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A structure of support to address the socio-emotional needs of high school learners: a case study of one government high school in Johannesburg

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Chapter 1: An Overview and Rationale for the Study

Chapter 1 provides an outline of the background and contextualisation of the study. In addition, a statement of purpose and research aims as well as a formulation of the research question, followed by a brief summary of the research methodology will be provided.

1.1. Introduction

"…the key to reducing barriers to learning within all education and training lies in a strengthened education support service" (Department of Education, 1995b, p. 6).

Many South African youth face a range of challenges and barriers to learning and the variety of socio-emotional problems affect learning and performance in profound ways (Adelman & Taylor, 2012). The prevalence of learners with socio-emotional barriers to learning (EBD) in South African schools is significantly increased due to the disadvantaged circumstances that many learners live in (Potgieter-Groot, Visser & Lubbe-deBeer, 2012). The prevalence of these learners coupled with the state of education in South Africa results in numerous challenges for educators and schools. Although many societal considerations are involved, the primary reason for strengthening mental health in schools is due to the fact that schools provide excellent accesses to learners (and their families) that require mental health services. In addition schools need to address socio-emotional concerns to enable effective school performance and student well being (Adelman & Taylor, 2012). South African education policy such as Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) outlines approaches and strategies to assist educators in dealing with socio-emotional problems that interfere with schooling.

However, Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) does not clearly outline the role Life Orientation educators could play within structures of support that address socio-emotional barriers to learning. Life Orientation (LO) is a compulsory subject (Wood & Olivier, 2007) that aims to provide possibilities for equipping learners in South Africa with the relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to face some of the many challenges they incur as informed, confident and responsible young people (The Department of Education,

2010). These aims, set out in the National Curriculum Statement for LO, are highly valuable and necessary, however, the design of a system that can achieve these goals has been extremely difficult (Prinsloo, 2007; Rooth, 2005). Additionally, the aims set out by the National Curriculum Statement are aims that LO educators alone should not be solely faced to meet.

A structure of support, involving all stakeholders, needs to be established to address high school learners' socio-emotional needs. The school based support team (SBST), educators, the principal, the school management team (SMT), educational psychologists, families, communities, professionals such as health care workers, social workers, non-profit organisations (NGOs) and others must be involved, where necessary to provide support to the learner over and above that which is provided by the LO educators (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010). There is limited research on the role these stakeholders could play in assisting learners with socio-emotional needs. Thus, more understanding in this regard is needed. The research therefore aimed to examine the following research questions, at one government high school in Johannesburg, using a case study design approach:

- What does this structure of support look like?
- How does this structure of support function?
- What are the challenges faced by this structure of support?
- What are the roles and functions of the various stakeholders (educational psychologists, the school-based support team (SBST), the district-based support team (DBST), the school principal, Life Orientation educators, parents and educators) within this structure?

Additionally, there are a total of 1,464 registered and working educational psychologists in South Africa and 145 educational psychology interns registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and working in South Africa (Y. Daffue, personal correspondence, October 1, 2013). Furthermore, in 2011, there were 12 283 875 learners in schools in South Africa, who attended 25 851 schools and were served by 420 608 educators (Department of Basic Education, 2011). However, with only 1,509 registered educational psychologists and registered intern educational psychologists in South Africa this results in one educational psychologist for every 8, 140 learners. Thus, it is not possible for every school in

South Africa to employ an educational psychologist at their school and it is not possible for every learner in South Africa to receive individual psychological care. Thus it is necessary that the optimal use of these professionals be examined. The research therefore aimed to examine the role of the educational psychologist in collaborative relationships, with educators, Life Orientation educators, members of the school-based support team (SBST), the school principal and members of the district-based support team (DBST), that address and assist learners with socio-emotional needs.

1.2. Orientation of the Research

The researcher has worked as a Life Orientation educator over the past five years. During her studies she worked at two high schools in Cape Town and numerous schools in Soweto. In addition, during her employment as a Life Orientation educator she has worked at two high schools. One of the high schools she worked at for two years was situated in Cape Town and the other high school she worked at for three years was situated in Johannesburg. Both of these high schools were government high schools.

At the high school situated in Cape Town, two Life Orientation educators, with the support from the school principal and an educational psychologist at the district level, provided much of the socio-emotional support to learners. In contrast, the high school situated in Johannesburg had a structure of support which involved all educators, the school-based support team, the school principal, two educational psychologists, a department of eleven Life Orientation educators and the district based support team. What became apparent to the researcher during these diverse experiences is that there is a common need for socio-emotional support at the high school level. In all of these experiences it was found that learners faced numerous socio-emotional challenges. The challenges learners faced were for example teen pregnancy, substance abuse, bullying and poor living environments. Thus at all the schools the researcher worked at, learners experienced socio-emotional challenges and as such needed support.

In conceptualising this study, the researcher believed that it was important to give those that deal with the socio-emotional support of learners, such as Life Orientation educators, school-based support teams (SBST), district-based support teams (DBST) and educational psychologists, a voice in which to express challenges that they face. In addition, the researcher believed that it was important to highlight best practices that could perhaps be implemented in other schools.

1.3. Aim of the Study and Research Rationale

The primary aim of the research was to explore the structure of educational support services required to address the numerous socio-emotional needs of high school learners, within one fairly well *resourced* government high school in Johannesburg. The research aimed to examine the following:

- What support was needed
- What supportive relationships existed
- What support could have been strengthened?

In addition, the research aimed to add to the literature and research done on this topic. For example, research conducted by Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) examined the ecological aspects influencing the implementation of inclusive education in South African government primary schools in the Eastern Cape. A qualitative approach was used; using observation and semi-structured interviews conducted with 28 participants from seven mainstream primary schools. Williams (2010) focused on exploring the viability of school-based support for vulnerable children in two township schools in Johannesburg. Mphahlele (2005) examined the support offered by school-based support teams at the foundation phase in Tshwane North. Lastly, Thabana (2004) examined the role of the school-based support team in assisting educators of learners with special education needs in one school in Khayelitsha. Thus research to date examined under-resourced schools and school-based support teams at the foundation phase. The current research aims to expand on the research done by offering a case study of a resourced government high school in Johannesburg. Whereas the research to date examined the structures

of support available to vulnerable children and learners with special education needs the current research aims to add to the research by examining the structures of support available to adolescent learners with a broad range of socio-emotional needs.

Mphahlele (2005) suggested that future research should examine the challenges, needs and experiences of school-based support teams currently functioning in schools. Additionally, Thabana (2004) suggested that research on support services should be extended to other schools in other areas. Thus the research aimed to extend the research done to date, by providing a case study of one government high school in Johannesburg with an aim of exploring the structures of support available to learners with a broad range of socio-emotional needs. The research done to date (Mphahlele, 2005; Thabana, 2004; Williams, 2010) focuses on the role of the school-based support teams whereas the current research aimed to explore the broad structure of support available to high school learners. The researcher believes that this structure of support includes Life Orientation (LO) educators.

The LO curriculum forms an excellent basis for equipping learners to respond positively to social demands, assume responsibilities and optimize their life chances (Prinsloo, 2007; Wood & Olivier, 2007). However, establishing a system that can achieve these goals has proven to be extremely difficult (Prinsloo, 2007; Wood & Olivier, 2007) and as a result the status and practice of LO is not yet optimal (Prinsloo, 2007; Rooth, 2005). Despite these challenges LO is a subject that has enormous potential as recognised by both learners and educators when implemented effectively (Rooth, 2005). Thus the research aimed to examine how best to support LO educators, in the provision of socio-emotional support to high school learners, by providing a case study of one resourced government high school in Johannesburg.

From the perspective of inclusive education policy (Department of Education, 2001), a collaborative effort is needed whereby all stakeholders (the educational psychologist, the SBSTs, the DBSTs, the social worker, educators, the SGB, the SMT and the LO educators) make the best use of available resources, and work together to optimise these resources and achieve improved provisioning of socio-emotional support to learners. Little mention is made of the role of Life Orientation educators within this structure of support. Thus the research aimed to add to the

research done to date by examining what role Life Orientation educators could play within the structure of support available at the case study high school.

After sharing the research findings educational psychologists in South Africa could potentially use their knowledge and skills to assist in the development of possible strategies and/or design interventions that may have an impact on the conditions that exist within schools. Educational psychologists could therefore utilise the information within the research to plan psychological services. In addition, the Department of Education could be informed about probable ways to provide socio-emotional support to the high school system. In addition, the study could assist stakeholders (LO educators, SBSTs, educational psychologists and staff in the DBSTs) in exploring how to make the best use of available resources and to potentially assist them to understand the likely potential for supporting relationships. Lastly, the research could provide South African national and provincial departments of education with some information on how to possibly make the best use of educational psychology services.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The researcher used two theoretical frameworks from which to conceptualise the study. These are: ecosystemic theory and collaborative consultancy. Ecosystemic and collaborative consultancy models are very much in line with inclusive education policy in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001); which addresses the provision of socio-emotional support to learners. Therefore the researcher utilised these theoretical frameworks in order to gain a richer understanding of the research topic. A detailed description and exploration of these theoretical frameworks is provided in Chapter 2.

1.5. Conceptual Clarification

1.5.1. Inclusive education

Inclusive education is the concept used to describe educational policies and practices that defend the right of learners with barriers to learning, to belong and learn in mainstream education

(Green, 2001). The term 'inclusive education' acknowledges that all learners can learn and need support. It involves enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners thus shifting the focus from learners having to adjust to the demands of the system, to the system being capable of accommodating the diverse needs of all learners as inclusively as possible (Swart & Pettipher, 2001). Inclusive education therefore promotes the full development of all learners regardless of their race, class, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning style and language (Department of Education, 2001).

1.5.2. Barriers to learning

Barriers to learning are defined by the Department of Education (1997b) as factors that lead to the inability of a learner to learn or which prevent learners from accessing educational provisions whereby essentially a school sytem is unable to accommodate such learners. Barriers to learning is the term used for intrinsic and extrinsic factors that prevent optimal learning or that lessen the extent to which learners can benefit from education (Department of Education, 1997b). In 1997 the South African Department of Education released a report by the National Commission of Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Educational Support and Services (NCESS), in which the term 'barriers to learning' was deemed to be more appropriate than that of 'special educational needs' due to the fact that a breakdown in learning may occur not only from an individual's intrinsic factors, but also from external factors such as "the curriculum, the centre of learning, the system of education, and the broader social context" (Department of Education, 1997a, p.2).

1.5.3. School-based support teams (SBST)

Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) stipulates that the institutional-level support team (ILST) is a team based at the school that comprises of selected educators whose main function is to identify and address barriers to learning. Although Education White Paper 6 refers to these team as the ILST, for the purposes of this study, the term institutional-level support teams (ILST) will be replaced with school-based support team (SBST). This is due to the fact that the case study high school uses the term SBST and not ILST.

1.5.4. District-based support teams (DBST)

District-based support teams refer to integrated professional support services at district level. Support providers employed by the Department of Education draw on the expertise from local education institutions and various community resources. Their key function is to assist education institutions to identify and address barriers to learning and promote effective teaching and learning. A key function of the DBST is to provide ongoing support to the SBST. The way in which particular provinces and districts use and further develop these guidelines depends on identified local needs and available resources (Department of Education, 1995 b). Participants in the DBST include education support providers employed by the Department of Education these participants provide both classroom and organisational support; specialised learner and educator support; curricular and institutional development (including management and governance), and administrative support. Other relevant experts from various community structures and other government departments are also utilized by the DBST (Department of Education, 1995 b).

1.5.5. Life Orientation (LO)

Life Orientation (LO) is a compulsory subject in the South African national education curriculum. LO is comprised of six topics, namely: development of the self in society; social and environmental responsibility, democracy and human rights, career and career choices, study skills and physical education (Department of Basic Education, 2010; Prinsloo, 2007).

1.5.6. Educator

An educator is the new South African terminology used within policy documents (Department of Education, 2001; Department of Basic Education, 2010) for a person whose work involves educating learners in schools. This term has replaced the term ‘teacher’.

1.5.7. Learner

This term has been adopted by the South African education system to replace the term “pupils” and refers to those known as students elsewhere (Amod, 2003).

1.6. Paradigmatic Perspectives

1.6.1. Metatheoretical paradigm

The research adopted an interpretivist lens, realising that all theory is revisable and that observation is imperfect and contains flaws (Henning, 2004). Interpretivism was suitable for this study because it is exploratory in nature. The research used a variety of data, different sources as well as analysis methods in an attempt to provide valid and in-depth descriptions of the selected case (Henning, 2004).

1.6.2. Methodological paradigm: qualitative enquiry

A qualitative mode of inquiry was used in this study to enable the researcher to understand the viewpoint of Life Orientation educators, members of the SBST, a member of the DBST, the school principal and educational psychologists within the case study high school (Creswell, 2007).

1.7. Research Methodology

1.7.1. Research design and approach

The research used a case study design as this research design is useful for learning about situations which might be poorly understood or about which not much is known (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). More specifically, an instrumental case study design, was used because this is aimed at illuminating a particular issue (Creswell, 2007). The defining feature of the case study design is that it investigates phenomena that have a definable boundary (Morgan and Sklar, 2012). The marked boundary in this case was a specific South African Government high school in Gauteng, Johannesburg, in 2013. The aim of the research was to obtain a deep and holistic understanding of the experience of Life Orientation educators, members of the SBST, the school principal and educational psychologists within this particular context. This choice of design enabled the researcher to investigate the experiences of LO educators, the school-based support team, a member of the DBST, the school principal and educational psychologists based within a school system.

1.7.2. Data collection methods

Data was collected using three methods:

1. **Semi-structured individual interviews** were conducted with the school principal and deputy principal in charge of the SBST at the case study high school. In addition a semi-structured individual interview was conducted with the deputy chief of educational services at the district.
2. **Focus groups:** Two focus group interviews were held. The first focus group interview was conducted with three psychologists at the case study high school. The second focus group interview was conducted with eight Life Orientation educators at the case study high school.
3. **Crystalisation:** An analysis of the weekly memorandum document over a three month period together with field notes and a reflected journal were used.

1.7.3. Data analysis and interpretation

The primary data analysis technique used was content analysis. Content analysis is a methodical approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarises message content (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Data was examined from different angles to identify keys in the text in order to help the researcher interpret the raw data from transcripts and the weekly memorandum documents (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The data collected was reviewed regularly in order for the researcher to become fully immersed in it. Similarities and differences were identified to confirm or disconfirm data. Once acquainted and familiar with content, and saturation occurred the researcher generated preliminary codes and code headings through which to categorise data (Creswell, 2007). When the data was coded, themes developed and inferences were made to address the research questions (Maree, 2007). The themes were then presented to the participants for comment, as an added aspect of the crystalisation of data.

1.7.4. Quality Criteria

Using different methods of data capturing to facilitate crystallisation enhanced the trustworthiness of the research. Research themes and sub-themes, which emerged from the data collection and interpretation process, were then discussed with participants to ensure that they were accurate and therefore dependable. Additionally, to ensure crystalisation the researcher kept field notes and a reflective journal throughout the research process. Lastly, the researcher constantly reflected on the research process including the literature review, observations made, reflections made, data collection methods decided upon and the analysis of data. Through crystalisation and member checking a match between the reality that was constructed by the participants and the reality represented by the research was acquired (Sinkovics, Penz and Ghauri, 2008). In order to make the study dependable samples of the data analysis were included as well as a copy of the questions that were asked during the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. By providing these methodological steps the researcher ensured that the study could be repeated within other similar contexts (Shenton, 2004). To ensure that the research was confirmable direct quotations of participants within the research report were used.

1.8. Demarcation of the Study

The remaining chapters in the research report are structured as follows:

Chapter 2: A discussion of the background literature related to the inquiry and findings is presented in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research design and methodology as well as the characteristics of a phenomenological inquiry.

Chapter 4: The research findings are provided in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5: A summary of the findings and implications as well as the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are discussed Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

A discussion of relevant literature related to the research inquiry and findings is presented in this chapter, Chapter 2. The researcher aims to provide a clear understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem that has been identified and places the research project in context. The researcher will guide the reader through the relevant literature by beginning with a summary of the theoretical basis of this study; providing insight into Bronfrenbrenner's bioecological model as well as theory on collaborative consultancy. Once the theoretical basis has been established the researcher provides an overview of the South African education system as well as government policies related to the provision of socio-emotional support in high schools, including inclusive education policy. Thereafter, Chapter 2 examines structures of support to promote learner well-being.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The researcher used two theoretical frameworks from which to conceptualise the study. These frameworks are ecosystemic theory and collaborative consultancy. The research aimed to examine support available to address socio-emotional barriers to learning and inclusive education policy outlines the provision of this support. Inclusive education policy is very much in line with an ecosystemic approach, which moves away from seeing barriers to learning only in medical terms towards seeing it as a complexity of influences, interactions and interrelations between a learner and all the systems in which the learner functions (Du Toit & Forlin, 2009). Therefore the researcher believed that the ecosystemic framework was a useful theoretical framework to use as it appears to be a core component of inclusive education policy in South Africa and inclusive education policy provides the outline for the provision of socio-emotional support which is central to the research topic. In addition, inclusive education policy, commits itself to holistic and integrated support provision through intersectoral collaboration (Department of Education, 2001). Therefore the collaborative consultancy model was also deemed to be a useful theoretical framework to use when conceptualising the research topic.

2.2.1. Ecosystemic theory

Ecosystemic theory was originated by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and was further developed in South Africa by Donald et al. (2010), Engelbrecht and Green (2001) and Swart and Pettipher (2005). Much of the South African research (Donald et al., 2010; De Jong, 2000; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001; Swart and Pettipher, 2005; Rooth, 2005; Theron, 2009) suggests a need for a paradigm shift from an individualistic to an ecosystemic approach which involves viewing learners within their psychosocial context and endeavouring to understand their needs in relation to a range of inter-connected levels of influence. Inclusive education policy in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001) which encompasses a move away from the medical deficit model towards a more ecosystemic model, is very much in line with this paradigm shift and with an eco-systemic approach (Du Toit & Forlin, 2009).

Within ecosystemic theory, behaviour is said to develop as a result of the interaction between a person and his/her environment (Scileppi, Teed & Torres, 2000). Bronfenbrenner discusses bio-ecological theory in contrast to the eco-systemic concept that we mostly use in South Africa. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasises that in order to understand behaviour one must study the contexts within which one behaves because the explanations for this behaviour can be found in the interactions between the individual and the context and the influence each has on one another. Similarly, if one wants to change behavior, then one would have to change elements within the person as well as his/her environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Therefore the researcher believed that the ecosystemic framework was a useful theoretical framework to use as it considers factors in the immediate environment of the learner (family, school, peer group, community) and the mutual interaction between these factors and explains mutual relationships between people, communities and institutions. Within ecosystemic theory an individual learner is both influenced by and influences the system within which they interact (Schmidt & Venet, 2012) and therefore interventions must be aimed both at the level of the individual learner but also at the level of various interlinked systems which impact on and are impacted by the individual learner (De Jong, 2000). Emphasis is therefore placed on providing a holistic support system (Rooth, 2005; Dunbar-Krige, Pillay & Henning, 2010; Prinsloo,

2007).This corresponds with inclusive education policy with the focus of educational support services moving from changing the individual learner to a systems change approach (De Jong, 2000; Department of Education, 2001).

"The ecological environment" is conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as a set of "nested structures", each inside the next, which Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes as being like a "set of Russian dolls". According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), an individual is influenced by the interation between these series of interlinked systems. Figure 1 below, displays Bronfenbrenners' ecological environment in more detail.

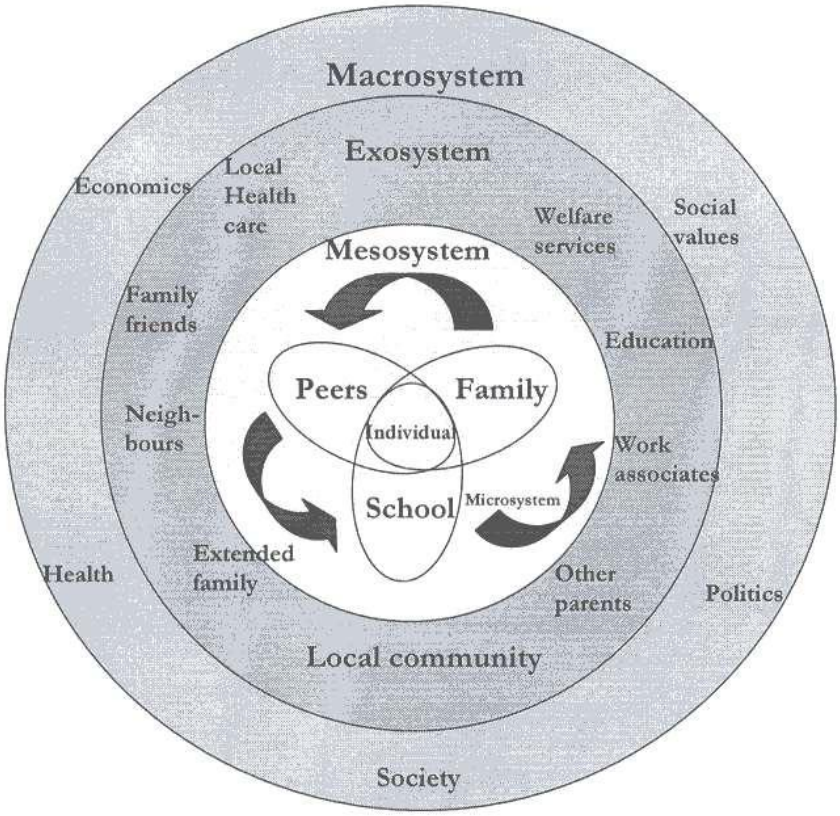


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model**.**
Source: Swart & Pettipher (2005, p.1).

At the inner most level is the immediate setting which contains the developing person. The next level involves the relations or interconnections between elements of the immediate setting. This complex of interrelations within the immediate setting Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to as the "microsystem". Interrelations between settings in which the person actively participates in is described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as the "mesosystem". The mesosystem can therefore be described as a set of microsystems that continually interact with one another (Donald et al., 2010). The third level of the ecological environment involves events occurring in settings in which the person is not present (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Interrelations between one or more settings in which the person may never enter and thus actively participate in, but in which events occur that affect or are affected by what happens in the person's immediate environment, Bronfenbrenner (1979) calls the "exosystem". Lastly, the multifaceted interconnected systems, Bronfenbrenner (1979) called "the macrosystem", is seen as an expression or materialisation of overarching patterns of ideology and organisation of the social institutions familiar to a particular culture or subculture. For the purposes of this study, the micro and meso systems are of importance.

The ecosystemic approach is also served by the asset-based approach to intervention, which focuses on learners' and educators' skills, resources, capacities and strengths, that can be shared among individuals, groups of people, institutions and communities, to develop the most appropriate support strategies and learning contexts to overcome emotional and behavioural barriers to learning. This approach moves away from the needs-based approach which focuses on the deficits or limitations of the learner and is very much in line with inclusive education policy (Department of Education, 2001; Du Toit & Forlin, 2009). The ecosystemic approach to the provision of socio-emotional support appears to be relevant and necessary to the South African context which is marked by a shortage of skilled professionals. With a shortage of skilled professionals it would appear that interventions that focus on the sharing of educators' skills, resources, capacities and strengths is therefore valuable to the current study, which seeks to investigate the most appropriate support strategies to overcome socio-emotional barriers to learning.

Although, there has been a paradigm shift from an individualistic to a systemic approach it must be noted that there will always be a need for interventions at the intrapersonal level. Thus one should not ignore the intrapersonal level within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model. This is the immediate setting which contains the developing person. Some researchers caution that as the profession moves away from a child deficit model and toward a more systemic approach, educational psychologists should not ignore the need for applied psychology and the recognition that there will always be some children with highly individualised needs (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009).

2.2.2. Collaborative consultancy

Collaboration is a helpful framework (Hanko, 1999) to use when embarking on an examination of support structures available to address the socio-emotional needs of high school learners. The collaborative consultancy framework stipulates that through building collaborative relationships within the educational subsystems and systems, the intention is that all the role-players will be able to communicate more easily and will work towards the same goal, of enabling the individual learner to achieve his/her potential (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001, p. 75). This is aligned with inclusive education policy such as Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) which commits itself to a holistic and integrated service provision through intersectoral collaboration between government departments, between various disciplines and between various professionals as well as between parents, educators and learners (Department of Education, 2001).

Therefore, the collaborative consultancy model provides an important framework to use given the South African context in that it enables participants to accomplish more with their limited resources, through a process of problem-solving and teamwork (Amod, 2003). The collaborative consultation model is based on equality and reciprocity between professionals (Eisenman et al., 2011), whereby there is a shared responsibility for planning, decision-making and problem-solving (Elliott & Sheridan, 1992). Collaborative consultation may therefore increase professionals' joint ownership of learners' education and increase educators' confidence and skill with including diverse learners (Eisenman et al., 2011).

Since the inception of government policy with regards to inclusive education services (Department of Education, 2001), school systems and educators have struggled with how to include students with barriers to learning, including those with emotional and behavioural barriers to learning, into mainstream schools, while ensuring the provision of individualised, support services (Adelman & Taylor, 2012). As discussed above, this may be partly due to the fact that there will always be learners with highly individualised needs and these learners may need professional specialised assistance. In the collaborative consultancy model the consultant's relationship to the student is mostly indirect. Less often, for example when there is a need for individualised special services, a consultant may provide some direct services to a student, (Eisenman, Pleet, Wandry, & McGinley, 2011).

Eisenman et al. (2011) provide a variation of the collaborative consultancy model which incorporates both collaboration and consultancy models and provides a theoretical framework to assist school systems and educators with the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning, while ensuring the provision of individualised, special services. They cited positive outcomes of a mixed collaborative consultancy approach, which involved combining an indirect collaborative-consultation approach with direct support to learners (Eisenman et al., 2011). Therefore, this collaborative consultancy model may be an appropriate framework to use as it incorporates both collaboration and consultancy models.

However, the collaborative consultancy model has been proposed by many as the foundation for a range of alternative services designed to enhance general education experiences (Donald & Lazarus, 1995, Elliott & Sheridan, 1992, Green, Donald & MacIntosh, 1990). The researcher therefore aims to examine some of the most recent collaborative consultancy models.

Adelman and Taylor (2012), cite an example of a successful collaborative consultancy framework, which has been adopted by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). Adelman and Tayor (2012) state that common policy and plans, for transforming or improving schools, are centered on a two-component framework. The two-components they refer to (illustrated in Figure 2 below) are namely the *instructional component* and the *management*

component. The instructional component involves high quality teaching, improved academic assessment and staff development. The management component involves shared governance, improved data collection systems, increased accountability, budget control and funding although important, In their opinion the two-component framework neglects efforts related to providing additional support and attention where needed. Although both components are essential, what educators really want and need is sizeable help in addressing barriers to student and school success. Thus Adelman and Taylor (2012) support the notion that policy for improving schools needs to shift from a two- to a three-component framework as outlined in Figure 2.

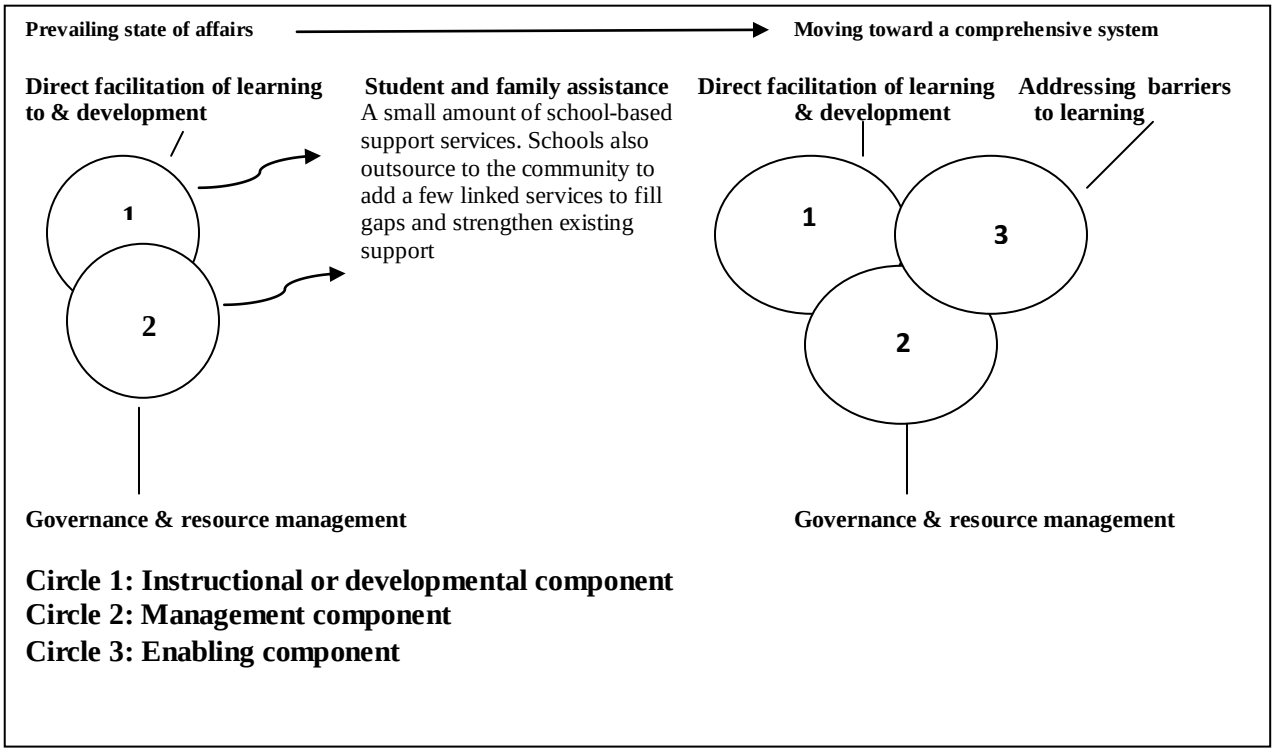


Figure 2. Moving to a Three-component Policy Framework for School Improvement.
Source: Adelman & L. Taylor (2012, p. 9-18)

The third component, illustrated in Figure 2, (the *enabling component)* is the unifying concept and umbrella under which all resources currently expended for learner and learning supports are woven together to develop a cohesive, comprehensive, and multifaceted system. The enabling component, is any component that enables learning by addressing barriers to learning. Adelman and Taylor (2012) demand that, as with the other two components

(instructional/developmental component and management component), the third component must be treated in policy and practice as primary and essential and as such it must be fully integrated into school improvement, in order to combat marginalisation and fragmentation of the work.

Adelman and Taylor (2012) stipulate that the move to a three-component framework is intended to ensure that schools can enable learners to get around barriers to learning and re-engage them in classroom instruction. Furthermore, the overlapping nature of the three-component framework provides major opportunities for learner support staff to play a significant role in enhancing classroom and school-wide programs in ways that promote student, family, and community healthy development, well-being, and engagement with schools (Adelman & Taylor, 2012). In addition, Adelman and Taylor (2012) believe that unifying learners and learning supports into a third component will empower efforts to counter the continuing marginalisation of learner and learning supports and provide leverage for full integration into school improvement policy and practice.

Another example of utilising the collaborative consultancy framework as the foundation for a model of service delivery is that of Ainscow (2012). Ainscow (2012) believes that networking and collaboration, within and across schools, should be the key strategy for strengthening the overall improvement capacity of the school system. This approach builds on earlier research which suggests that, under appropriate conditions, greater collaboration within schools is a means of fostering improvements (Ainscow 1999; West, Ainscow, & Stanford, 2005); and that collaboration between differently-performing schools can reduce polarisation within education systems, to the particular benefit of learners who are performing relatively poorly (Ainscow, 2010; Ainscow & Howes, 2007; Ainscow, Booth, Dyson, Farrell, Frankham, Gallanngaugh et al., 2006; Ainscow and West 2006). Ainscow (2012) believes that this is done by both transferring existing knowledge and by generating context specific new knowledge.

Ainscow's research (2012) focused on schools in highly disadvantaged contexts within the United Kingdom. The research findings suggested a way of strengthening relatively low performing schools that can, at the same time, help to foster wider improvements in the system.

This has importance to the South African context, which is marked by large discrepancies in the quality of education provided by under-resourced schools in previously disadvantaged areas and resourced schools found in higher socio-economic areas. Evidence from her research suggests that school-to-school partnerships (pairs or sometimes trios) are the most powerful means of fostering improvements across the system. Progress was achieved through carefully matched pairings of schools that cut across social 'boundaries' of various kinds (cultures, religion, age group of students and schools in different districts and socio-economic areas). In this way, expertise that was previously trapped in particular contexts was made more widely available. In addition, there was strong evidence of mutual benefit in the approach used by Ainscow (2012) and both the schools receiving support and those providing support benefitted from this model.

Ainscow (2012) summarised the primary strategies she used in her study, which proved to be effective. The first strategy Ainscow (2012) believed to be of importance was to recognise and mobilise the untapped potential found in schools. Secondly, Ainscow (2012) believed that a sound needs analysis was necessary to identify issues that need urgent attention and the human resources to support improvement efforts in relation to these issues. Thirdly, Ainscow (2012) states that school partnerships are the most powerful means of fostering improvements, particularly in challenging circumstances.

However, a challenge of the collaborative consultancy model is that in order to successfully implement this primarily indirect service delivery model; training, ongoing support and monitoring is necessary at all levels of the education system, including the school level and district level (Amod, 2003; Coben, Thomas, Sattler, & Morsink, 1997; Green, Donald & MacIntosh, 1992; Swart & Pettipher, 2000). A further challenge of the collaborative consultancy model is that the preventative effects of consultation had yet to be adequately proven (Elliott & Sheridan, 1992). There is a perception that through a collaborative consultancy approach consulters will acquire new skills from the consultants which they can then apply to other learners later on. However, there was a lack of research to prove that this occurs (Amod, 2003; Eisenman et al., 2011). As such research such as Amod (2003) and Eisenman (2011) sought to extend the few studies of collaborative models of inclusive education in schools.

Amod (2003) found strong support for the Systemic Assessment and Intervention Approach (SAIA) as a strategy for indirect service delivery, which involved collaborative problem-solving and decision-making both of which are indicative of the collaborative consultancy model. As such Amod (2003) believes that the SAIA model of psycho-educational assessment provides a consultative framework for the delivery of a range of services to meet a continuum of learner needs and therefore holds promise for application within the South African education system. However, of vital importance to the successful implementation of this model is the need for capacity-building in the DBST, as outlined in Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001). Amod (2003) states that the development of system-wide structures, resources, and support from, the National Education Department to the provincial, district and school levels, is necessary to successfully implement the new educational policies and that it is within this infrastructure that indirect service delivery can be a truly viable option in South Africa.

Although Amod (2003) cited a successful strategy for indirect service delivery; Eisenman et al. (2011) cited positive outcomes of a mixed collaborative consultancy approach, which involved combining an indirect collaborative-consultation approach with direct support to learners (Eisenman et al., 2011). As previously mentioned, there has been a paradigm shift from an individualistic to a systemic approach yet it must be noted that there will always be a need for interventions at the intrapersonal level. Some researchers caution that educational psychologists should not ignore the need for applied psychology and the recognition that there will always be some children with highly individualized needs (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). As such a mixed collaborative consultation (Eisenman et al., 2011) may be an effective model to use when attempting to address the socio-emotional needs of high school learners as it utilises both an indirect and direct service delivery approach.

Due to the numerous socio-emotional needs of high school learners, a fundamental challenge for policy makers and practitioners in South Africa is to find ways of breaking the links between disadvantage, educational failure and restricted life chances. Ainscow (2012, pg. 289) states “Children enter schools from different backgrounds, have different experiences of education, and leave with very different results. In many countries the poorest children tend to lose out most

starkly, achieve the worst results and attend the lowest performing schools." This would appear to hold true for the South African situation, as there is a large discrepancy between the quality of education found in under-resourced government high schools, which house learners from low socio-economic areas in our society, and between resourced government high schools and private high schools which cater for learners from higher socio-economic areas (South African Human Rights Commission and Unicef, 2011) In order to address these disadvantages, educational failures and restricted life chances it would appear that South African education policy (Department of Education, 2000; Department of Education, 2001) is informed by both eco-systemic and collaborative consultancy models, as explored in more detail above.

2.3. An Overview of the Education System

2.3.1. The status of education worldwide

A study, carried out by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (2012), assessed the education systems of 50 countries, combining international test results and data such as literacy rates and graduation rates between 2006 and 2010. A wide range of education inputs, both quantitative data, such as spending on learners and class size, as well as qualitative data, such as level of school choice, were examined along with numerous potential outcomes ranging from development of cognitive skills to GDP growth. Finland and South Korea were placed in first and second places, respectively, while at the lowest end of the 50-nation list were Mexico, Brazil and Indonesia (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012). What can be seen from these results is that there is no automatic association between the wealth of a country and its educational performance. For example, the United States of America has lower enrolments in primary school than Argentina (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012). The data gathered by UNESCO/UNICEF on the numbers of children who are out of school place the United States even lower for its failure to ensure primary education for all children. School enrolments in 2001/2002 were reported at 94%. This meant that 6% of school aged children (6-11) were out of school, some 1.3 million (Tomasevski, 2006). This has important implications in South Africa as it has been reported that the South African Government spends a greater percentage of our national budget (18, 5%/R165.1 billion) on education than do many other countries in the world,

yet we appear to lag far behind international assessment standards (Modisaotsile, 2012; Venter, 2012). In addition, poor educational performance by both South Africa and the United States of America may indicate that other extrinsic factors could play a part in the education performance of a country.

2.3.2. The South African education system

When the quality of our education is compared to that of international standards South Africa appears to fall far behind international standards (Spaull, 2012). For example, according to Spaull (2012) three of the most recent cross-national assessments found the following results:

1. In 2003, the trends in international Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tested Grade 8 students in 50 countries in Mathematics and Science. Of the 50 countries, six were African countries. South Africa was positioned last; 50 out of the 50 countries tested.
2. In 2006, the progress in reading and literacy study (PIRL) tested Grade 4 and 5 learners in 45 countries in reading and literacy. Out of the 45 countries South Africa was again positioned last.
3. In 2007, the Southern African Consortium for monitoring educational quality (SAMCEQ) tested Grade 6 learners from 14 African countries in reading and mathematics. Of the 15 countries that participated, South Africa came 10^{th} for reading and 8^{th} for mathematics.

These results are surprisingly low as it would appear that the Grade 12 pass rate is increasing year by year. However, Spaull (2012) suggests that too often we only look at the Grade 12 pass rate (what proportion of Grade 12 learners pass the examinations), instead of the number of students that pass grade 12 out of the group that started their schooling twelve years prior to the Grade 12 examinations. Modisaotsile (2012) states that of the total number of learners enrolled in grade 1, only half make it to grade 12. The biggest drop-out rate is found between Grade 10 and Grade 12 (Spaull, 2012). The root cause of this drop-out rate has been attributed to low quality education, whereby learners are not adequately taught the foundational skills they need to

develop in earlier grades (Spaull, 2012). In addition, the majority of learners who do pass grade 12, do not meet the minimum requirements for university entrance (Modisaotsile, 2012).

What appears to be more important than how much a country spends on education is the way in which the money is allocated, managed and used. Maluleke (2013) states that some of the poor conditions found in the current education system are due to poor leadership. However, he also states that it must be acknowledge that some of the conditions facing South African educators and learners are due to the legacy of apartheid and one cannot ignore the unique circumstances and challenges the apartheid education system has left in its aftermath (Maluleke, 2013). During the apartheid era, learners were not only educated separately according to race, but a separate special education system existed for learners with disabilities or impairments. This segregated and fragmented education system needs to be addressed to bring education practice in South Africa in line with international trends which focus on the inclusion of learners with special education needs in mainstream classes (Engelbrecht, 2006). Although some challenges South African educators face are unique to the South African situation, others, such as educator stress and burnout, are not isolated to the South African situation and appear to be problems that are faced by many educators worldwide.

Burnout amongst educators in first world countries has been well researched owing to its prevalence (Josean, 2013). A variety of research has been conducted on the relationship between teaching and burnout. It is notable that burnout amongst educators is not isolated to Africa or even South Africa. Some may state that the South African educator has to contend with more stressors than educators from Canada, Australia and other first world countries; for example, in countries like South Korea and China, educators are highly respected and the profession is highly viewed and sought after. In Australia, India and the Dominican Republic, teachers are “relatively well” perceived and being a teacher is seen as “respectable” (Josean, 2013), whereas educators in South Africa are often viewed with disrespect and as holding a low position in society (Jay, 2010).

In addition, it was recently reported that in the Eastern Cape educators teach up to 153 students in one class (Maluleke, 2013). In addition, many of the ‘under-resourced’ schools are in

such a decrepit state that they are no longer fit to be used as places of learning, forcing children to study under a tree ("Freedom is a Mirage", 2013). A typical South African school in a very poor area, either rural or township, consists of over half of its educators unable to pass the exam for which they are preparing their students. In addition, principals are under-qualified and learners are undernourished with educational deficits from earlier years. Furthermore, parents are unable to assist their children with their homework and are struggling to make ends meet. A significant proportion of families contain only one parent, and the burden of disease and substance abuse is common. Additionally, an average South African school in a very poor area has large class sizes (anything above 35) and limited educational facilities such as computers or laboratory equipment, as well as poor on-site sanitation. The school may not have electricity and if it does the photocopying equipment, critical for producing notes and assessments, is regularly out of order. If it is a rural area then educators may live far away from the school and need to take a long ride on unsealed roads twice a day. In urban areas there may be very serious problems with gangsterism, crime and drugs (Muller, 2013).

Additionally, inadequate screening techniques for early identification of socio-emotional problems, as well as lack of access to basic services and treatment also forms a risk factor, particularly for the disadvantaged communities (Van der Riet and Knoetze's, 2004, Rooth, 2005, Reddy, Panday, Swart, Jinabhai, Amosun, James et al., 2003). Moreover, the majority of learners in South Africa is bi- or multi-lingual, and attends school in a language that is not their first language. South African educators have expressed deep distress about this lack of language acquisition and stimulation in their classes and tend to spend significant amounts of class time regarding these language impediment issues which interrupts the flow of lessons (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). Other factors that lead to educator stress are: physically small or a lack of rooms in which to teach; unmanageable numbers of students in one classroom; lack of time and know-how to help low level learners; lack of time and skill to help learners with emotional, social or family problems; lack of support from and pressure placed on educators from parents, management or the Education Department; low salary; lack of books and other resources; low status in society; learner discipline and issues related to a large workload which is exacerbated by increased administrative work, and an indifference and negative attitude of learners (Van Tonder, 2009).

Another major stressor that affects South African educators is the system of inclusive education which was introduced in 2001 by the Department of Education by means of White Paper 6 (Department of Education, White Paper 6, 2001). Theoretically inclusive education intends to introduce strategies and interventions that will assist educators to cope with a diversity of learning and teaching needs in order to ensure that transitory learning difficulties are ameliorated. In reality, it would appear that learners with special education needs create additional stress for educators as many schools throughout the country are under-funded and under-resourced and are therefore unable to adequately include these learners (van der Linde, 2006). Furthermore, Msibi and Mchunu (2013) state that the teaching practice has been reshaped in such a way that educators have less control over the pedagogical process. They are not being given the chance to be heard when it comes to establishing priorities and setting goals for policy reform, yet it is common for them to be blamed for school failure.

Chronic job stress caused by the factors listed above can result in burnout. Burnout affects educators' performance as educators are less motivated to help their learners and are less patient with them (Montgomery, 2004). As there is an increasing numbers of educators experiencing burnout in South Africa, this may be a contributing factor to decline in the quality of education (Montgomery, 2004).

Factors leading to job-related stress amongst educators and which could result in burnout, include violence in schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013), which ranges from bullying to violent crimes (Daniels, Bradley, & Hays, 2007) and includes physical, emotional and psychological violence as well as deprivation and neglect (Jacobs, 2012). High school educators in South Africa often battle to cope with increasing demands for learner performance whilst needing to manage violent learners within the classroom (Bester & du Plessis, 2010). The threats and intimidation they endure, as well as the violence they witness or experience appears to lead to symptoms of trauma (Bester & du Plessis, 2010).

In a study conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention in 121 high schools across South Africa, it was found that one in five pupils had experienced some form of violence at school and over a third of these learners experienced repeat violations (Burton & Leoschut,

2012). What is more, the classroom was indicated as the primary site of violent activity (Morkel, 2013). The study indicated that 70% of educators felt safe when teaching while a third of teachers reported feeling unsafe on school premises (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

This is further illustrated by the recent media reports of violence in schools. For example, the report of a gang-related murder of a high school boy, in Grade 12 who was shot in the head outside of his school (Spes Bona High school) in Athlone, in the Western Cape ("Pupil Dies After School Shooting", 2013). In addition it was reported that a 16-year-old boy was stabbed and killed by another learner during break time, at Beauvallon Secondary School in the Western Cape (Mncube & Harber, 2013). In another incident it was reported that an 18-year-old boy was stabbed once in the neck and died outside the school gates of Vorentoe High School in Auckland Park, Johannesburg, allegedly in a fight over a ball (Mncube & Harber, 2013). Some of these violent acts are caught on learners' mobile phones and then posted onto websites such as YouTube. For example the recent murder of a learner in Sizimele High School in Kwa-Zulu Natal was recorded on a fellow learner's cellphone and posted on YouTube but then was removed from the website due to being deemed too violent (Mncube & Harber, 2013).

However, studies (Jacobs, 2012; Mncube & Harber, 2013) have found that educators are victims, onlookers and perpetrators of violent acts in schools. It must be noted that a proportion of educators are verbally, physically and psychologically violent towards learners (Mncube & Harber, 2013). However, Bester and du Plessis (2010) attribute some of these violent acts by educators as indicators of trauma and educators who experience violence at school may display PTSD symptoms. Research shows that feeling fear and experiencing high levels of stress can lead to teacher burnout and poorer levels of work effectiveness (Daniels, Bradley, & Hays, 2007). Educators who fear for their own safety may experience decreased commitment to teaching, an increased need to avoid going to work and may have poor relationships with students (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

The Gauteng Provincial Government offers an employee health and wellness programme called "Zinakekele". This programme offers educators, their partners or spouse and dependents, with toll-free 24 hour, 365 days a year , telephonic counseling as well as face-to-face short-term

counseling, short-term trauma counseling as well a life management services. The life management services include guidance on such issues as financial management, legal advice and family care (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2013).

Coupled with poor educational performance and due to the state of many schools in South Africa, the demands placed on educators have become ever greater and the ability of competent educators to teach is impeded (Muller, 2013). Therefore, a conclusion may be drawn that South African educators experience large amounts of stressors which can lead to burnout. However, burnout is a common phenomenon amongst educators globally and even though South Africa has its own unique set of serious problems which arguably can be seen as worse than the problems facing many educators in the developed world, there are other countries who are experiencing their own set of disruptive issues which may be seen as at least equally problematic.

The literature review has examined the stressors present within the education system that contribute to educator stress and burnout, and which may be contributing to the low quality of education referred to in, 2.4. of this chapter. The literature review will now pay particular attention to the specific socio-emotional problems youth in South Africa face and how these factors may contribute to the low quality of education described in section 2.4. later in this chapter.

2.3.3. The challenges and needs faced by high school learners

In developing countries like South Africa, where extreme social and educational inequalities exist, those experiencing most commonly external barriers to learning are considered to comprise the majority of learners (Donald et al., 2010). This is further stipulated by Potgieter-Groot et al. (2012) who report that the prevalence of learners with emotional and behavioural barriers to learning (EBD) in South African schools is significantly increased due to the disadvantaged circumstances these learners face.

According to the literature, some of the disadvantaged circumstances the youth in South Africa face are the following: nontraditional family structures (Davis, Young, Hardman, & Winters, 2011), as well as interpersonal problems, relationships and sexuality; health problems

and financial issues; absence of parents from home, parental alcoholism, unemployment, peer pressure, substance abuse, teenage suicide, teenage pregnancy, poverty, child abuse and violence, a lack of access to services, as well as the fragmentation of the family unit, the loss of caregivers and unsafe environments (Reddy et al., 2003; Rooth, 2005; Van der Riet & Knoetze's, 2004). Youth in South Africa are exposed to high and traumatic levels of violence, with learners the target of rape, sexual harassment and bullying (Rooth, 2005). In addition to HIV/AIDS, critical health issues that affect South African learners and their education are malaria, bilharzias and tuberculosis (Rooth, 2005). Closely aligned to health promotion is the issue of physical activity and lastly, there is the need for education about the world of work (Rooth, 2005).

A comprehensive study conducted by the South African Human Rights Commission and Unicef (2011) states that of the 49.9 million people in South Africa, 18.6 million are children under the age of 18 years. Of these 18.6 million children, 7 million of them live in the poorest 20% of households while only 1.7 million children live in the richest 20% of households. In addition, 11.9 million children (64%) live in income poverty, with 4 out of 10 children living in households with unemployed adults or caregivers. This results in a number of consequential factors. For example 1 in 3 children will experience hunger. In addition, children living in the poorest 20% of households are three times less likely to complete secondary school, and two times less likely to be exposed to early childhood development programmes. Patton (2000) states that in situations where children do not have adequate nutrition, access to healthcare and exposure to stimulating educational opportunities, it is very difficult for them to learn well at school. The study conducted by the South African Human Rights Commission and Unicef (2011) also reported that 27% of high school learners feel unsafe at school and 16% have been threatened with a weapon. In addition, gender-based violence remains widespread and female learners are 3.5% more likely to be infected by HIV than male learners (the South African Human Rights Commission and Unicef, 2011). These findings are consistent with other research conducted on violence in schools (Bester & du Plessis, 2010; Burton & Leoschut, 2012; Jacobs, 2012; Mncube & Harber, 2013). From the above mentioned issues, it is evident that South African learners face the complex challenge of living in an increasingly demanding and rapidly changing world, where they have to make informed decisions particularly about their health and well-being, lifestyles, relationships and careers (Rooth, 2005).

Internal barriers to learning are considered to arise from the individual learner where as external barriers to learning may arise from the environment and/or broader social context of the individual. The notion of 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulties' (SEBD) or 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' (EBD) in learners is a difficult concept to define, as what is considered socially accepted behaviour in one situation may not be so in another, and is dependent and influenced by multiple factors such as family, culture, religion and context (UNESCO, 2009). In addition to the debate around the clarity of which behaviours constitute EBD, it is also unclear where the line ends between EBD and 'behavioural problems' related to the more general issue of discipline strategies. Furthermore, although there is a general distinction between learners with behavioural difficulties, due to an underlying mental health problem and thus requiring psychiatric intervention, and those with EBD, the line between these two is also unclear and considered a grey area (Evans, Harden, Thomas, & Benefield, 2003). While there is much debate around the concept and definition of EBD, what is clear is that there are learners that have significant emotional and behavioural difficulties that vastly affect many areas of their lives, including that of the school context and their ability to learn (UNESCO, 2009). Furthermore, Potgieter-Groot, et al. (2012) stress that EBD is especially a concern among learners in South Africa, due to the high number of learners with EBD and the effects this has on both the learning and teaching process in schools.

The notion of SEBD essentially encompasses three distinct aspects of functioning: learners with *social difficulties* typically struggle in their interactions with peers and adults; learners with *emotional difficulties* struggle to experience or express their feelings (most often feelings related to fear, sadness and loneliness), and learners with *behavioural difficulties* often struggle to control their own behaviour; in which their behaviour is often impulsive, unpredictable and aggressive (UNESCO, 2009). While separate definitions can be provided for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, they are often linked under the same 'umbrella' and occur concurrently with one another. A focus will be given to learners with EBD, with emotional and behavioural difficulties considered together as the difficulties in behaviour that learners may exhibit typically arise as a result of the socio-emotional difficulties they experience.

Learners with emotional and/or behavioural problems typically behave in a way that is considered unusual, age-inappropriate or socially unacceptable, as well as often struggling to form and maintain positive and meaningful relationships (Evans et al., 2003). Learners with EBD may respond in extreme ways to certain social, emotional, personal or physical circumstances, and they may often have an underlying low self-image, accompanied by feelings of anxiety or depression (UNESCO, 2009). Learners with EBD are also often characterised in their show of defiance, vindictiveness or resentment; they may threaten, swear and interrupt or alternatively be very silent, act clingy or refuse any contact. Furthermore, these learners are often known to be frequently absent from school or even if at school, may fail to attend their classes; may fail to abide by rules and be disruptive, destructive, violent and aggressive (UNESCO, 2009); may challenge authority or act out in attention-seeking behaviour (Potgieter-Groot et al., 2012). Learners with EBD may also be restless and unable to concentrate; may show disorganised schoolwork; as well as often being unable or unwilling to follow instructions or to complete tasks; or unable or unwilling to work without direct supervision (UNESCO, 2009). Learners with EBD are often categorized in terms of internalizing behaviour (difficulties with internal feelings such as anger, sadness and/or anxiety) or externalizing behaviours (such as aggression and oppositional behaviours). Although most learners with EBD typically fall into one of these categories, it is possible for a learner to exhibit characteristics of both internalising and externalising behaviours (Davis et al., 2011).

The behaviour of learners with EBD often interferes in their learning process and as a result these learners can often be seen to have learning difficulties and fall behind in their classwork (Davis et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2003). This was demonstrated in a study conducted by Akpan, Ojinnaka and Ekanem (2010) where learners with behavioural problems were found to achieve significantly lower on their academic performance than that of their peers without behavioural problems. Furthermore, not only do learners with EBD hamper their own learning process, they often also tend to interfere with their peers learning process due to their disruptive behaviour (Evans et al., 2003), and their tendencies to act aggressively towards or provoke their peers (Davis et al., 2011). Thus it is argued that thought should be given to whether the inclusion of children with emotional and behavioural barriers is not in fact detrimental to all parties involved, as the quality of education for both learners with and learners without EBD is

questionable. However at the same time, it is also argued that learners with EBD have a right to be a part of a mainstream education, and that what is needed is an understanding by educators of how to address the needs of these learners (Potgieter-Groot et al., 2012).

It is clear that emotional and behavioural problems can significantly impact on a learner's functioning and development, however, it is essential to consider other factors that may impact on a learner, especially in the South African context. There is much debate around whether EBD can be considered as an 'intrinsic' barrier to learning, arising from within the individual, or whether EBD can in fact be attributed to external factors such as the social and political context of which the individual is a part (Evan et. al., 2003). Thus there is a need to "acknowledge the complex relationship between the societal, family and school environments and the part that each of these contexts plays in creating and ameliorating children's emotional and behavioural problems" (Evans et al., 2003, p. 11).

The challenges listed above are heightened by the current state of education in South Africa. Some of these challenges include high levels of educators' stress and burnout; a lack of resources in schools and youth with interpersonal, family and intrapersonal problems. Thus in trying to understand and address learners with emotional and behavioural barriers to learning it is essential to be aware of the socio-political and environmental context in which they live. A learner's school environment is often where a learner spends the majority of their time, therefore, it is understandable that "an inadequate school environment contributes to the development and/or exacerbation of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; conversely a healthy one may help to reduce and/or prevent such difficulties" (Smeets, 2009, p. 51). Despite the impact of societal change and related societal problems on the youth of post apartheid South Africa, and amidst severe problems such as poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and violent crime, research conducted by Steyn, Badenhorst and Kamper (2010) indicates that a general spirit of optimism and independence exists, paired with a strong desire to escape the trappings of poverty and to fulfill their career and social expectations. An empirical investigation into the views of 1, 326 adolescents from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds indicated that not societal factors, but ironically the ailing education system, is blocking the future ideals of thousands of South African adolescents (Steyn et al., 2010).

Concerns have been raised over the state of many schools in South Africa as well as the overall state of education in South Africa. Coupled with these concerns are worries over the increased prevalence of learners with socio-emotional problems and educators' high stress levels. Educators appear to feel that they are untrained and unequipped to deal with these barriers to learning and as a result feel overwhelmed (Potgieter-Groot et al., 2012). However, despite these concerns schools are an important point of entry to address and assist learners with barriers to learning.

2.3.4. Schools as a point of entry

In 2011, South Africa had roughly 25 851 schools that served 12 283 875 learners (Department of Basic Education, 2011). As such South African schools have an ever increasing role to play in tackling the social issues present in the lives of vulnerable children (Williams, 2010). Schools have unparalleled access to children and are therefore natural places to reach vulnerable children. In addition, children cannot do well academically while social issues such as hunger, abuse, abandonment or neglect press more heavily (Williams, 2010).

A school as a point of intervention has been considered essential in addressing the needs of children and youth within a community framework. Research conducted by Hallas (2011) states that the mental health of the youth is a growing concern in England. The research stipulated that learners in secondary schools in Barnsley, England, wanted more support and to be able to talk about their problems. Importantly they wanted the support and assistance to be provided at the school level. The research called for students who have behavioural, emotional or social problems to be able to have easily accessible access to support within the school environment. Hallas (2011) states that services based at a school level can increase students' likelihood of accessing health care when they become adults. The research also states that youth who are emotionally or mentally healthier achieve greater success at school (Hallas, 2011; Kendal, 2011). Kendal (2011) states that using schools to promote young people's emotional well-being makes perfect sense from a health perspective as emotional well-being is the building block of mental health of learners.

However, it is estimated that 80 percent of secondary schools in South Africa are deemed to be struggling and that these schools are essentially dysfunctional (De Clercq, 2007). As a result of the large number of struggling schools in South Africa; schools that are ultimately deemed to be dysfunctional, there has been a decrease in the number of functioning high schools over the years. The total number of government schools in South Africa decreased by 9% between 2000-2011, but the total number of private or independent schools increased. In total there are 1910 fewer government schools than there were in 2000. Furthermore, the total number of learners attending independent schools increased by 50% whereas the number of learners attending government schools only increased by 1.6% (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2012).

Although there are a number of urban 'resourced' schools whose school governing bodies can afford to employ professionals, such as educational psychologists, to assist with the provision of socio-emotional support to high school learners, De Clercq (2007) reported that almost all non-urban schools in South Africa report poor education support systems and a lack of on-site professional assistance. The lack of school support is considered a serious challenge (De Clercq, 2007). Therefore, it is incomprehensible for the South African education system to provide specialised support services at every school in South Africa. As there is a shortage of specialised support, and there is no way of accommodating all the learners with 'barriers to learning', focus has been placed on the upskilling of educators. In addition, the creation of the SBST placed schools in charge of identifying and helping vulnerable learners. Furthermore, the role of the educational psychologist has historically involved working with individual children identified as having special educational needs; however, it has been recognised that the contribution of psychological theory and practice can be effective if applied more widely (Atkinson, Regan, & Williams, 2006).

In 1995 the World Health Organisation developed the health promoting schools framework (HPS) (Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012). This framework recognised the relationship between a child's health and wellbeing, and the quality of the social environment. Additionally, this framework emphasises the importance of multilevel and integrated community health

programmes in schools (Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012). Based upon this framework, The National Policy Guidelines for Youth and Adolescent Health (Department of Health, 2001) specify that each of the five general intervention strategies outlined by the World Health Organisation can be applied to the school setting. These include firstly, providing a safe and supportive environment. Secondly, providing sport and recreation facilities and information to assist young people and significant adults to recognise mental health problems and obtain the necessary assistance. Thirdly, building skills such as study skills, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills and self-awareness and self-esteem through for example, the Life Orientation programmes. Fourthly, increasing access to counselling services, within the school context and ensuring access to health services. Lastly, ensuring appropriate referral pathways to health systems (Department of Health, 2001).

The National Commission of Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET), the National Committee on Educational Support and Services (NCESS) (Department of Education, 1997a), and Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), recommend a community-based approach as a strategy of support for developing an inclusive education system, with the school being at the forefront of this support structure. The school has been identified as a particularly important setting for the provision of mental health promotion interventions for youth as it has the potential to reach many young people in a cost-effective manner (Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012). Such a system of support might draw on the following human resources depending on the context of the school: educators; learners; parents; community members; school counselors or psychologists; community organisations; Department of Education personnel; school governing body and NGOs (Muthukrishna, 2001). The focus is not only on learners but all other aspects of the school system that have to address the diverse needs of learners. Within this approach, the major focus would be to prevent problems and to develop an enabling environment for all learners (Muthukrishna, 2001).

Below is a brief overview of the most current and researched caring schools models in place in South Africa (Williams, 2010). While the models are similar in their goals and desired outcomes, each approaches the provision of care in schools from varying perspectives, and with a range of different interventions and resources.

The child-friendly schools framework emphasises collaborations and linkages to civil society organisations, as well as educator training to provide skills to facilitate this expanded role. In South Africa, the CFS framework targets the 585 lowest performing schools in the country. Through UNICEF, these schools are connected to the resources needed to implement the framework (UNICEF, 2008). The Soul City Schools as Nodes of Caring (SNOC) model is a multi-year initiative joining the efforts of the National Association of School Governing Bodies, the South African Democratic Teachers Union, South African Non-Governmental Organisation's Coalition and the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (Soul City: IHDC, 2006). The SNOC initiative focuses on "building the capacity of school governing bodies (SGBs) to provide leadership in creating a caring and supportive learning environment for learners rendered vulnerable by HIV and AIDS" (Bialobrzeska, 2007:18). The Media in Education Trust (MiET) model targets a broad range of issues within schools, including HIV/AIDS, health and nutrition. This model is based on the hope that "by expanding the roles and functions of the principal, teachers, learners and parents, the impact of HIV and AIDS can be mitigated" (Bialobrzeska, 2007:22). The strength of this programme is the cluster system, in which several schools band together and work with community service providers to meet the needs of vulnerable children. The "Integrated Service Delivery Teams" that support the clusters consist of "health-care workers, a learning support worker, a community development worker and a councillor" (UNESCO, 2008:23). Additionally, the schools establish care teams of parents and educators (Bialobrzeska, 2007). The Circles of Support (COS) programme is a multi-sectoral, multi-country plan for schools. In South Africa, Health and Development Africa (HDA) worked in the Eastern Cape with the provincial department of education to implement the programme in 100 schools. The COS model created clusters of schools that implemented Health Advisory Committees to work with the SGB on bringing health related interventions into the school, and utilised school-based caregivers to make referrals and link children to services (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008).

The Department of Education's pilot project called the *Resource and Training Programme for Educator Development: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* was funded by Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA). The project was piloted in the North West, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape provinces. The three provinces

chosen for participation were characterised by high levels of poverty and poor socio-economic infrastructure. The overall objective was to support the implementation of the government's policy on the development of an inclusive education system that would be of benefit to all learners experiencing barriers to learning and participation. The project emphasized educator capacity-building through the development of training and resource programmes that would enable existing educators to meet the full range of diverse needs in the learner population (Education Policy Unit, 2002).

The recommendations presented by the findings of this project are reinforced by many of the guidelines stipulated in Education White Paper 6 and in most cases these recommendations arise from successful practice. Of significance was the recommendation for the sustainability of the pilot projects. In addition, the need to identify and pursue strategies to facilitate 'top-down' support (through commitment to and enforcement of White Paper 6) was recommended. This recommendation included the creative use of existing resources and the injection of extra resources for a few years. Of further significance was the recommendation that in every province and district, dedicated posts be allocated to inclusive education – to ensure that there are people with understanding of and passion for the challenges of inclusive education, and to push for and provide direction for the integration of this policy (Education Policy Unit, 2002).

Of particular relevance to the current research were the recommendations that related to the support needed in the schools and at district level to help schools to address barriers to learning in their local contexts. The final report provided to the Department in 2003 stipulated that provincial capacity building plans must be developed to ensure that core education support providers in the districts are prepared for their roles and responsibilities relating to working in integrated teams to support schools. In addition, special schools/resource centres must be targeted for capacity building to assist them to re-orientate towards their new roles as resource centers. A commitment to pursuing this strategy needs to be developed at all levels, and this commitment needs to be supported by the necessary human and financial resources. Additionally, universities responsible for pre-service training of the various education support personnel must be made aware of the implications of Education White Paper 6 policy for the role of the professionals concerned, so that they are appropriately prepared. This report stated that

there is clear evidence that existing professional roles need to be examined, challenged, and transformed, if members of the intersectional support teams are to fulfill their roles with confidence and success. Furthermore, provinces must develop a formal strategy for establishing and developing the District Based Support Teams (DBSTs) in their region. The report stipulated that the successful implementation of inclusive education in schools is dependent on the extent to which they can access the support they need (particularly for their own capacity building) to address barriers to learning in their own contexts. The role of helping schools and other education institutions to develop SBSTs is clearly identified and prioritised in Education White Paper 6. The findings from the pilot project highlight the importance of doing this in a well-planned and sustained way, within the context of overall institutional development.

Thus in addressing the needs of the community, interventions targeted towards children and youth within the school context are especially important, as it is within this context that children and youth spend the majority of their time, and it is also the developmental period that they are most vulnerable to risk factors, and most susceptible to intervention programmes (Muthukrishna, 2001). However some argue that by focusing on the socio-emotional needs of learners one must not lose sight of the historical and core role of the school as an institution of teaching and learning. Thus educators should arguably focus more on teaching than serving as ad hoc social workers (Blank and Berg, 2006). Where social services in schools do arise in academic literature, it is often in relation to the backlash and controversy surrounding the expanded roles of schools. Robert Heslep noted that in the United States from the 19th to the mid-20th century, education focused heavily on "academic subjects, citizenship, and culture" (Heslep, 1995). This was followed first by an increase in non-academic instruction, which was then preceded by outright social service programming. Epstein (2004) suggested that while policymakers focus heavily on academic indicators, the general population's concern with the societal problems that are particularly relevant to schools (teenage pregnancy, violence, HIV/AIDS) has pushed the social role of schools to the forefront. Others have posed more divergent views, disagreeing with mainstream practitioners on the basic premise that schools are able to affect social problems. Rothstein (2002) argued that schools cannot be the "primary instrument of economic and social reform" that reformers would like to believe.

Ultimately the goal for educators, schools and other education institutions, and for those who support them, is the development of learners. To ensure the implementation of inclusive education in schools in South Africa, Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) suggest that urgent interventions are needed at all levels of the education system. The development of learners is dependent on effective teaching, which, in turn, relies on the development of effective curricular and supportive teaching and learning environments. Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) state that flexible curricula should be developed to ensure that learners' diverse abilities are catered for, and should not be prescriptive, but rather provide a broad framework for educators within which they are allowed to adapt the main curriculum to the specific needs of learners. Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) stipulate that all current education policies should be integrated and aligned with Education White paper 6 to eradicate any confusion and the perception that inclusive education is an alternative form of education. In addition, in order for educators and their institutions to achieve inclusive education they must have ongoing support (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013). The literature review will now focus its attention on the structure of ongoing support as outlined in Education White Paper 6.

2.4. Government Policy Development: The Provision of Support for Learner Well-being

In South Africa, efforts to create linked and inter-sectoral support structures (indicative of both ecosystemic theory and collaborative consultancy) for learners have been underway since the mid-1990s (Williams, 2010). In 1997, the NCSNET and the NCESS found that specialised support, such as that provided by the school psychologists, social-workers, remedial educators, therapists and medical personnel was still only provided to a small percentage of learners. Furthermore there was a shortage of specialised support at school level (Department of Education, 1997a). As there was a shortage of specialised support and there was no way of accommodating all the learners with 'barriers to learning' focus was placed on the upskilling of educators. However, some members argued that there was still a need for specialised support at the school level and as such the committee made a strong argument for the retention of specialised services, such as school psychologists, within the education system, but conceptualised their support more broadly by transforming the role of existing specialised support staff (Daniels, 2010). However, by the time the commission presented its

recommendations for the envisaged changed role of existing support staff, many specialised support posts had been lost across the country (Daniels, 2010).

Another one of the early government policies concerning service provision in schools was the Tirisano Plan (Tirisano meaning "working together"), which was delivered in 1999 by the Minister of Education at the time, Kader Asmal. The third priority of the Tirisano plan instructed schools to "become centres of community life" (Williams, 2010). Implementation of the plan experienced setbacks due to national and provincial departments' lack of access to the expertise of such people as planners, demographers, economists, sociologists, anthropologists and care workers (Hoadley, 2008). Thus, as can be seen by critics of both these documents, lack of resources provided by specialised personal has been noted as a significant barrier to improving the social functioning of schools and has presented a challenge for the implementation of these documents (Sayed & Motala, 2009). Furthermore, South Africa lacked the social service professionals needed to implement the plan set out by the Children's Bill of 2002 which called for the minister of social development to create a national framework that would bind all government bodies (as well as all organisations working with governmental assistance) to an inter-sectoral plan of action for child protection and welfare (Matthias, 2005). Particular emphasis was placed on improving services aimed at prevention and early detection. As there was a shortage of social service professionals the plan relied instead on child and youth-care workers, community development workers, primary health-care workers and educators (Matthias, 2005).

Following on from the Tirisano Plan, and the lack of specialised personal, the *Norms and Standards for Educators* document was released. This document sought to address the role of educators in caring for vulnerable children and as such it specifically placed social care in the hands of educators, which includes principals, education department managers and officials (Department of Education, 2000). Placing the social care of learners in the hands of educators resulted in many arguing that this created additional work and stress for educators who were already feeling overwhelmed and overworked. In addition, some argued that the Norms and Standards can be construed as asking educators to serve children in roles that are ideally suited to

social workers, educational psychologists and other specialists and for which they are not ideally trained (Morrow, 2007).

The NCSNET/NCESS report of 1997, discussed above, then formed the conceptual framework for Education White Paper 6 which was published in 2001. The timeline for the full implementation of Education White Paper 6 is 20 years. This policy document provides a full statement on special needs education, which had been missing from the original Tirisano plan. Education White Paper 6 brought services for vulnerable children into focus by listing psychosocial disturbances and socioeconomic deprivation amongst its catalogue of "different learning needs" (Hoadley, 2008, 138). The South African Department of Education is working with multiple non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to transform schools into "caring schools" that emphasise: health promotion, safety, care for orphans and vulnerable children, quality education, community engagement and respect for rights and equality. Education White Paper 6 became a crucial document for advocates of the 'caring schools movement' because it mandated the creation of a School-Based Support Team (SBST) for every school. The creation of the SBST placed schools in charge of identifying and helping vulnerable learners in a way that they had previously not been tasked to do. Leading on from Education White Paper 6 a new document for assessment was released which is called the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SAIS) document.

The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) document moves away from a focus on assessing the intrinsic barriers of the learner, and enables a thorough investigation of contextual factors which impact on teaching and learning (Department of Education, 2005). The SIAS document guides inclusive education policy by defining the process of identification, assessment, and enrolment of learners in special schools, and it curbs the unnecessary placement of learners in special schools (Department of Education 2008). The SIAS strategy provides guidelines on early identification and support, the determination of nature and level of support required by learners, and identification of the best learning sites for support. The strategy also provides guidelines on the central role of parents and teachers in implementing the strategy

The influence of eco-systemic and collaborative consultancy theory within South African education policy can be seen. In addition, South African education policy also indicates a shift in policy towards the international trend of inclusive education.

2.5. Inclusive Education

There has been a growing movement all over the world towards a philosophy of inclusion of all individuals no matter how diverse, based on the principles of human rights. Specifically, there has been a growing movement towards the inclusion of children with 'barriers to learning' into mainstream schools (Ali, Mustapha, & Jelas, 2006, Lindsay, 2007). There was a recognition that a breakdown in learning may occur not only from an individual's intrinsic factors, but also from external factors such as "the curriculum, the centre of learning, the system of education, and the broader social context" (Department of Education, 1997a, p.2).

Inclusive education is therefore conceptualized as the concept used to describe educational policies and practices that defend the right of learners with barriers to learning, to belong and learn in mainstream education (Green, 2001). Key policy documents and legislation such as the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995a), White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Department of Education, 1997b), Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) and the South African Schools Act (Department of Education, 1996) have articulated the new goals of equity, redress, quality, efficiency and the right of all learners to equal access to the widest possible educational opportunities. Inclusive Education thus shifts the focus from learners having to adjust to the demands of the system, to the system being capable of accommodating the diverse needs of all learners as inclusively as possible (Swart & Pettipher, 2001).

In developed countries, those who experience barriers to learning (most commonly intrinsic barriers) are considered to comprise the minority of learners. However in developing countries like South Africa, where extreme social and educational inequalities exist, those experiencing barriers to learning (most commonly external barriers) are considered to comprise the majority of learners (Donald et al., 2010). Inclusive Education appears to be the strategy most

likely to achieve a democratic and just society whereby the celebration and recognition of diversity is reflected in the attitudes of its citizens and in the nature of its institutions (Engelbrecht, 1999; Green, 2001; Hay, Smit, & Paulsen, 2001). However, research (Carrim & Soudien, 1999; Goduka, 1998; Pillay, 2004; Meier, 2005; Vally & Dalamba, 1999) suggests that most attempts at providing equitable, quality education for learners with diverse backgrounds, interests and abilities are not succeeding. Including learners with barriers to learning into mainstream schooling might change the attitudes of citizens towards those with barriers to learning but will these learners and others receive adequate education? Are South African schools equipped to handle learners with barriers to learning? If South African schools are not equipped then although those with barriers to learning have gained the right to belong in mainstream schools, perhaps they have lost the right to *quality* education? Thus it is debatable whether mainstream education in South Africa can currently sustain such a policy in a way that is truly in the best interests of all learners (Green, 2001).

The Salamanca "Framework for Action" (UNESCO, 1994), states that inclusive schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their learners, accommodating all learners, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. However they also state that the government should offer a continuum of support services to support the development of inclusive schools (UNESCO, 1994). This is further reiterated by Hay et al., (2001) who suggest that in order for inclusive education to be effective, professionals need to equip educators with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to meet the needs of a diversity of learners within their classrooms. Walton (2007) also stresses that the approach taken to implement inclusive education relies heavily on the empowering and training of educators, SBST and DBST. In addition, Amod (2003) states that for the successful implementation of the new educational policies it is necessary that there is capacity-building in the DBST as well as the development of system-wide structures, resources, and support from, the National Education Department to the provincial, district and school levels. However, it is debatable whether government successively provides schools with this support and Malcom (2000) cautions against a system that offers so little guidance in terms of the specific practicalities involved when implementing Inclusive Education. Both the South African Schools Act (Department of Education, 1996) and Curriculum 2005 (Department of National Education, 1997a) signaled a change in direction, but

neither prescribed with sufficient clarity how an inclusive integrated education system that caters for the rights of all learners was to be implemented (Green, 2001). In addition, Kruss (2000) points out that policy changes are reinterpreted at every level of the system, so what happens in the classroom may bear little resemblance to what policy makers had in mind.

In terms of government policy with regard to education, South Africa is one of the most sophisticated countries in the world. However, challenges emerge when policy is implemented (Venter, 2012). Turning policy into grass-roots level implementation requires employing the right people in the right positions and it would appear that there is a shortage of specialised support specialists to assist in this process. Forlin (2007) contends that continuing to support an intervention must be based on empirical evidence and he suggests that input from the stakeholders involved as well as research into the implementation of policy should be conducted in order to determine best practice. South Africa has joined the growing inclusive education movement somewhat after other international countries (Walton, 2007). Thus, it could be argued that the international experience of inclusive education could inform local practise however, some (Walton, 2007) caution that South Africa has a unique historical, socio-economic and educational context which must be acknowledged.

2.6. Structures of Support to Promote Learner Well-being

The Education White Paper 6 (2001) recommended a three-tier level of support services, which compliments an ecosystemic perspective, as discussed in section 2.2.1, because it incorporates the different levels of the education system. The three levels of the education system are namely: the institutional level (referred to in this study as the SBST); the District-Based Support Team and intersectoral collaboration between the different Government Departments. These levels as well as the functions of the various levels of the education system in South Africa are outlined in further detail in Table 1.

Table 1 Levels and functions of the education system

Level	**Key Support Functions**
Department of Education	Providing national policy and a broad management framework for support.
Provincial departments of education in the nine provinces	Coordinating the implementation of the national framework of support, in relation to provincial needs.
District-based support teams (including special/resource schools)	Providing integrated support to education institutions to support the development of effective teaching and learning.
Institution-level support teams	Identifying and addressing barriers to learning in the local context thereby promoting effective teaching and learning.

Source: "Education White Paper 6", (Department of Education, 2001).

For the purposes of this study the literature review will focus on those structures of support at the school and district levels.

2.6.1. School based support teams (SBST)

According to Education White Paper 6 (Department of education, 2001), the core function of the SBST is to support all learners and educators by identifying support needed and designing intervention strategies to address the challenges faced by the educators. A school-based support team supports educators through problem-solving groups which function to assist learners indirectly through educator collaboration. Educators are able to exchange ideas and work through problems collaboratively (Creese, Norwich & Daniels, 2000). According to Hanko (1995), the aim of the SBST is to engage in structured and joint-problem solving; to initiate early intervention and therefore to prevent inappropriate referrals to outside agencies and to enhance educators' interprofessional skills needed to collaborate with colleagues. Through sharing, and thus maximising their expertise, it is thought that educators can contribute to each other and their own effectiveness. In addition, through mutual support educators can enhance their recognition and understanding of the needs that underlie emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties and develop the skills required during an ordinary teaching day (Hanko, 1995). Lastly, Bandy and

Boyer (1997) suggest that with the help of a SBST, the needs of educators for programmes such as in-service training and skill development can be filled.

Muthukrishna (2001) states that the effective functioning of the SBST is largely determined by the school's acceptance of the idea of different professionals working together. In addition, the inclusion of experts from local and district communities might strengthen the SBST's functionality. Furthermore all resources available in both school and communities must be considered as this may increase the capacity of the school to assist all learners to participate and develop successfully. Thus, for the SBST to be most effective it is essential for the SBST to pool limited available resources and make use of them (Muthukrishna, 2001). Bandy and Boyer (1997) further suggest that for the SBST to function successfully there should be trust among partners and each should feel free to ask for help and share new ideas.

A research study conducted by Daniels and Norwich (1997) on the effectiveness of the SBST as a special educational needs support strategy in primary schools in South Africa found that twenty percent of educators noted an increase in educator confidence and happiness, while all learners who had been referred to the SBST showed improvement. The majority of participants (70%) had used strategies suggested by the SBST even with learners who did not have special needs. Non-referring educators reported that they did not consult the SBST because they felt that they already received adequate support from colleagues. However, a study conducted by Williams (2010) found that SBSTs struggle to pull together a cogent response to the overwhelming number of needy children, and educators find themselves trying to fashion ad-hoc solutions to the problems presented by their learners (Williams, 2010). Research conducted by Mphahlele (2005) found that there was little or no collaboration between the educators in her study and the SBST. In addition, the SBST lacked knowledge and skill regarding the identification of learning difficulties and designing interventions for educators to support learners in their classrooms. Thabana (2004) found that there is a need to provide specialised training to members of the SBST. In addition, the educators and members of the SBST indicated that they needed support from social workers and psychologists at the district level. As stipulated in section 2.4.3, the Department of Education/DANIDA pilot project (Education Policy Unit, 2002) recommended that training, ongoing support and monitoring is necessary at all levels of

the education system, including the school level and district level, as outlined in Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001).

2.6.2. District based support teams (DBST)

The Department of Education's function is to provide the necessary infra-structural and human resource support for success. The district-based support team is a primary channel through which this should be provided (Department of Education, 1995 b). As cited by Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), the primary focus of District Support Teams is to provide the necessary support to schools and other learning sites. The aim of the DBST is to support all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met. The DBST plays a vital role in building the capacity of the SBST and the school as a whole in order to face the challenges relating to individual barriers to learning. The following are the key roles of the DBST as stipulated by Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001): Developing a holistic, community-based approach to support services, building the capacity of school-based support teams, facilitating the assessment of system needs and learners needs, assisting the school to access community support, facilitating intersectoral service co-ordination and collaboration, and building capacity and awareness of governing bodies around issues of barriers to learning and development.

Daniels (2010) on the other hand states that most of the short- and medium-term goals from 2001-2008 outlined by Education White Paper 6 were achieved. Some of these goals were to build capacity in all education departments to address barriers to learning, revising all policies, legislation and structures to facilitate the transformation to an inclusive education system and developing DBST and SBST (Department of Education, 2001). In addition, 30 nodal districts most in need of redress were to be identified to field-test the recommendations in Education White Paper 6. In these districts special schools were chosen to become model resource centres, and mainstream schools were chosen to become model inclusive schools. The roles of the DBST in these districts, including school psychologists were to be transformed in line with the changed roles envisaged in Education White Paper 6. This meant that school psychologists who were accustomed to the model of service delivery that focused mainly on a child-deficit model of

assessment of individual learners for diagnosis and placement in special classes and special schools had to undergo a major re-orientation (Daniels, 2010).

The DBST aims to assist educators by holding in-service training for them on how to deal with the difficulties they encounter in the classroom. In addition, it aims to allow professionals and community volunteers, to give their input with regards to the learners. Furthermore the DBST should support the involvement of the parents of the learners with special educational needs. The collaboration of all agencies can ensure successful learning because each expert brings new ideas and skills. The DBST should be multi-disciplinary in its composition with the main aim of bringing all the available resources in the community to the school (Department of Education, 1995 b). The educator's relationships with other professionals could result in positive outcomes. This can only be achieved if the educators accept that they cannot solve all the difficulties they encounter in the classroom on their own. The educators should rather refer to their colleagues who constitute the School Based Support Teams and who would then analyse the problem or refer to the DBST if the problem is beyond their reach (Department of Education, 2001).

However, some argue that even if support is available, it is often fragmented and uncoordinated and that to unite it into cohesive practice which works is the challenge (Education Policy Unit, 2002). Often different support providers do not work as a team around common issues. One example of this would be the way in which human resource development or training is being provided at the moment. These training programmes are often not developed in an integrated way, so that educators and others, who are targets of these programmes, are overwhelmed and over-loaded (having to attend many workshops) (Amod, 2003). But the main problem is that the training does not provide them with an understanding of how the different areas of training connect around the core purpose of education: teaching and learning (Amod, 2003). Furthermore, educational psychologists are seen to be a part of the district based level of support and are not seen to be positioned at the school level. While there is a severe shortage of educational psychologists and psychological resources and thus an educational psychologist could not be positioned per school in South Africa, this doesn't mean to say that they should be excluded completely at the school level. For example an educational psychologist could be

positioned at a number of schools and serve a few different schools in one area. In addition, schools with educational psychologists employed by the SGB could team up with schools in their area who do not have educational psychologists positioned at their school and this resource could be shared amongst or between schools.

Additionally, there is limited research on the establishment of DBST and SBST within South Africa. Thus, there is limited current research on whether or not these structures of support are being effectively implemented and whether or not they are successfully fulfilling their role as stipulated in Education White Paper 6. Forlin (2007) suggests that input from the stakeholders involved as well as research into the implementation of policy should be conducted in order to determine best practice. Forlin (2007) also contends that continuing to support an intervention must be based on empirical evidence. However, there appears to be limited recent research into the implementation of inclusive education policy, which provides input from the stakeholders involved. Moreover, given the important function of DBSTs in ensuring that schools are prepared and guided towards the effective implementation of inclusive education, the structuring, staffing and capacitating thereof should be a high priority (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013).

2.6.3. Changing roles for principals and educators

Much concern has been raised about the apparent increase in the number of learners with emotional and behavioural barriers to learning in schools, in South Africa. Educators appear to be grappling at trying to find effective strategies to support these learners as well as to try minimize adverse effects on the rest of the learners in the class (Akpan, Ojinnaka, & Ekanem, 2010; Evan et al., 2003). Research conducted into educator preparedness for inclusive education in South Africa and educators' perspectives concerning inclusive education (Magare, Kitching, & Roos, 2010; Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009) suggest that the shift towards inclusive education appears to have placed a strain on educators in mainstream schools because these educators were only ever trained for mainstream education and were not trained to teach learners with barriers to learning. Studies conducted by Potgieter-Groot et al. (2012), as well as Dalton, Mckenzie and Khonde (2012) reveal that many educators do not feel efficiently trained or equipped to deal with the numerous barriers to learning that may present in a classroom. Additionally, mainstream

schools have not been designed for diversity or for responding to the needs and strengths of its individual learners, and therefore the task of ensuring inclusive education is a challenge for mainstream schools (Vlachou, 2004).

Achieving an inclusive learning environment, which addresses emotional and behavioural barriers to learning, is dependent on establishing an inclusive school climate and culture (Swart & Pettipher, 2001). This requires more than merely changing an educator's classroom practices, and extends to include the context of the whole school (Swart & Pettipher, 2001); providing a comprehensive and ongoing whole-school development approach, which actively involves all role players and all systems of the school as a learning organization (Vandeyar, 2010). Although individuals or groups within a school may be able to act as agents of change (Vandeyar, 2010) their ability to bring about major shifts will be limited by the existing culture of the school (Swart & Pettipher, 2001). Thus, these core principles and strategies need to be embedded in a shared vision (individual, school and community) (Vandeyar, 2010).

Educators play a vital role in developing an inclusive learning environment as they are in direct relationship with the learners on a daily basis (Swart & Pettipher, 2001; Vadeyar, 2010). However, collaboration is essential to respond effectively to diversity and manage change and is seen as the determining factor by which inclusion will either succeed or fail. Collaboration is a new experience for educators who are used to working in an isolated manner. Thus educators need to learn to work collaboratively and with flexibility; being able to adjust curriculum, instruction and assessments to be more effective (Swart & Pettipher, 2001). Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) state that assessment policies should be developed to allow learners to be assessed according to their needs and abilities. Currently all learners are subjected to uniform assessment standards and modes of assessment to the detriment of learners who experience barriers to learning. Educators need to share resources, provide support to one another and create a climate of trust (Vadeyar, 2010). In addition, educator perceptions of learner diversity do influence classroom teaching and educators need to think about and verbalise the assumptions they make about learners, differences and learning as these are translated into actions and teaching practices and inform their decision-making (Meier, 2005; Vandeyar, 2010). Furthermore, they must possess the knowledge and skills related to the strengths and barriers

each and every learner in their classroom experiences (Swart & Pettipher, 2001). Geldenhuys & Wevers (2013) suggest that all educators should receive in-service training regarding the management of inclusive classrooms through well-structured training and staff development programmes. In order for all educators to fulfill their essential role as stipulated in Education White Paper 6, they need to improve their skills and knowledge. Therefore, staff development at the school and district level is critical (Department of Education, 2001).

It is clear that educators need support. Principals have been cited as the single most influential individual in creating inclusive school culture and climate (Swart & Pettipher, 2001). Thus the principal needs to be a dynamic leader that can offer both effective management and leadership with a commitment to the following goals: shared leadership, participation, diversity, conflict resolution and reflection. In addition to the principal, it is the function of the school-based support team together with educational psychologists within the school system to provide educators with support (Swart & Pettipher, 2001).

2.6.4. Life Orientation (LO)

With a shortage of psychological resources and an increasing number of learners with socio-emotional challenges, LO has the potential to be used as an additional strategy of support. LO could potentially be added to the support offered by the SBST, DBST and educational psychologist if one is available. Trained high school LO educators have studied a minimum of two years of Psychology at a university level. Therefore, their psychological knowledge could be used to add support to the SBST, DBST and educational psychologist(s). In addition, as LO is a compulsory subject every school in South Africa employs LO educators and there are a number of these educators at the school level. Therefore the optimum use of these educators in assisting the SBST, DBST and educational psychologist(s) needs to be examined. The literature review will provide more insight into the LO curriculum in order to examine the possibility of LO adding support to the SBST, DBST and educational psychologist(s).

To improve its implementation, the National Curriculum Statement was amended. The revised curriculum, known as CAPS, was implemented in January 2011 (Department of Basic Education, 2010). Some of the core changes made to the previous Life Orientation curriculum

are that the physical education component is now allocated more time in the timetable; learning outcomes have been replaced by six topics, which function interdependently, and are considered to be of equal importance and a national Life Orientation (LO) examination for all grade 12 learners was introduced (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

LO is comprised of six topics which aim to address the most prevalent needs of the youth, as discussed in 2.4.2. These six topics have replaced the four learning areas (personal well-being, citizenship education, recreation and physical activity and careers and career choices) previously prescribed by the National Curriculum and Assessment policy (Department of Basic Education, 2010; Prinsloo, 2007). The six topics are as follows: development of the self in society, social and environmental responsibility, democracy and human rights, career and career choices, study skills and physical education (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

LO has the following aims: to guide and prepare learners to respond appropriately to life's responsibilities and opportunities; equip learners to interact optimally on a personal, psychological, cognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural and socio-economic level; to guide learners to make informed and responsible decisions about their own health and well-being and the health and well-being of others; to expose learners to their constitutional rights and responsibilities, to the rights of others and to issues of diversity; to equip learners with knowledge, skills, and values to make informed decisions about subject choices, careers, additional and higher education opportunities and the world of work; to expose learners to various study methods and skills pertaining to assessment processes and expose learners to an understanding of the value of regular participation in physical activity (Department of Basic Education, 2010; Prinsloo, 2007). Thus it would appear that LO educators are asked to achieve quite a profound undertaking with only two hours a week (one lesson a week if one takes into account physical education lessons).

Preliminary indications are that LO is struggling to achieve its potential. LO is not allocated the prescribed time on many school timetables and its' time-slots are given away to other learning areas, perceived as more important (Rooth, 2005). Due to timetable constraints and priorities given to other subjects LO educators are often allocated all the LO classes in an

entire grade and in some instances all the LO classes in an entire school. Additionally, attitudes of school principals were found to be not conducive to the effective implementation of LO. School Principals viewed LO as less important than other subjects such as mathematics and therefore gave priority to other subjects over LO. For example principals would schedule extra mathematics classes instead of LO (Van Deventer, 2009). In addition, a comprehensive core of specially trained LO educators is not available and the allocation of educators to this learning area is somewhat arbitrary (Prinsloo, 2007; Rooth, 2005; Van Deventer, 2009). Furthermore, many schools lack the resources needed to successfully implement this subject (Van Deventer, 2009). Large classes, the newness of assessment and a scarcity of suitable learning support materials as well as preconceptions that exist due to the non-examinable status of this subject further add to the problems of LO educators (Prinsloo, 2007; Rooth, 2005; Van Deventer, 2009). Furthermore, lack of parental support and involvement; lack of appropriate role models in the teaching staff; learners who are not proficient in the language of instruction, lack of discipline in schools, overcrowding in classrooms and lack of support from the learning support facilitators appointed by the Department were additional challenges cited by Prinsloo (2007). LO educators felt that when learners were out of school, the influences of the peer group, the media and the general climate in their communities, eliminated largely the positive influence of LO lessons (Prinsloo, 2007). Lastly, many LO educators take on or are allocated the role of school counsellor. Many are not trained in this regard and are ill- equipped to meet this challenge (Prinsloo, 2007; Van Deventer, 2009; Wood et al., 2007). These challenges result in many LO educators being over-worked and feeling overwhelmed (Wood et al., 2007).

LO has the potential to be an added strategy of support however, it would appear that in order for LO to be effective the subject must be taken more seriously by all members of the school system including the parents. In addition a core of specially trained LO educators need to be employed by schools in South Africa and these professionals may need to be equipped with basic counselling skills. Along with changes made to the implementation of LO in schools, educational psychologists have also had to adjust their roles.

2.6.5. Changing roles for educational psychologists

With the inception of Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) school-based psychologists in government schools in South Africa are generally employed by the school governing body (SGB) or are private consultants attached to schools.

According to the Health Professions Act educational psychologists are involved in assessment, diagnosis and intervention in order to optimise individual, group and organisational functioning in the broad context of learning. In addition educational psychologists provide advice on the development of policy based on various aspects of psychological theory and research. Additionally, educational psychologists evaluate educationally-based programmes in diverse settings (Department of Health, 2011).

However, the role of educational psychologists is cause for much debate within the literature. This is due to a number of factors. Firstly, educational psychologists do not always agree with each other about what their role is. Furthermore, there is a conflict between what schools are looking for and what educational psychologists want to offer (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). Lastly, each school presents with school-specific specialisation needs and challenges due to a range of learners within each school setting (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Crespi & Politikos, 2004; Watkins, Crosby & Pearson, 2001). Boyle et al. (2009) further enhance this argument by stating that educational psychology is somewhat diverse and differs between countries, within countries, within services and lastly at the level of individual educational psychologists.

Despite the discrepancy in the literature with regard to the specific role of the educational psychologist, the literature supports the belief that the service provided by educational psychologists is invaluable and needs to be made more available (Boyle et al., 2009; Watkins et al., 2001). However, there are only a total of 1,464 registered and working educational psychologists in South Africa and 145 educational psychology interns registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and working in South Africa (Y. Daffue, personal correspondence, October 1, 2013). Furthermore, in 2011, there were 12 283 875 learners in schools in South Africa, who attended 25 851 schools and were served by 420 608 educators (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Therefore, with approximately 25 851 schools in South

Africa and with only 1,509 registered educational psychologists and registered intern educational psychologist working in South Africa (Y. Daffue, personal correspondence, October 1, 2013) it is not possible for every school in South Africa to employ an educational psychologist. As a result of the limited number of educational psychologists there is an unequal distribution of psychological services with school psychologists mostly found in urban areas with the highest concentration in the more financially secure schools, who can afford to retain these services. Thus the majority of schools are dependent on district health services for psychological services and as such the district based support teams are under enormous strain due to the demand for their services (Nieuwoudt, 2012).

In a study conducted by Du Toit and Forlin (2009) it was found that educators were concerned over the lack of a strong and cohesive support system within the Department of Education. Educators reported that the response rate by the Department could even be as much as two to three years upon request for a psycho-educational assessment, and as a result they arranged for parents to take their children to a state funded hospital for a psycho-educational assessment to be conducted. The educators in this study were concerned that their learners needed support over and above that which they could provide and that this support was virtually unavailable and when they did manage to find support they were not included in the process or provided with feedback on the outcomes of interventions.

Furthermore, Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) and more recently the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) document (Department of Education, 2005) stipulate the new roles of psychologists in the education support system. However, it has been stated (Daniels, 2010) that psychologists are struggling to understand what is expected of them as Education White Paper 6 does not adequately provide clear guidance to psychologists working within the education system. Additionally, there is no standardised national job description for school psychologists in South Africa (Daniels, 2010). Therefore school psychology practices may vary considerably among provinces and even among districts in provinces (Daniels, 2010). However, what appears to be consistent is that more and more educational psychologists working in the education system are working within the community-psychology-based framework, outlined by Education White Paper 6, and they appear to be less

frustrated and have more job satisfaction than those who continue to work within the previous child-centred model (Daniels, 2010).

The recent Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SAIS) document signaled a shift from educational psychologists being at the forefront of the assessment process to the acknowledgment of the role of the parent, educator and learners. In addition, the role of the educational psychologist is to provide psycho-educational and psychotherapeutic/counseling support within a whole school context to educators, parents and learners through the SBST (Daniels, 2010). Therefore educational psychologists are not the only staff responsible for addressing emotional and behavioural barriers to learning. Educational psychologist must collaborate with other staff that make up the DBST (learning support advisors, social workers, curriculum advisors, therapists, HIV and AIDS advisors, financial management advisors, governance advisors and institutional advisors) who must also work collaboratively and provide a more indirect form of service delivery (Daniels, 2010).

Some of the key services offered by educational psychologists are: assessment, counselling, consultation, special-education input, crisis intervention, training, research and behaviour management (Boyle et al., 2009, Crespi et al., 2004). In addition, it is important for educational psychologists to have a detailed knowledge of the system in which their clients are living and working (school, family, community) and to develop a trusting and mutually supportive relationship with members of the system. However, some researchers caution that as the profession moves away from a child deficit model and toward a more systemic approach, educational psychologists should not ignore the need for applied psychology and the recognition that there will always be some children with highly individualised needs (Boyle et al., 2009).

Others caution against the child deficit model and the belief that behavioural, emotional and learning problems are internal deficits or pathology within the individual learner (Adelman & Taylor, 1983, 1993, 2010; in Amod, 2013, Anderson, Klassen and Georgiou, 2007). This model tends to perpetuate the marginalization which still seems to be prevalent in the profession. A study reported by Anderson et al. (2007) showed that educational psychologists were generally ‘below the radar screen’ of educators. Additionally, Adelman and Taylor (1983, 1993, 2010; in

Amod, 2013) are particularly concerned and caution against the risk of misdiagnosis and bias towards labeling (Adelman & Taylor, 1983, 1993, 2010; in Amod, 2013). The majority of literature supports the need for Educational psychologists to shift away from within-learner or medical deficit model towards a more ecological and systemic approach (Amod, 2013; Boyle et al., 2009; Crespi et al., 2004; De Jong, 2000). For example, as a substitute to the child deficit model, Adelman et al. (1983, 1993, 2010) propose an interactional framework within which socio-emotional issues and barriers to learning can be understood (Adelman & Taylor, 1983, 1993, 2010; in Amod, 2013).

Prinsloo (2007) sites a successful collaboration at a 'resourced school' in South Africa, whereby Life Orientation (LO) educators and the school psychologist formed a team and the information and skills conveyed in LO lessons was strengthened in follow-up sessions with the school psychologist and often in individual afternoon sessions with learners in which educators acted as counsellors. Some other potential avenues for educational psychologists to work collaboratively and to offer assistance are: providing ongoing support to LO educators, due to the often evocative nature of teaching this subject; they could train peer counselors, run specific sessions with learners, and assist in co-coordinating some of the LO-related programmes. Most LO educators report that they do not have sufficient training to teach all the six allocated topics (Prinsloo, 2007; Rooth, 2005; Van Deventer, 2009). An educational psychologist could assist in specific LO topics such as within the career and career choices as well as the study skills topics. Additionally, Wood et al. (2007) believe that LO educators need to develop a belief in their own ability (a sense of self-efficacy) to cope in their school environments and deal effectively with specific problems facing them. An educational psychologist could assist LO educators in this regard.

A study conducted by Potgieter-Groot et al. (2012) found that an intervention programme targeted towards the in-service training of educators, focusing on the needs of learners with emotional and behavioural barriers, was found to be effective and was found to have a systemic influence. Educators were provided with knowledge and an understanding of the needs of learners with emotional and behavioural barriers, as well as skills to help address these in the classroom environment. This was found to change their behaviour and attitude towards those

learners in the classrooms, which resulted in changes in learners' behaviours. As educators grew more confident in themselves, changes in the school environment could be seen with educators forming support groups and working together to address the behaviours of learners, and educators also felt more confident in providing guidance for parents in understanding the needs of their children. A change in the larger education system could also be seen as educators began sharing their knowledge with educators from different schools, encouraging and motivating them to try different strategies (Potgieter-Groot et al., 2012). Educational psychologists could assist in the development of such programmes within schools offering staff development programmes in addition to learner-to-learner support (Engelbrecht, 2004).

In addition, Atkinson et al. (2006) conducted a small-scale action research project in three primary schools, over a six-week period. They found that educational psychologists and educators were working together in a joint problem-solving approach, where the needs of individual children were discussed and addressed alongside broader issues affecting teaching and learning and whole school development. Overall it was found to be a beneficial experience with professional development benefits for all involved.

Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) stipulates the new role of educational psychologists as developing schools' and other role players' knowledge and understanding of psycho-social and other related issues that create barriers to learning and development; promoting organizational development; and designing and developing learning and developmental programmes. Educational psychologists could help to establish school-based support teams, communicate and work with district-based support teams, use special schools as a resource, draw upon centres and resources offering educational support to learners in need in an attempt to establish school-based, holistic and integrated services (Muthukrishna, 2001, Engelbrecht, 2004). Educational psychologists could also provide Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), in which parents are helped to understand and improve their relationship with their child by changing the patterns of interaction between parent and child (Cooper, Masi, & Vick, 2009). In addition, educational psychologists could help to promote links between the school and parents, and between the school, parents and the community (Harcombe, 2001).

2.6.6. Parent participation

In a study conducted by Du Toit and Forlin (2009) it was found that most of the parents of the learners in the ten schools which participated in the study were illiterate and thus were unable to give assistance to their child with regards to homework. In addition, for many families their own social deprivation and difficulties were so overwhelming that little energy, time or money was left for helping their children. Many parents often worked far away from home and had little communication with their children. As a result many learners felt that their parents did not care about them or their education. These factors stated above often resulted in learners displaying social and emotional behaviourial problems which impacted on their ability to learn at school. Furthermore there was little to no communication between the parents and the educators. According to the educators, the parents believed the responsibility of educating their children lay solely on the educators and not on themselves. Parents have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that their children are at school and their homework is done. A lack of parental involvement is indicated as a causal factor for poor learner performance. A study conducted by Feinstein and Symons (1999) found that a very high parental interest in a learner's education is associated with better exam results. Children whose parents show little or no interest are low achievers.

School Governing Bodies (SGBs) should become more acquainted with the requirements of inclusive education. They should receive proper training so that they are able to develop school policies that ensures the right of all learners to receive quality and equitable educational and developmental opportunities (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013). Parents, for example, should be subjected to parent skilling programmes to improve the quality of their parenthood in cases where they are displaying unsympathetic behavior and negative attitudes towards their children who experience barriers to learning. Schools, on the other hand, should make concerted efforts to acquire the necessary resources to ensure that learners experiencing barriers to learning have the same quality access to teaching and learning opportunities as their more able peers. This could be done by obtaining sponsorships and the involvement of local businesses and health services. Schools should involve parents as equal partners in the education and development of learners. This can be done, for example, by the creation of cluster parent-educator groups where certain

educators are assigned to a certain group of parents to provide assistance regarding support to learners (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013).

2.7. Summary

Education White Paper 6 acknowledges that all youth can learn and that all youth need support. In addition, Education White Paper 6 aims to enable education structures and systems to meet the needs of all learners; these include learners with socio-emotional barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001).

With a limited number of educational psychologists in relation to the number of learners in South Africa, schools have an ever increasing role to play in tackling the social issues present in the lives of vulnerable children (Williams, 2010). Schools have unparalleled access to children and are therefore natural places to reach vulnerable children. In developing countries like South Africa, where extreme social and educational inequalities exist, those experiencing barriers to learning (most commonly external barriers) are considered to comprise the majority of learners (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010). Therefore, in order for the goals and guidelines stipulated by Education White Paper 6 to be successfully achieved the need for trained professionals including educational psychologists is vital. However, with the limited number of these professionals it is not possible for every school in South Africa to employ an educational psychologist at their school. In addition, as a result of the limited number of educational psychologists there is an unequal distribution of psychological services with school psychologists mostly found in urban areas with the highest concentration in the more financially secure schools, who can afford to retain these services. Thus the majority of schools are dependent on district health services for psychological services and as such the district based support teams are under enormous strain due to the demand for their services (Nieuwoudt, 2012). Therefore it is necessary that the optimal use of these professionals be examined.

Furthermore, educational psychologists are envisaged to be part of the DBST, but Education White Paper 6 does not clearly define their role nor does it acknowledge the specialised role of the educational psychologist or specify the use of psychological services in the education system. In addition, educational psychologists are seen to be a part of the DBST

and are not seen to be positioned at the school level. However, while there is a severe shortage of educational psychologists and psychological resources and thus educational psychologists could not be positioned in all schools in South Africa, this doesn't mean to say that it should be excluded completely at the school level.

Forlin (2007) suggests that input from the stakeholders involved as well as research into the implementation of policy should be conducted in order to determine best practice. Forlin (2007) also contends that continuing to support an intervention must be based on empirical evidence. However, there appears to be limited recent research on the role and function of the DBST and the SBST as well as the role of educational psychologists and Life Orientation educators within this structure of support. There appears to be limited current research on these stakeholders' views and opinions regarding their role and function as well as limited current research on best practices regarding their functionality. Thus the research aimed to add to the literature and research done on this topic by providing a case study of one government high school in Johannesburg with an aim to explore the structures of support available to learners with socio-emotional needs.

The primary aim of the research was to explore the structure of educational support services required to address the numerous socio-emotional needs of high school learners, within one 'resourced' government high school in Johannesburg. The research aimed to examine what support was needed; what supportive relationships existed and what support could have been strengthened? From the perspective of inclusive education policy (Department of Education, 2001), a collaborative effort is needed whereby all stakeholders (the educational psychologist, the SBSTs, the DBSTs, the social worker, educators, the SGB, the SMT and the LO educators) make the best use of available resources, and work together to optimise these resources and achieve improved provisioning of socio-emotional support to learners. Little mention is made of the role of Life Orientation educators within this structure of support. Thus the research aimed to add to the research done to date by examining what role Life Orientation educators could play within the structure of support available at the case study high school.

A more elaborate description of the research design and methodology as well as the characteristics of a phenomenological inquiry will be provided in the next chapter, Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology. The researcher discusses the aims of the research and different methods of data collection used. The research

paradigm and research design are discussed, followed by specifics in research methodology such as data collection methods and data analysis. Finally, trustworthiness of the study is considered, along with ethical considerations.

3.2. Research Aims

The research is in the form of a qualitative inquiry and explored the structure of educational support services required to address the numerous socio-emotional needs of high school learners, within one 'resourced' government high school in Johannesburg. The research aimed to examine what support was needed; what supportive relationships existed and what support could have been strengthened. Furthermore the research aimed to add to the literature and research done on this topic.

3.3. Research Questions

The research was guided by the following research questions:

3.3.1. Main research question

What structure of support exists to address the socio-emotional needs of high school learners at the case study school?

3.3.2. Sub research questions

3.3.2.1. What do the educational psychologists view as their role in addressing the socio-emotional needs of high school learners at the case study school?

3.3.2.2. What do the Life Orientation (LO) educators view as their role in addressing the socio-emotional needs of high school learners at the case study high school?

3.3.2.3. What does the educational psychologists at the district level view as his/her role in addressing the socio-emotional needs of high school learners?

3.3.2.4. What does a member of the school-based support teams (SBST) view as his/her role in addressing the socio-emotional needs of high school learners at the case study school?

3.3.2.5. What does the school principal view as his/her role in addressing the socio-emotional needs of high school learners at the case study school?

3.3.2.6. What are the challenges experienced when addressing the socio-emotional needs of high school learners?

3.3.2.7. What forms of collaboration exist?

3.3.2.8. What could be done to strengthen the existing forms of collaboration?

3.3.2.9. What additional forms of collaboration could exist?

3.3.2.10. What do role players view as the key success factors in the provision of socio-emotional support to high school learners?

3.4. Methodological Paradigm: Qualitative Enquiry

The study followed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a broad all encompassing term for research methodologies that describe and explain human experiences, social contexts and behaviours without the use of quantifying data (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). Qualitative research makes use of a naturalistic approach and seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the researcher used this approach as the researcher sought to understand the viewpoint of Life Orientation educators, a member of the SBST, a member of the DBST, the school principal and the school psychologists within the case study school. It is through the researcher's insight that qualitative research achieves its ultimate goal. The strength of qualitative research lies in its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Joniak, 2002). In order to gain insight and to be able to provide complex textual descriptions of the experiences of the Life Orientation educators, a member of the SBST, a member of the DBST, the school principal and school psychologists, the researcher gathered first-hand information from the participants, in the form of individual and focus group interviews.

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in a number of ways. Firstly, in qualitative research the raw data to be analysed is text/words whereas in quantitative research the researcher analyses numbers (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010). Secondly, qualitative analysis lacks variables and a hypothesis which is found in quantitative research (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010).

Thirdly qualitative research focuses on meaning rather than quantifiable phenomena. Lastly, qualitative research aims to provide a rich description of the world rather than measurement of specific variables (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010).

3.5. Paradigmatic Perspective

Maree (2007) argues that paradigmatic assumptions inform the basic belief system or worldview that guides the researcher on how he or she undertakes research. This is guided by ontological (nature of reality), epistemological (relationship between knower and non-knower) and methodological (how the unknown can be known) considerations. All of these considerations related to one another in that a response on one level informed the responses on subsequent levels.

3.5.1. Metatheoretical paradigm

The main philosophical tradition underpinning qualitative research is interpretivism (Morgan & Sklar, 2012). Interpretivism is guided by the principle that all theory is revisable and that observation is imperfect and contains flaws (Henning, 2004). The research aimed to gain a deep understanding of the lived experiences of the participants, relying on their perceptions and interpretations thereof. Thus interpretive methodologies were an appropriate methodology to use as the primary focus of interpretive methodologies is to understand and account for the meaning of human experiences and actions (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). At the heart of Interpretivism is the assumption that there is not one reality but many, and interpretivist researchers conduct their research in natural contexts to reach the best possible understanding (Maree, 2007).

3.6. Research Methodology

3.6.1. Research design and approach

A design is a plan of how one intends to accomplish a particular task, and this plan provides a structure that informs the researcher as to which theories, methods and instruments the study will

be based on. A research design is therefore a structure for selecting participants, research sites and data collection procedures to answer the research questions (Seabi, 2012).

The research used a case study design as it is useful for learning about situations which might be poorly understood or about which not much is known (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Thus a case study design is a useful approach to use as, as stated in *3.2*., little mention is made of the role of Life Orientation educators within a structure of support to address the socio-emotional needs of high school learners. In addition, there appears to be limited recent research on the role and function of the DBST and the SBST as well as the role of educational psychology services. Furthermore, there appears to be limited current research on these stakeholders' views and opinions regarding their role and function as well as on best practices regarding their functionality.

Case study research is defined by Yin (1989) as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. A researcher using this method can approach the phenomenon being investigated from different "ontological and epistemological perspectives within the case study design" (Morgan & Sklar, 2012). A case study aims to understand how participants relate and interact in a specific situation, and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study.

The specific case study design is an instrumental case study design, because this is aimed at illuminating a particular issue (Creswell, 2007; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The defining feature of the case study design is that it investigates phenomena that have a definable boundary (Morgan and Sklar, 2012). The marked boundary in this case was a specific South African government high school in Gauteng, in 2013. The aim of the research was to obtain a deep and holistic understanding of the experience of Life Orientation educators, the school principal, a member of the SBST, a member of the DBST and school psychologists within this particular context. This choice of design enabled the researcher to investigate the experiences of these people within the specific school system.

A challenge of case study design is the lower sample numbers inherent in the design. In addition, participants were selected on the basis of convenience and might therefore not expand variability and be representative of the natural population (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). However, the aim of the research was not to generalise knowledge but rather to obtain a deep understanding of the experiences of these particular stakeholders (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Thus, the possibility of tendencies indentified in this case study being observable or transferable to similar schools does exist, as other resourced South African government schools might well display similar characteristics.

The specific environment chosen for study in a case study is very important. The school in this case study was chosen as although it is a fairly well 'resourced school', it was still a government high school. Additionally, the school was a well-functioning school which achieved regular academic success. For example for the past two years the school achieved a 100% pass rate as well as a 99% university acceptance rate. The learners were predominantly Christian and Muslim. In addition, the learners represented a variety of cultures and races, please refer to Table 2. The table below shows that the case study school was comprised of an almost equal amount of 'African', 'Indian' and 'White' learners, followed by a lesser amount of 'Coloured' learners. Table 2 also illustrates that the majority of educators were Caucasian.

Table 2 Race Demographics of the Case Study School

	African	**Asian**	**Coloured**	**Indian**	**White**	**Total**
Qualified Educators	5	0	1	4	58	68
Learners	359	8	115	323	295	1100

Furthermore, a number of learners came from 'under-resourced' areas. A large proportion of the learners' mothers were domestic workers who worked in the area and the learners' either lived with their mothers in the area or lived in nearby townships. This specific high school was also chosen as it is a relatively large school. The school comprises of 1100 learners and 68 educators. Thus the school has a number of educators who teach LO, it also has two educational psychologists and one clinical psychologist positioned and employed by the school governing

body, a school based support team and a school principal who has been in her position for a number of years. Historically educational psychologists have not worked within one school rather they have rendered their services to a large number of schools that fall within the district allocated to them. In terms of White Paper 6, these educational psychologists in the district need to work collaboratively with the schools' SBST. However, the case study school does not have an educational psychologist positioned at the district level. Thus a member of the DBST was included in the case study. The researcher was therefore provided with the necessary participants needed to conduct a rich and holistic understanding of the experience of educators and educational psychologists within this particular context.

3.7. Selection of Participants

Non-probability, purposive sampling was used (Seabi, 2012). Purposive sampling is the act of selecting participants and sites based on the fact that they can provide you with 'rich information' on a specific topic (Creswell, 2007:214). Thus, the site/s and individuals were selected in order to understand a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Since the purpose of the research was to obtain a deep understanding of the role of the educational psychologists in collaborative partnerships with the various role-players within a particular context, purposive sampling was utilised. The following participants were involved in the study to ascertain their views and experiences: eight LO educators within the case study school; two educational psychologists and a clinical psychologist within the case study school; a member of the School-based Support Team (SBST), a member of the district-based support team (DBST) and the school principal. The case study high school is a government high school situated in Gauteng. The school comprises of one thousand one hundred learners, who come from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, culture, religion and socio-economic backgrounds. The structure of support found at the case study high school comprises of three psychologists, a school-based support team, twelve Life Orientation educators, sixty-eight educators, three deputy principals and a school principal. Of the 68 staff members eight life orientation educators, one member of the SBST and the deputy principal as well as the school principal were interviewed. All twelve LO educators were invited to participate in the study, but three were unable to partake in the study due to time constraints.

The case study high school is divided up into six. There is a house head for each house therefore there are six house heads in total. Each house head is responsible for the learners' emotional well-being in the house that has been allocated to them. The SBST is thus made up of these six house heads together with the three psychologists and the deputy principal in charge of the SBST. Therefore, the SBST is a support system for learners. If there are serious issues then the house heads can refer those issues up to the deputy in charge or they can refer the matter to one of the three psychologists.

3.8. Data Collection and Documentation Strategies

According to Chamberliss and Schutt (2010) the first step in the qualitative data analysis process is the documentation of the data and the data collection. In case study research, the exploration and description of the case takes place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context (Fouché, 2002). The research utilised the following three data collection methods to gain multiple sources of information:

1. **Semi-structured individual interviews** were conducted with the deputy principal in charge of the SBST at the case study high school, the principal of the case study high school and the deputy chief of educational services at the district. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.
2. **Focus group interviews:** There were two focus groups. One group consisted of three psychologists working at the case study high school and the other group consisted of eight Life Orientation educators working at the case study high school. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.
3. **Crystalisation:** The weekly memo document (over a three month period), field notes and a reflective diary were analysed.

3.8.1. Semi-structured individual interviews

Interviewing is the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research (De Vos, 2002). The research utilised semi-structured interviews as the main data collection method. This type of

interview is flexible as it is neither fully fixed in structure nor fully free of structure (Seabi, 2012). Semi-structured interviews commonly require the participant to answer a set of predetermined questions (Niewenhuis, 2007). A set of pre-determined, open-ended questions were developed on an interview schedule. Participants' responses to these pre-determined questions were recorded and transcribed. The data collected during this process was used to obtain factual information as well as an in-depth understanding of approaches and interventions, roles and responsibilities, and so on. The interviews were intended to elicit detailed views and opinions from participants. Participants were guided and encouraged to share their experiences and views (Maree, 2007) through the use of specific questions to elicit information that would best help the researcher answer the research question (Creswell, 2007).

A possible benefit of conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews was that it enabled the researcher to gain participants' co-operation by establishing a relationship with them. Establishing such relationships enabled the researcher to gain more in-depth information (Maree, 2007). Participants could provide detailed information and the researcher had the opportunity to ask specific questions to elicit information that would best assist the researcher to answer the research question (Creswell, 2007). The interviews ranged between 30-50 minutes long and they were recorded and transcribed. In addition, field notes were used and observations of non-verbal cues during interviews were noted, to support the recordings (Maree, 2007).

The table on the next page, Table 3, illustrates a summary of the semi-structured interview questions asked of the school principal and a member of the SBST at the case study school.

Table 3 A Tabulation of Interview Schedules

Semi-structured, Face-to-Face Interview Schedules The school principal and a member of the SBST	
1	How many years have you worked in this profession?

2	How long have you worked at this particular school?
3	What do you consider to be your key roles and functions within the broader school system?
4	How do these roles or functions fit within the broader school function or system?
5	What do you consider to be the key contributions made by your work?
6	What challenges do you face in your day-to-day roles or functions?
7	What in your opinion is needed to alleviate these challenges?
8	Who in your opinion is responsible for the socio-emotional development of high school learners?
9	Who is responsible for providing learners with knowledge, attitudes and values they need to face challenges in their worlds?
10	Who is responsible for providing learners with support?
11	Could you please tell me a little more about the channels of communication within the school system; how you communicate with one another and who communicates with whom?
12	In terms of communication with the educational psychologists in the district is there communication with them at all?
13	How valuable in your opinion is Life Orientation as a learning area?
14	What communication do you have with the DBST?

The questions asked of the member of the DBST where somewhat different to those asked of the school principal and a member of the SBST. This was due to the fact that the member of the DBST, the Deputy Chief of educational services at the district, rarely worked directly with the case study school. In addition, the interview had to be shortened from 50 minutes to 30 minutes, as the member of the DBST was very busy and could not partake in a 50 minute interview. Table 4 illustrates the questions asked of the member of the DBST, the Deputy Chief of educational services at the district.

Table 4 A Tabulation of Semi-structured Interview Questions

Semi-structured Face-to-Face Interview Schedule

A member of the DBST	
1	What is your position in the district?
2	What are your key roles and functions?
3	What do you consider to be the key contributions you make in the work that you do?
4	What challenges do you face in the work that you do?
5	What career specific goals do you have for the future?
6	In your opinion who is responsible for providing learners with support?
7	Do you work independently or with others to achieve your key roles and functions?
8	Are there any people with which you are currently not working with but with which you feel you could benefit from working with them?

3.8.2. Focus group interviews

In addition to semi-structured interviews the researcher used focus group interviews. A focus group interview is the process of collecting data through an interview with a group of people (Creswell, 2007). However, the role of the researcher is much more of a facilitator than an interviewer (Seabi, 2012). Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic (Strydom, 2002) and thus focus groups can be used to collect a shared understanding from this group (Creswell, 2007). The group interaction should produce a wide range of responses as participants are reminded of forgotten details (Maree, 2007). Additionally, the interaction amongst the participants will yield a lot of information within a limited amount of time (Creswell, 2007) as focus groups create a process of sharing and comparing among participants (Strydom, 2002). Focus groups usually include six to ten participants (Strydom, 2002) and a small number of questions are asked and responses are elicited from all participants (Creswell, 2007).

A focus group instrument was developed to structure a discussion between the stakeholders. The researcher conducted two focus groups of roughly 50 minutes each. One of the focus groups comprised of eight Life Orientation educators within the case study high school. The other focus group comprised of three psychologists (one clinical psychologist and two educational psychologists) within the case study high school. A disadvantage of this process of data collection is that some participants may find their group experience threatening

(Nieuwenhuis, 2007) and some participants may take over the discussion thus limiting the time available for others to speak (Creswell, 2007). The researcher was vigilant about these concerns and ensured that all members had an opportunity to speak and feel as safe as possible within the group. As with the semi-structured individual interviews, the focus group sessions were recorded and transcribed. Furthermore, field notes together with observations during the focus group session were noted (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

Table 5 below, illustrates a summary of the focus group questions asked of the participants in the case study. Two focus groups were conducted. One focus group consisted of three psychologists and the other consisted of eight LO educators.

Table 5 A Tabulation of the Focus Group Interview Schedule

Focus Group Interview Schedule	
1	How many years have you worked in this profession?
2	How long have you worked at this particular school?
3	What do you consider to be your key roles and functions within the broader school system?
4	How do these roles or functions fit within the broader school function or system?
5	What do you consider to be the key contributions made by your work?
6	What challenges do you face in your day-to-day roles or functions?
7	What in your opinion is needed to alleviate these challenges?
8	Who in your opinion is responsible for the socio-emotional development of high school learners?
9	Who is responsible for providing learners with knowledge, attitudes and values they need to face challenges in their worlds?
10	Who is responsible for providing learners with support?
11	Could you please tell me a little more about the channels of communication within the school system; how you communicate with one another and who communicates with whom?
12	In terms of communication with the educational psychologists in the district is there communication with them at all?
13	How valuable in your opinion is Life Orientation as a learning area?

3.8.3. Crystalisation

Crystalisation involves collecting data in as many different ways and from as many diverse sources as possible. This process assists the researcher to better understand the phenomenon being studied, and to clarify meaning as it is being approached from different angles (Kelly, 2006a; Maree, 2007). Through crystalisation, the researcher is able to verify and validate the findings (Kelly, 2006b). To verify and validate findings from the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, the researcher used data collected from observation field notes, a document review of a weekly memo document over a three month period and the researcher's reflective journal

3.8.3.1. Observation

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007), observation is a key component of data gathering as the researcher is able to use all their senses to begin to experience reality as the participants do, thus providing the researcher with an insider perspective. According to Creswell (2007) observation is the process of gathering open-ended, first hand information by observing people and places at a research site. As was found in the literature review there is often a discrepancy between what is reported and what is observed at the grass-roots level (Rooth, 2005). Thus, observations are important as they can provide a check on what is reported in the interviews (Patton, 2002).

The researcher used direct, observer as participant observation (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2003; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The observer as participant interacts casually and non-directly with subjects in what Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2003) refer to as 'observation as context of interaction'. The intention of the researcher during these observations was to look for patterns of behaviour in the community of observation, to seek out and explore insights into the nature of relationships within the observed communities, and to collect evidence of whether collaborative approaches are being used (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). In this study, observations were particularly important as they enabled evidence to be collected of the impact of collaboration, and enabled examples of observed collaboration which was used to amplify or clarify a conclusion. The data recorded during observations was included in the field notes (Creswell, 2007).

The disadvantages of observation are that when the researcher fully participates in the activities of the community, respondents will not act as naturally as in the case of no outsider being present, however, the researcher has formed a good relationship with the members of the community and it is believed that they developed a trust in the researcher and felt comfortable around the researcher. However as the researcher has developed a good relationship with participants the problem of validity comes into effect. The researcher is thus more susceptible to subjectivity, prejudices and selective perceptions (Strydom, 2002). However, to counteract this problem the researcher relied on her supervisor and peers to act as objective outsiders to ensure that she remained objective and non-prejudicial as well as being open to multiple perceptions.

3.8.3.2. Document review

It is important to gather documentary communication that can shed light on the concepts being studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Documents have limitations in that they may be incomplete or inaccurate. However, document analysis can provide a behind-the-scenes look at the issue being researched that may not be directly observable and about which the researcher may not ask appropriate questions without the leads provided through documents (Patton, 2002). Due to time constraints the researcher narrowed the document review to contain a specific form of communication between the relevant stakeholders based at the school level. This document can be defined as a non-personal document, which is a document that is compiled and maintained on a continuous basis by an organization. This type of document is more formal and structured than personal documents (Strydom & Delport, 2002).

The researcher examined a weekly memorandum that was developed by the school principal at the case study high school and handed out to all educators, educational psychologists and SBST members. Information in the memo was discussed with these stakeholders in a weekly meeting. Thus the weekly memo was analysed because it elicited communication between educators, the SBST, educational psychologists and the school principal. The researcher analysed the weekly memo document over a three month period, in addition to field notes obtained from the researcher's observations and the reflective journal.

3.8.3.3. Reflective journal

The researcher kept a diary throughout the study to record ideas and thoughts as well as reflections regarding her experiences. Reflections on the process were made in order to make changes when necessary, in addition to reflections on her abilities as a researcher (Maree, 2007). These notes from the reflective journal formed part of the data review alongside the observation field notes.

3.9. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Chamberliss and Schutt (2010) outlined five steps in the qualitative data analysis process. The researcher used these five steps during the data analysis and interpretation process. Step one involved the documentation of the data and data collection, as outlined in 3.7. The second step in the qualitative data analysis process involved the conceptualisation of data (Chamberliss & Schutt, 2010). The third step involved the examination of relationships to show how one relationship may influence another. The fourth step involved authenticating conclusions by evaluating alternative explanations (Chamberliss & Schutt, 2010).

In case study research, the interpretation of the data collected is a process whereby the researcher interacts with the data throughout the study, and tries to make sense of the data collected from multiple sources. This ongoing examination and interpretation allows for the drawing of tentative conclusions and the refinement of the research questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Qualitative data analysis takes raw data and transforms this data into findings. There is not one correct manner in which this process occurs, rather there are guidelines that a researcher can use to help them through this process (Chambliss & Schitt, 2012). The primary data analysis technique, that the researcher used to help guide her in the process of transforming raw data into findings, was content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarises message content (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Content analysis involves looking at data from different angles to identify keys in the text to help one understand and interpret the raw data from transcripts, documents and other media (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

The data collected was regularly reviewed so as to become fully immersed in it. The process of reading through the data began from the outset and continued throughout the study (Chambliss & Schutt, 2012). Similarities and differences were identified to confirm or disconfirm data (Creswell, 2007). When it appeared that additional concepts or new relationships needed exploration the researcher adapted the research questions and redefined the focus of the research. This process is known as 'progressive focusing' (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010). The reading of the data involved three steps as described by Chambliss and Schutt (2010). The first step involved reading the data literally; focusing on the literal meaning and form. The second step involved reading the data reflexively; focusing on how the researcher's own biases and prejudices as well as her own orientation influences the interpretations of the data. The third step involved reading the data interpretively; trying to construct an interpretation of what the data means.

Once acquainted and familiar with content, and after saturation occurred, the researcher generated preliminary themes which were tabulated. The themes captured important elements of the data, in relation to the research question. The researcher used her judgment with regard to what constituted as a 'theme'; however, the themes were also presented to the participants as well as the researcher's supervisor for comment, as an added aspect of the triangulation of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, inferences were then made from these themes to address the research questions (Maree, 2007).

Crystalisation involves collecting data in as many different ways and from as many diverse sources as possible. This process assisted the researcher to better understand the phenomenon being studied, and to clarify meaning as it is being approached from different angles (Kelly, 2006a; Maree, 2007). Crystalisation also ensured the trustworthiness of the study. Through triangulation, the researcher was able to verify and validate the findings. Methodological triangulation was used to study the problem, looking for convergent evidence from different sources, such as interviewing, focus groups, observation and documentary review (Kelly, 2006b).

Three processes were followed to ensure effective data control. Firstly, the participants verified the data results to prevent misinterpretation of meaning or misrepresentation of the content or context of the collected data. Secondly, data results were compared with existing literature, to identify similarities or discrepancies that might call for further verification, including the possibility of further research in future. Lastly, data verification took place by following a process whereby data results were monitored by a research supervisor (Maree, 2007).

The last step in the qualitative data analysis process as outlined by Chamberliss and Schutt (2010) involves reflexivity. Reflexivity is a method many qualitative researchers use to legitimize, validate and question research practices and representations (Pillow, 2003). It refers to the recognition and detection of the researcher's place and presence as researcher in the research. It is in this process and when using this insight to critically examine the entire research process that the researcher achieved reflexivity (Underwoord, Satterthwait, & Bartlett, 2010). Reflexivity unlike reflection demands both an 'other' and focused self-awareness during the process of self- inspection, whereas reflection does not demand an 'other' (Pillow, 2003). The researcher's supervisor primarily took on this role of 'other'. Together they engaged in an ongoing conversation about the researcher's experience while simultaneously being involved in the research. At appropriate moments in the research, such as when finalising themes to be examined during the semi-structured interviews, the participants became the 'other' and helped the researcher to finalise these themes. In this way, the researcher focused on developing reciprocity with research subjects; doing research with them instead of on them (Pillow, 2003).

In addition, the researcher was fully aware of the active role in the construction of knowledge throughout the research process. Consciously or not, the researcher needed to become cognisant of the power held in shaping the form and content of what participants recount. The researcher actively monitored the role in the production of knowledge and attempted not to let personal views overshadow the participants' perspectives, giving the participants' views primacy throughout the research. A self-reflective journal was kept throughout the research process which aided the researcher to become critically conscious of any potential biases (Underwoord, et al., 2010). In this way reflexivity thus becomes a form of additional fieldwork; the researcher's

notes (the "field") and the researcher's attempt to understand them (the "fieldwork) (Pillow, 2003). Therefore the researcher's notes formed part of the data review alongside the field notes.

3.10. Quality Criteria

3.10.1. Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.290) define trustworthiness in qualitative research as support for the findings being worth paying attention to. In order to establish the trustworthiness of a study the researcher must ensure that the results are credible, dependable, confirmable and transferable (Maree, 2007). Trustworthiness can be ensured by discussing identified themes with the participants to ensure that they are accurate and dependable (Creswell, 2007). Once the researcher identified research themes, these were then discussed with the participants to ensure that they were accurate and therefore dependable. Additionally, using different methods of data capturing to facilitate crystallisation enhanced the trustworthiness of the research. Crystalisation can ensure the validity of data by using a variety of methods of data collection and analysis. In order to establish crystalisation the researcher used a variety of data collection methods; these included observation, two focus group interviews, three semi-structured interviews and a data analysis of a weekly memo document over a three month period. In addition, to ensure crystalisation the researcher kept field notes and a reflective journal throughout the research process. Lastly, the constant reflection on the research process can also ensure reliability (Maree, 2007). The researcher constantly reflected on the research process including the literature review, observations made, reflections made, data collection methods decided upon and the analysis of data.

3.10.2. Credibility

The term credibility refers to the extent to which research findings are accurate and truthful. A match between the reality that was constructed by the participants and the reality represented by the research was acquired (Sinkovics, Penz and Ghauri, 2008) through triangulation and member checking.

3.10.3. Dependability

This term refers to the stability of one's results over time. In order to make the study dependable samples of the data analysis were included as well as a copy of the questions that were asked during the interviews and focus groups. By providing these methodological steps one ensures that the study can be repeated within other similar contexts.

3.10.4. Confirmable

Confirmable research is research in which the interpretation the researcher draws from data captured, is based on the participants' views and it is not biased nor shaped in any way by the researcher's own perspective (Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008). To ensure that the research is confirmable direct quotations of participants within the research report were used. In addition, discussions with the participants about the data captured were conducted to ensure that the correct conclusions were drawn from such data.

3.10.5. Transferability

This term refers to the extent to which the findings are applicable and can be transferred to other contexts (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri, 2008). The results of the study do not necessarily represent the wider community. However, the intention of the study was to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the intention was to provide rich descriptions which will allow the audience to determine whether the findings could apply to similar contexts and to learn lessons from this case study.

3.11. Ethical Considerations

There were a number of ethical considerations the researcher was aware of while conducting the research and continual consideration was given to these ethical concerns during planning, thinking about and discussing each aspect of the research (Glesne, 2006). For example the researcher ensured that the research subjects had sufficient information to make informed decisions about participation in the study. The researcher also ensured that the participants could

withdraw at any time from the study and eliminated all unnecessary risks to the research subjects (Glesne, 2006). Furthermore the researcher sought to guard the anonymity of the research material (Josselson, 2007).

The following steps were taken to ensure that these ethical considerations were adhered to. Firstly, permission from the Gauteng Department of Education was attained (Appendix 7). Secondly, formal permission was obtained from the school's governing body and the principal of the school (Appendix 2; Appendix 1). Thirdly, an ethical clearance certificate was acquired (Appendix 6). Every participant was fully conversant of all the necessary information needed for them to make an informed decision about participation (Appendix 3; Appendix 4). Josselson (2007) states that the informed consent form must provide a statement of purpose of the study that is as close to the researchers focus as possible. A clear and accurate description of the purpose of the study within the consent forms was provided. In addition, information pertaining to who will have access to the data and how the data will be stored was included in the consent form. Participants were made aware that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. They were also made aware of any aspects of the research that might affect their well-being. Participants were kept fully informed at all times about the research process and purpose, and were asked to give their consent to participate as well as their consent to be video recorded (Appendix 5) (Glesne, 2006).

Qualitative researchers develop relationships with their research participants. Yet, the relationship is unequal with power located on the side of the researcher. The researcher was aware of this and therefore protected the right to privacy of the participants. The principle of privacy incorporates the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher has an obligation as a student psychologist to safeguard the confidential information obtained during the study, and may not disclose any confidential information obtained to others, except with the written, informed consent of the person concerned. In a case study where research partners are all members of a school community, it may not be possible to maintain anonymity of participants. In this case, the principle of anonymity may not apply, however, the participants were asked to keep all information shared during the focus groups confidential as well as not to

mention the names of the participants to others outside the study. In addition the data collected during the research process was kept confidential.

Respect and caring for research partners was perhaps the most important of the ethical guidelines. In addition to respecting participants during the research process, it was important to write about them in a respectful way (Josselson, 2007). It was explained to all research partners how all data created will be stored in such a form that it remains anonymous and hidden from anyone seeking to identify them (Glesne, 2006). Furthermore, the participants were asked not to mention learners' names when they shared information so as to protect the learners from being identified.

3.12. Challenges of the Study

A challenge of the case study design was the lower sample numbers inherent in the design. Participants were selected on the basis of convenience and might therefore not expand variability and be representative of the natural population (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The specific environment chosen for study in a case study is very important. The school in this case study was chosen as although it was a somewhat 'resourced school', it is still a government high school. In addition, the learners represented a variety of cultures and races and a number of them came from 'under-resourced' areas. A large proportion of the learners' mothers were domestic workers who worked in the area and the learners' either lived with their mothers in the area or lived in nearby townships. Thus, the possibility of tendencies indentified in this case study being observable or transferable to similar schools does exist, as other South African government high schools might well display similar characteristics.

In addition, this specific high school was chosen as it is a relatively large school. Thus the school had a number of educators who teach LO, it also had two educational psychologists and one clinical psychologist positioned and employed by the school governing body (SGB), a school based support team (SBST) and a school principal who has been in her position for a number of years. Historically educational psychologists have not worked within one school rather they have rendered their services to a large number of schools that fall within the district

allocated to them. In terms of Education White Paper 6, these educational psychologists in the district need to work collaboratively with the schools' SBST. However, the case study school did not have an educational psychologist positioned in its district and rather had three psychologists positioned at the school.

A challenge of the study was related to gaining the trust of those that were interviewed. Another challenge was finding a way to protect the privacy of the educators and staff being interviewed. As the research was conducted in only one school, once the findings are published and members of the school read the research, anonymity may be difficult to establish. The researcher was open and honest with the participants about this and ensured that they were aware that they have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time. Another challenge of the research was with regards to the researcher's ability to achieve 'reflexivity' as discussed in section 3.8.

3.13. Summary

Chapter 3 has outlined the qualitative research approach and the nature of qualitative data. It described processes of data collection, analysis and the ethical requirements. Chapter 4 will describe the research findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 will begin with an overview of main themes and sub-themes. A summary of the main themes and sub-themes is presented in Table 6. Subsequently each of these main themes and sub-themes will be explored in more detail using data from the various sources of information gathering (semi-structured individual interviews, focus group interviews, data analysis and observation). Verbatim experiences as expressed by the participants are also provided to verify these summaries.

4.2. An Overview of Themes and Sub-themes

The themes and sub-themes outlined in Table 6, capture important elements of the data, in relation to the research question. The researcher used her judgment with regard to what constituted as a 'theme' and 'sub-theme'; however, these were also presented to the participants as well as the researcher's supervisor for comment, as an added aspect of the crystalisation of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data outlined and captured in Table 6 forms the basis from which the findings are subsequently discussed.

Table 6 A Tabulation of Main Themes and Sub-themes

	Main Theme		**Sub-theme**
4.3.1	The need for socio-emotional support	**4.3.1.1**	Socio-emotional barriers to learning
4.3.2	Socio-emotional support available to learners	**4.3.2.1**	School level support
		4.3.2.2	Family system support
		4.3.2.3	Community level support
4.3.3	Collaboration	**4.3.3.1**	Communication
		4.3.3.2	Success Factors
		4.3.3.3	Challenges
4.3.4	Stakeholder roles and functions	**4.3.4.1**	The role of the psychologist
		4.3.4.2	The role of the SBST
		4.3.4.3	The role of the educator
4.3.5	Life Orientation	**4.3.5.1**	The benefits of Life Orientation
		4.3.5.2	Challenges to the successful implementation of Life Orientation

4.3. A Discussion of Main Themes and Sub-themes

Table 6 presents a summary of main themes and sub-themes that emerged during the data analysis and interpretation process. Each main theme and sub-themes will now be discussed. A discussion of each theme and sub-theme will take place in the order in which it is presented in Table 6.

4.3.1. The need for socio-emotional support

The first main theme presented in Table 6 above, is the *need for socio-emotional support*. A large proportion of learners at the case study school experience socio-emotional barriers to learning and are in need of socio-emotional support. As stated by a member of the SBST, during the semi-structured interview, "I would say in excess of 50% of our learners, come from homes and backgrounds where they have problems…there are so many learners in a situation where they require support." What follows is an exploration of these socio-emotional barriers to learning.

4.3.1.1. The socio-emotional barriers to learning

Socio-emotional barriers to learning were identified through: the semi-structured interviews; focus group interviews; and data analysis of the *weekly memorandum* document over a three month period. The following socio-emotional barriers were identified:

Socio-emotional barriers to learning at the school level

Many of the learners and educators appear to experience academic pressure or pressure to achieve academic success. As stipulated by one of the psychologists, "I feel that the learners are under such a lot of (academic) pressure and so are the teachers" (Focus group interview with the psychologist). Additionally learners appear to face peer pressure; as stated by one LO educator "…they are very impressionable and they also have peer pressure" (Focus group interview with

the LO educators). Learners also experience bullying in the traditional sense; as stated by an LO educator "…one of the things I think we are dealing with is the bullying thing…" (Focus group interview with the LO educators); as well as cyber-bullying; as stated by another LO educator "…they will walk out and post something rude or disrespectful on Facebook for example" (Focus group interview with the LO educators). In addition, it would appear that some learners at the case study high school experience teenage pregnancy. This is expressed by one of the school psychologists, "There is a girl that is far along in her pregnancy" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists). Other learners appear to experience depression. This is expressed by one of the school psychologist, "There is a lot of depression around. Recently I have had quite a number" (Focus group interview with the psychologists). In addition to depression some learners have experienced suicide ideation or attempted suicide. Additionally, some learners run away from home which is expressed by one of the school psychologists "…we had one child now run away…for the second time in two weeks" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists). Furthermore, some learners experience health issues; for example it was reported by one of the school psychologists that "one of the learners has rheumatoid arthritis" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists). Lastly a lack of learner motivation, learner tardiness and learner bunking were identified in the weekly memorandum document.

Socio-emotional barriers to learning at the family systems level

Learners at the case study high school appear to experience parental pressure or pressure from their parents to achieve academically. The parental pressure learners experience can be seen as a socio-emotional barrier to learning as learners appear to find it difficult to cope with this pressure and it appears to affect their emotional well-being. This is expresses by the school principal, "I think that is the nature of the times in which we live; the stresses in families and also in our school which is a high stress environment because of the expectations parents have; that if they (their children) come here they are going to exceed academically and there is that pressure on them to succeed. Many of them ignore it until it is very late and then in matric they suffer. I am beginning to hear that a number of them are not in a good way" (Semi-structured interview with school principal).

In addition, parents appear to not take or follow up on the advice provided by the school psychologists. For example the school principal provided examples whereby the psychologist recognised that a learner had depression or attention deficit disorder (ADD) and the psychologist suggested that a learner may need medication for these respective mental disorders. However the parents of the learners did not want their child to be on the required medication. "I think that is a common one when we recognise ADD or we recognise depression and then the parents say they don't want medication, they don't want to follow through on the advice and recommendations" (Semi-structured interview with the school principal). In addition during the focus group interview with the school psychologists they expressed their frustration at trying to contact parents and trying to get support from them. "It is quite difficult to get a hold of the parents…getting that support…to try and follow up with parents" (Focus group with the school psychologists).

Furthermore there appears to be a lack of parental socio-emotional support, which is expressed in a statement by one of the LO educators, "I think the parents need to play a bigger role (in the socio-emotional support of learners)" (Focus group interview with the LO educators). Part of providing socio-emotional support to their children involves having meaningful conversations with their children around such pertinent issues as teenage pregnancy and substance abuse. However, one of the LO educators states that there is a lack of meaningful communication between parents and their children. "They (parents) can't just be like I have no time to talk to my kids about sex and drugs but it is fine the teachers will do it at school. That is quite a big thing because the learners have said this is the first time they will hear about these things because their parents don't speak to us about these things. So they getting information from friends, media, twitter and it is not always the right information. They also need to sit down and have those conversations" (Focus group interview with the LO educators).

One of the school psychologists stated that "they (parents) don't seem to care" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists). However, it was also acknowledged by one of the LO educators that the lack of parent involvement and support may be due in part to parents not physically being present, either due to death or due to living arrangements. "A lot of them maybe don't go home to parents… I think there are a lot of kids in the school that maybe don't

have parents to teach them that. I think kids actually start falling through the system because they don't have the support when they leave here and there is only so much we can give them here" (Focus group interview with the LO educators).

Lastly many of the learners at the case study high school appear to come from poor home circumstances which presents as a socio-emotional barrier to learning. This was expressed by a member of the SBST, "There are lots of learners that don't have anything at home; whether that's food or money or places to study. A lot of the learners are domestic workers children and they live in a little house with three or four other people. So it is a big challenge" (Semi-structured interview with a member of the SBST).

Socio-emotional barriers to learning at the community level

Participants expressed that a lack of outside support services presented as a socio-emotional barrier to learning. Therefore, the participants believed that there was a need for more socio-emotional support from outside support services. Although the school employs three psychologists and these psychologists are primarily responsible for the socio-emotional support of learners, there were times when the psychologists needed the assistance of outside support services for example from the Department of Education, the Police Department and state hospitals. In moments when the school psychologists needed to refer a matter to outside support services they found that support was sparse. These sentiments are expressed by one school psychologist, "the challenge I face is that when they (the learners) do need outside support there is very little…so if there is something were we can't deal with here and we do need to take them elsewhere that I find challenging" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists).

Additionally the school psychologists stated that the support providers from outside support services often have a non-supportive and non-inviting attitude which they find challenging. This is expressed by one psychologist, "the emergency wards at the government hospitals are just a nightmare. It is the same with the police, if we need to go and lay a charge, they are really horrible to them (the learners). When children run away…they tell you to your face, it's irritating me because I don't have time, I have better things to do than to look after a

child that has run away and that is their attitude…it is not as if they are inviting and are supportive. We do get some that are supportive but it is not a nice experience" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists). Therefore participants believed that there was a need for more supportive and generous outside support providers.

Although the school is privileged to be able to employ full-time psychologists at the school, there are times when the school needs outside assistance from the Department of Education and this support is not always there. This is supported by a member of the SBST who states, "we require more support from the educational department" (Semi-structured interview with a member of the SBST). According to the participants at the case study school, the Department of Education needs to provide more accessible and readily available psychological services. A member of the SBST supports this claim by stating, "More support from the Educational Department in terms of their psychological services being more accessible; so you can refer children to the department as well, whether it is for discipline issues or academic issues or anything else" (Semi-structured interview with a member of the SBST). In addition, the Department of Education needs to provide more assistance with the process of application and acceptance into a remedial or special needs school. This sentiment is supported by the school principal who states, "What we need is their help to get into a special school. So that when we have a child who shouldn't be here that we get them to help us to get the child into a special school…That would be our biggest need" (Semi-structured interview with the school principal).

However it appears that the DBST at the Department of Education is overwhelmed with the sheer volume of support that is needed from them, some of which does not fall within their scope of practice. Members of the DBST feel overwhelmed and under-resourced or under-qualified for the work that they are expected to perform. This is supported by claims expressed by the deputy chief in charge of educational services at the DBST. She states, "We are also overloaded. There are only a few psychologists and we have to cover a big area starting from Soweto right through to Diepsloot which is a big challenge. One other challenge is that people do not understand what our core responsibilities are as a psychologist in the department of Education. I think there has been a confusion of skills and I really feel that I don't belong here" (Semi-structured interview with the deputy chief of educational services at the district).

The core functions of emotional services at the district level are to render psychological services to schools, which includes full psychological assessment, screening and placement, debriefing, therapy and learning support (Semi-structured interview with the deputy chief in charge of education services at the district). However, according to a member of the DBST, the DBST needs more trained and skilled learning support specialists. The deputy chief in charge of educational psychology services states, "learning support specialists are needed but because the department has a lack of a post for those teachers and I don't think that the teachers who are learning support specialists have the competence level that is needed and can offer support as needed". In addition, the DBST requires the employment of social workers within the DBST. This is supported by statements made by the deputy chief in charge of educational psychological services at the DBST, "I feel that social workers are needed. The department does not employ any social workers and I feel that they are part of the core functions that I work with and dealing with right now and I think it would be beneficial to be able to work with them. So right now we have to struggle to find a social worker within a certain area to help us and it becomes quite difficult" (Semi-structured interview with the deputy chief of educational services at the district).

4.3.2. Socio-emotional support available to learners

The case study school has developed a system of learner support. This system covers learners' emotional, cognitive and social support. For the purposes of this study the researcher focused on the support structure to address learners' socio-emotional needs, although it became apparent through the research that emotional, cognitive and social support cannot be separated from one another. Figure 3 below, illustrates the support available to learners with socio-emotional needs at the case study high school.

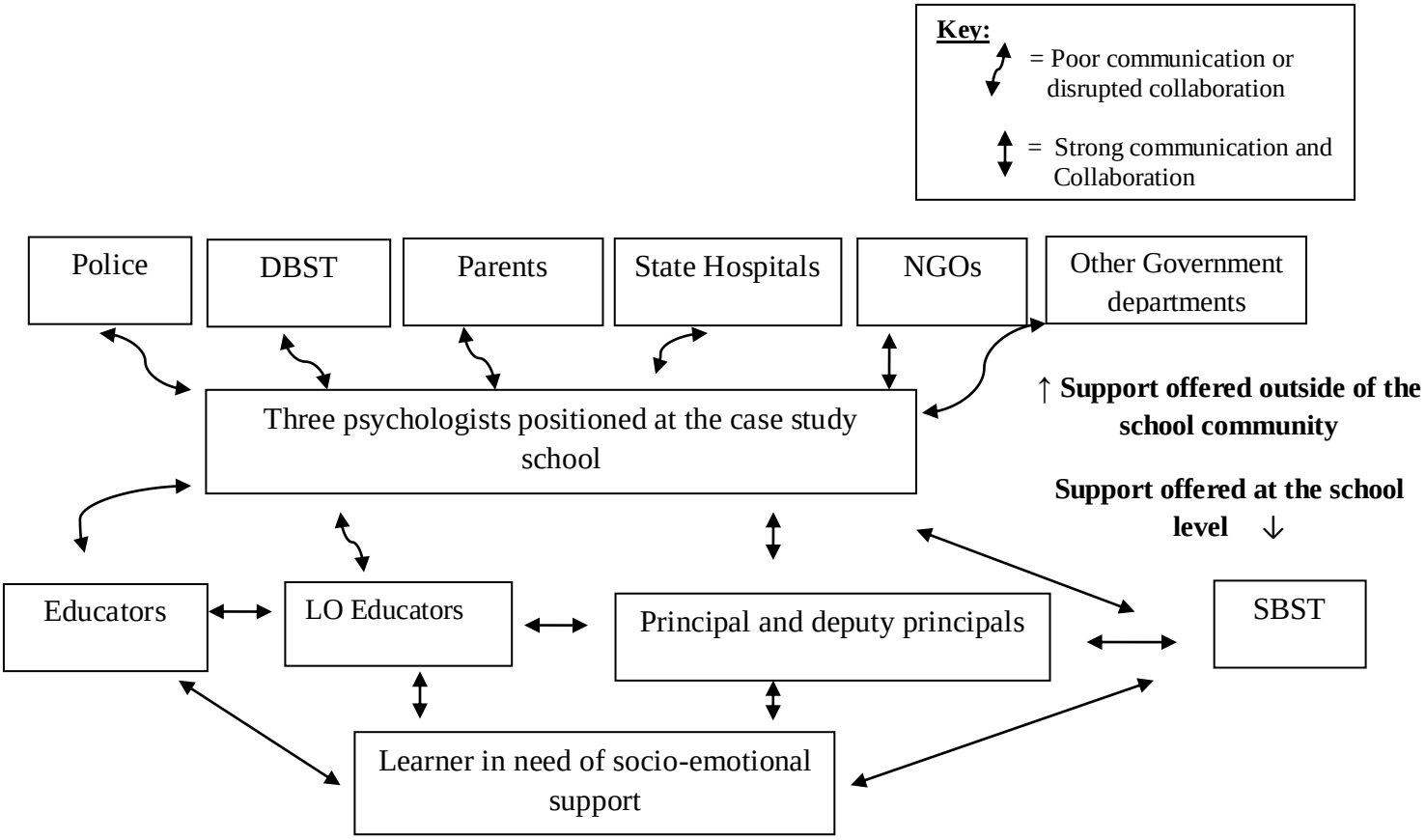


Figure 3. The Structure of support available to high school learners

The support offered to learners at the case study school will be discussed in more detail, using Figure 4 as a guide. Three categories of support are identified: support at the school level, support at the family system level and support at the community level. Each of these levels of support will be discussed using data gathered from the semi-structured interview, focus group interviews, observation and the data analysis of the weekly memorandum document over a three month period.

4.3.2.1. Structure of support at the school level

Please refer to Figure 3 above. Stakeholders who are positioned at the point of entry, or what the researcher will refer to as *the base level of support,* are the educators, the LO educators, the school principal, the deputy principals and members of the SBST. Through observation, it was found that many of the socio-emotional needs presented by the learners at the case study high

school were first identified by either one of these base level stakeholders. For example a learner may discuss a particular problem they have with an educator they trust or with their house head (who is a member of the SBST) or the matter may be brought to the attention of the principal or deputy principals. The matter is either dealt with at the base level or referred to one of three psychologists.

The structure of support at the school level, described above, is further illustrated by statements made during the semi-structured interview with a member of the SBST. A member of the SBST states, "The school is divided into six with a house head assigned to each house. So learners can go to their house head and the house head can refer learners to me (deputy principal in charge of the SBST) and I will refer them to the psychologists or they can go directly to the psychologists. Teachers play a role as well. And then Life Orientation also has a role to play…I think they need to be there to listen and to be supportive and then to refer problems when it needs to be referred to the psychologists" (Semi-structured interview with a member of the SBST).

The connection between learners who display discipline problems and those who experience socio-emotional issues was highlighted by the deputy principal in charge of the SBST. During the semi-structured interview she stated the following: "a lot of our discipline problems stem from children who have pastoral issues; issues at home; things that have gone wrong and so on. So I really firmly believe that SBST and discipline are very closely linked" (Semi-structured interview with a member of the SBST). Therefore the case study school's structure of socio-emotional support is closely tied to their discipline structure, with the deputy in charge of discipline also being in charge of the SBST.

The deputy in charge of the SBST and discipline at the case study school further elaborated on this connection between learners who display discipline problems and those with socio-emotional barriers to learning. During the focus group interview she stated: "We have very few learners that get involved in discipline issues that don't have problems at home. Very often learners whose names come up in the SBST are also learners whose names come up with regards

to discipline issues. I think knowing the situation on both sides means that you can deal better with the discipline problems" (Semi-structured interview with a member of the SBST).

Due to this connection between learners who display socio-emotional problems and those who display discipline problems the school has adopted a restorative discipline approach, whereby learners are not punished straight away; rather they are provided an opportunity to talk about their behaviour. They are encouraged to explore why they acted in the manner they did; what affect their behaviour had on others around them such as their educator and peers and what they could do differently if placed in the same or similar situation. The purpose of restorative discipline is to educate a learner on other more effective ways of behaving and to assist a learner to become more accountable for their behaviour.

The restorative approach is reflected in the following statement by the deputy principal in charge of the SBST, during the semi-structured interview: "I think it is important that the person in charge of discipline at a school should be someone who has patience and who can relate to children and who doesn't fly off the handle and scream and shout and carry on like that because children don't listen to that. They don't get punished straight away. I think it allows children to talk about their problems and I think that is what they want. I think they just want somebody to be interested. If they know that there is somebody who is interested they will do their best to not disappoint you. For most children it works that's all they want. They just want some adult to take an interest in them."

4.3.2.2. Support at the family systems level

A learner's socio-emotional problem is either dealt with at the base level or referred to one of three psychologists. Thus the socio-emotional problem is primarily dealt with at the school level. However, there are moments when the psychologists and the school need to get support from the family system, which primarily consists of the learners' parents. In Figure 3, support offered by parents has been positioned at the same level as outside support services, such as state hospitals and the police department. This is due to the fact that the case study school is the primary source of support to learners with socio-emotional barriers to learning. As discussed in section 4.3.1.1.,

participants in the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews believed that there was a lack of parental support and involvement. They stated that more support was needed from parents to address the socio-emotional needs of learners. This lack of support, communication and involvement from parents is illustrated in Figure 3 by a crooked arrow; please refer to the *key*, in Figure 3.

4.3.2.3. Support offered at the community level

As mentioned above a learner's socio-emotional problem is either dealt with at the base level or referred to one of three psychologists. The psychologists deal with the matter either independently or they may need to refer to an outside source for assistance. For example in the case of an attempted suicide, the psychologist will need to refer the learner to a state hospital or in the case of a rape the psychologist will need to refer the matter to both a state hospital and to a police department. Other government departments that the psychologists may need to refer to or to ask for assistance are the DBST, the education department and social welfare. In addition to government departments the psychologists may need assistance from NGOs, speech and hearing therapists, occupational therapists and social workers. However, as mentioned in section 4.3.1.1. there is a lack of support from outside service providers. Participants believed that more support was needed from the education department, state hospitals, the police service and the DBST. This lack of involvement, communication and support is illustrated in Figure 4.

4.3.3. Collaboration

From the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews with members of the case study school, it is clear that numerous structures of collaboration exist within the case study school. This school-wide collaboration structure is displayed in Figure 3. Collaboration exists between all educators; between educators and the SBST; between the deputy principals and the educators; between the deputy principals and the principal; between the principal and all educators; between the school psychologists and all the educators; between the SBST and the school psychologists and between the school psychologists and the principal. Collaboration amongst all members of the case study school is expressed in the statements made by one school psychologist. She states, "I think it is a collaboration of everyone...I think everybody here is responsible for the emotional,

social and cognitive development of learners…I don't think that there is one single person who can actually stand aside and say they are not responsible" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists).

4.3.3.1 Communication

Within the structure of support at the school level, outlined in section 4.3.2.1., there are numerous communication channels. Some of these communication channels are structured; they are scheduled at specific times and minutes are taken. Other forms of communication are more spontaneous, informal and less structured, for example, communication via email or face-to-face conversation. These two forms of communication (structured and informal communication) will be explored in more detail below.

4.3.3.1.1 Structured communication channels

Structured communication channels in the form of meetings are reflected in Table 7. The minutes of all of the meetings illustrated in Table 7 are recorded and sent to those attending the meetings. What is illustrated in Table 7, on the next page, is that a number of meetings are held to discuss learners' socio-emotional well-being and to develop strategies to address these needs. Thus it would appear that the case study school has prioritised the act of addressing learners' socio-emotional needs and is actively partaking in strategies to address these needs.

Table 7. The summary of scheduled communication channels

Meeting	**School Members involved**	**When the meeting takes place.**
1. Memorandum meeting: Issues in the *weekly memorandum* document are discussed.	All educators, deputy principals and principal	Once a week
2. SBST meeting: Pertinent learner's emotional needs or problems are discussed.	House heads, Psychologists and deputy head	Bi-weekly
3. 2020 meeting: Main learner academic or emotional needs or problems discussed, as well as the most pressing school problems discussed.	Subject department heads, deputy principals, psychologists and the principal	Bi-weekly
4. Meeting with the Psychologists and principal: Trends are discussed with regards to learners' emotional wellbeing so that school-wide intervention programmes can be established.	Three school psychologists and the school principal.	Bi-weekly meeting.

The first meeting illustrated in Table 7 above, is the weekly memorandum meeting. The weekly memorandum document is developed for and discussed during this weekly memorandum meeting. The weekly memorandum document contains up-coming events, important dates to add or alter, trends emerging in classroom behaviour and how to address these trends, recommended readings as well as important learner socio-emotional difficulties worth taking note of. The last aspect of this document (noteworthy learner socio-emotional difficulties) was most important for this study and as such a document review of the *weekly memorandum* over a three month period was conducted.

The importance of and the function of the weekly memorandum document is expressed by the school principal, during the semi-structured interview. "I think people need to know that something is happening. If they identify children in need; whether it is academic need and the child needs to be assessed; teachers need to know what the outcome of the assessment is and these things. So we do have reporting; not revealing much in terms of confidential matters but in the weekly memorandum document we put information that helps teachers handle learners better, understanding that this is a confidential document but it contains just enough for teachers to be able to treat the learners in the correct way."

An example of how information is fed back to the educators is illustrated in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Socio-emotional Barriers Identified and Advice provided in the Weekly Memorandum Document

Barrier to Learning identified	**Example of advice provided**
Poor home circumstances	Staff must just be supportive and give the learner some TLC.
Health issues	Please be supportive and help the learner catch up any work missed.
Disappearance	The matter is being dealt with.
Personal issues	Staff must be as supportive and compassionate as possible. Don't expect too much from her as she cannot give it.
Eating Disorder	Is receiving treatment. Staff are asked to keep an eye on her and contact her parents or the school psychologist if you become aware of any difficulties from her in class.

The name of the learner, a brief sentence explaining the socio-emotional problem and a brief sentence providing advice is provided in the weekly memorandum document. There are mixed opinions about the usefulness and effectiveness of this section of the memorandum document. Educators find that the feedback and information provided on learners with socio-emotional needs is helpful and necessary. This is supported by statements made by one LO

educator. She states, "So it is very helpful to get that little bit of information about them…when you are told a little bit I think it is so beneficial because you are just kind of aware of what is going on and I think they word things quite nicely so you don't know the whole story but you are just aware that something is going on. It does help a lot" (Focus group interview with the LO educators). However, the school psychologists worry about confidentiality and do not trust that information shared in the weekly memorandum document will be kept confidential. This is supported by statements made by one school psychologist. She states, "They (educators) seem to find it difficult not to say something and they don't necessarily say something bad but in their way of saying something positive they kind of highlight the problem…we are worried about confidentiality. I am not happy with that memo but the principal is adamant that they (educators) need to know because the principal trusts that they (educators) are going to be professional but I have my doubts" (Semi-structured interview with the school psychologists).

4.3.3.1.2. Informal communication channels

Communication occurs in the form of structured meetings, described in detail above, however communication also occurs informally via email and face-to-face communication which is more spontaneous and less structured. Informally educators contact the psychologists, usually via email with concerns about specific learners they teach. The psychologists then usually respond via email. However, they are aware of and are worried about confidentiality and will only provide feedback to the educators if absolutely necessary and will make their feedback brief. At times the psychologists sit with the learner as they write the email so that the learner knows exactly what is being conveyed to the educator. Informal communication between the psychologists and educators is described by one of the school psychologists. She states, "We set up individual meetings with the teachers if we have to, I email them. I now email them because you don't know if they are teaching etc. so it is easiest to email them and it is nice that I have that so if I had a child and there was an issue it is nice that I can email them and so that is the easiest thing for me to do now, to email them and say look there it is. So in that way we do have a lot of interaction with them. I try not to interact with the teachers, if I really have to I will. It's really an issue, I make the child sit here and read the email that I send because the issue is confidentiality" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists). In addition, the psychologists may ask for educators' feedback with regards to a child or during an assessment

they may ask an educator to fill in a teacher questionnaire such as the teacher temperament questionnaire (TTQ). However, the psychologists stated that because educators are so busy it is sometimes difficult to get this feedback from the educators. One psychologist states, "getting the information from the teachers that you need is difficult; they are also very busy so" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists). During observation it was discovered that educators discuss learners' socio-emotional concerns amongst themselves and they appear to gain the most support from other educators within their subject departments. Educators also discuss learners' socio-emotional concerns with a learner's house head (a member of the SBST) and the learner's house head may then refer the matter to the psychologists. Alternatively educators discuss a learner's socio-emotional problem directly with a school psychologist.

4.3.3.2 Success factors

During the semi-structured interviews and focus groups with members of the case study school it became apparent that all members of the case study school believed strongly in establishing collaborative structures and working with others to achieve their goals. A belief in collaborative relationships with others within the case study school appears to be a shared belief amongst all those that work within the case study school. Through observation it was found that three essential elements existed at the case study school which can be seen as adding to the success of collaborative efforts. These three elements are namely trust, support and a shared vision. Trust amongst stakeholders; support amongst stakeholders and a shared vision amongst stakeholders appeared to be what members of the case study considered key success factors.

4.3.3.3. Challenges

A breakdown in communication between parents and the school as well as between the psychologists and outside resources are viewed as challenges to effective collaboration. In all the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews with members of the case study school it was expressed that there was a lack of involvement from parents of learners with emotional needs. Thus through the process of data collection it was established that there appears to be a breakdown in communication between members of the case study school and parents of learners with emotional needs. Additionally, during the focus group interview with the school

psychologists it was stated that problems existed when the psychologists had to refer socio-emotional matters to resources outside of the school such as state hospitals, the educational department and the police service. Thus channels of communication between the case study school and these resources could be strengthened to improve effective collaboration amongst stakeholders. In addition there was also a fear of breaking confidentiality expressed by the psychologists in terms of what is communicated to the educators in the weekly memorandum document. The principal was confident that educators treated information expressed in the weekly memorandum as confidential, however, the psychologists were weary of the information they provided to the educators as they had experienced a break in confidentiality by educators and as a result were reluctant to share information about learners in this weekly memorandum document. Thus it would appear that trust and better communication between educators and the school psychologists, needs to be established.

4.3.4. Stakeholder roles and functions

4.3.4.1. The role of the psychologist

A common sentiment found throughout the semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted with members of the case study school was a belief in an increasing need in recent years for psychological services at the school level. Due to this pertinent need the case study high school has employed three full-time psychologists. Without the presence of these three psychologists, their key roles and functions would fall to the other educators within the school system and it is believed that the school system would not function nearly as effectively without their presence.

There also appears to be a shift in the roles and functions that psychologists within a school system are required to perform, as stated by the school principal in the semi-structured interview: “the psychologists play many roles. Originally they were employed to offer the normal kind of emotional and psychological support, for children with difficulties of all sorts. The original educational psychologist was able to do assessments and this was needed in terms of assessing students’ potential and why they might be struggling. We didn’t have a social worker so the psychologist also plays a bit of a role as a social worker. Then the work grew so

we employed another person; then the work grew again so we employed another person, all of whom are busy nearly all of the time, we can't actually believe it. They have extended more into study support so their role has in fact broadened."

Some of their core functions are:

1. **Counselling:** Learners are referred for counselling by educators, house heads, the principal or deputy principals. There are some learners who are referred for counselling after a disciplinary hearing, as part of a punitive measure. However, the majority of learners are referred for counselling as an educator, house head, deputy principal or school principal has identified the need for counselling. The counselling sessions are booked on a computer system. As the names of learners who are scheduled to receive counselling are revealed in the computer system this system has limited access. Only the heads of houses, psychologists, deputy principals and principal are able to access this system and book counselling sessions for learners. Educators do not have access to this computer system and cannot book counselling sessions for learners directly through the computer system. Educators must therefore refer the matter to a member of the SBST. If there is a crisis and a learner needs to receive counselling straight away, scheduled counselling sessions are rescheduled. But if there is no crisis then the school psychologists see scheduled learners which have been booked on the computer system.
2. **Study skills/support:** The psychologists offer study skills and study support for learners. Educators also refer learners to the psychologists when they feel that learners will benefit from doing their homework in a controlled environment. Thus the psychologists take on a learning support role. The school tried to employ a remedial educator as they recognised the need for learning support, however they were unable to find a suitable person. Thus the psychologists have taken it upon themselves to offer this support.
3. **Psycho-educational assessment**: The psychologists offer psycho-educational assessment to learners, which they state is very time-consuming. As one school psychologist stated during the focus group interview, "I use two whole mornings from 8-11:00, to try and get the assessments done. Then I still have to write the reports which I do that afternoon, so it takes a lot of time."

4. **Parental guidance and counselling:** The psychologists offer some parental guidance, parental support and parent counselling. However as stated previously participants felt that there is a lack of involvement and support from parents and therefore, although available, parents do not appear to use this resource.
5. **Working collaboratively with educators:** The psychologists work collaboratively with educators to establish best practices with regards to the handling of learners with socio-emotional barriers to learning.
6. **Career guidance:** Although the school has contracted an outside company to do subject choice assessment and career assessment; the psychologists still offer some career guidance and subject choice guidance.
7. **Socio-emotional support:** The psychologists believe that the key positive contributions made by the work that they do is to provide socio-emotional support to learners.

4.3.4.2. The role of the SBST

A member of the SBST, during the semi-structured interview, describes the role of the SBST as follows: "the SBST essentially offers base level support to learners and provides a system of support to learners with socio-emotional needs. I think it gives learners the sense that there is support at school. I think we are getting to a situation now where lots of children don't have any support at home at all. So I think it gives them a sense of being heard and it just gives them a sense of we can go to school and there is support there for us."

The importance of this role is further elaborated on by a member of the SBST, during the semi-structured individual interview. She states, "I think the SBST is becoming more and more of an important structure in terms of helping children to cope at school with their academics and all the other problems that are going on at home. So I can see it growing in necessity within the school…I do think that SBST is maybe under-utilized in other schools. But in this school we utilise it and it is of great value to us." In addition she believes that the structure of the SBST established by the case study school is particularly effective. She states, "I think that the structure we have here works because of the fact that we have this house head system. I think that the

house head system is good because you can take a big school of a thousand two hundred children and split them up into six smaller groups. So you not having to deal with huge numbers."

4.3.4.3. *The role of the educator*

The structure of support present in the case study school requires that educators work collaboratively with other members of staff to provide socio-emotional support to the learners that they teach and that all members of the staff provide a network of support to the learners. It appears that all educators provide a base level of support and then refer more serious socio-emotional matters to the psychologists either directly or via the house heads. This is reflected in comments made by the school principal, during the semi-structured interview: "when it comes to emotional support I think ordinary teachers can be the first line but when it becomes more serious teachers should hand over to people who are better trained; those who can counsel and the psychologists…I think the psychologists are there to take it further when the normal processes aren't working for a child but it is part of every teacher's job."

In addition, staff development at the case study school is given high priority. Some of the courses or training the educators at the case study receive are on basic counselling skills and the detection of mental illness. The staff development provided to educators at the case study school is provided by senior members of the staff or alternatively the school seeks the assistance of NGOs such as Rapewise to provide this training. However it must be noted that when outside organisations provide training to the school, the cost of this training is provided by the school governing body (SGB). The training that the educators at the case study receive allows them to offer base level support to learners with socio-emotional needs. The educators then either deal with socio-emotional issues themselves or refer these matters to the psychologists either directly or through the SBST.

4.3.5. Life Orientation

What was consistent throughout the data analysis was the importance of Life Orientation. However it was believed that certain areas of Life Orientation needed to be re-worked.

4.3.5.1. *The benefit of Life Orientation*

The value of Life Orientation (LO) was mentioned by many individuals in both the individual semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. For example during the semi-structured individual interview, the school principal stated "I think it (LO) is a valuable learning area". A member of the SBST reiterated this sentiment, during the semi-structured individual interview. She stated "I think it (LO) is very valuable". A school psychologist stated that Life Orientation is a highly valuable learning area. During the focus group interview she stated "I think it (LO) is excellent…it is very worthwhile". However, she cautioned that the value of LO depends on the educator who teaches the subject. During the focus group interview she stated "But as with anything I think you get good teachers and you get bad teachers and if it is a good teacher then it will be taught efficiently and it will be excellent, but if it is not such a good teacher than it will go by the waste side and it will not be done productively and effectively." Additionally, one of the psychologists stated that 'good LO educators' are able to detect socio-emotional challenges learners' face and then refer these issues to the school psychologists. She stated "some good teachers are able to pick up a lot during LO and are able to come to me and discuss it" (Focus group interview with the school psychologists). This was further supported by the LO educators, during the focus group interview, who all agreed that learners share more of their socio-emotional challenges during LO lessons than they do during their other subject lessons.

4.3.5.2. *Challenges to the effective implementation of Life Orientation*

Despite all of the participants agreeing that Life Orientation (LO) is a valuable learning area and could potentially add to the support offered by the SBST, DBST and educational psychologists, they all agreed that LO faces numerous challenges to its effective implementation. The following challenges were highlighted:

4.3.5.2.1. Life Orientation Assessment

Participants felt that the assessment of Life Orientation presented problems. The problems with the assessment of Life Orientation were described by the school principal, during the semi-

structured interview, as follows: “I think it is a valuable learning area but I don’t think it should be examinable. I think they made it examinable so that teachers are accountable so they are using assessments as a discipline measure and a checking up measure because otherwise they fear that it won’t happen. I think they are right; I suspect that if they don’t have to do assessments many schools would cut it out; which is a pity, so I suspect that it probably has to stay this way until teachers are generally more accountable and understand that the value doesn’t lie in assessments but the value lies in the content.”

The deputy in charge of the SBST had similar sentiments to share and she too believed that the assessment of Life Orientation was problematic. During the semi-structured interview she stated the following: “I think it is very valuable. I think the education department needs to look at Life Orientation as a subject that should not necessarily be assessed. I think that is the problem with Life Orientation is that everybody is worried about the assessments that they have to do when in actual fact those lessons could be much better used in terms of having discussions and teaching valuable lessons about how to cope with certain situations and bullying and whatever is prevalent in the school. “

4.3.5.2.2. A fixed syllabus

In addition to the problems with regards to the assessment of Life Orientation; an additional problem that was identified by the participants was the issue of an inflexible and fixed Life Orientation (LO) curriculum. During the semi-structured interview the school principal stated the following: “I think having an LO curriculum that is very fixed is probably not a good idea because I think it’s a place where I think you should be more flexible to deal with issues that are affecting the learners in the class at that time”. A member of the SBST shared similar views to the school principal. During the semi-structured interview she stated the following: “By giving us a syllabus and a curriculum to follow every school is following the same curriculum whereas I think every school has different challenges. So if we had the capacity to create our own Life Orientation syllabus that would suit our own school and the kids that we have at this school I think then it would probably be the most valuable learning area.”

4.3.5.2.3. Taking the subject seriously

Together with the problems around the assessment of Life Orientation and an inflexible curriculum, participants felt there was a need for educators, learners and parents to take Life Orientation more seriously. This sentiment was expressed by one of the Life Orientation educators, during the focus group interview. She stated the following: "people not taking the subject seriously that's our biggest issue and it's not just the kids it is also the teachers…parents could also take it seriously because in my class I hear children saying well I took this and showed it to my mom and she couldn't be bothered. So I would like LO to be taken seriously and to be made like a core subject."

4.3.5.2.4. The importance of Physical Education

Together with the need for educators, learners and parents to take LO more seriously, participants felt that the physical education component of Life Orientation was invaluable and therefore needed to be taught by a passionate and trained physical education educator, The benefits and importance of the physical education component of Life Orientation was expressed by a Life Orientation educators during the focus group interview. She states, "I also think that we should separate Physical Education from LO because there are some teachers who want to teach Life Orientation but really are not interested in the physical education which is a pity because that is part of life and you don't have a balanced life unless you have physical education or physical something in your life, but I would rather have physical education taught by a passionate physical education teacher…Which means that we have to bring physical education back into teacher training."

4.3.5.2.5. The need for passionate Life Orientation educators

In addition to passionate and trained physical education educators, participants felt that there was a need for passionate and trained Life Orientation educators. A Life Orientation educator stated the following, during the focus group interview: "As the system that we have places teachers who aren't passionate about the subject into a teaching role and I feel that if you are enthusiastic about what you teach you are better at it than when you don't actually want to be teaching the

subject. Your negativity to the subject will actually rub off on the girls and they will pick this up. So if the teacher doesn't take it seriously the girls will also not take it seriously so I think it is problematic to have a system which places teachers who aren't trained to teach Life Orientation or who aren't passionate about the subject in the department."

4.3.5.2.6. Applying Life Orientation knowledge in daily life

A problem that was identified through the data analysis was the issue of linking the knowledge the learners have learned in Life Orientation lessons; knowledge about such issues as substance abuse and teenage pregnancy, with their actions outside of the school environment. What was discussed was that learners did not appear to apply what they had been taught in school to their lives outside of the school environment. For example during the semi-structured interview the school principal stated the following: "they know it and they might indulge in say for example drugs not because they don't know but because they are going to just live risky lives because that's the nature of a teenager; they haven't got that brain maturity to be discriminating so I regret that despite the education they still do it". This inability to apply what is taught in the Life Orientation (LO) classes to their lives outside of the classroom is further described by one LO educator, during the focus group interview. She stated the following: "there is that missing link and you have to close the gap somehow, between what they are hearing in the classroom and then what they are doing outside in the real world as well, because it is a big challenge."

4.4. Summary

Chapter 4 presented a summary of the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis process. Subsequently each theme and sub-theme was discussed. Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the main findings, the implications of these findings, as well as limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Summary of the Research Study and Findings

South African schools have a pivotal role to play in addressing the social issues present in the lives of vulnerable children, as schools have incomparable access to youth and are therefore natural places to reach vulnerable children. Education White Paper 6 aims to enable education structures and systems to meet the needs of all learners; these include learners with socio-emotional barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001). Thus, the research provided a case study of one government high school in Gauteng with the primary aim of examining the structure of support available to address the socio-emotional needs of high school learners. The research was in the form of a qualitative enquiry. The following data collection methods were used; semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, observation and document review. Through the process of content analysis and through an acquisition of an interpretivist lens, the researcher gained a deep understanding of the lived experiences of the participants, relying on their perceptions and interpretations thereof. This section of the research report identifies the main findings. Together with information gathered from the literature review, the findings are then discussed.

The major socio-emotional challenges experienced by learners in this study were: academic pressure, peer pressure, bullying, teenage pregnancy, depression, suicide ideation/attempted suicide, poor living conditions and health problems. This is consistent with research conducted by Reddy et al. (2003), Rooth (2005) and Van der Riet & Knoetze's (2004). Learners in this study also displayed a lack of motivation, tardiness and bunking. Education White Paper 6 states that at the school-level, partnerships must be established with parents (Department of Education, 2001). However, in this study a lack of parental support and involvement was identified as a socio-emotional barrier to learning. There was little to no communication between the parents and the educators. These findings are consistent with research conducted by Du Toit and Forlin (2009). A large percentage of the parents in the study were illiterate and were thus unable to help their children with their homework. In addition, for many families their own social deprivation and difficulties were so overpowering that little

energy, time or money was left for helping their children. These factors stated above often result in learners displaying socio-emotional behaviourial problems which impact on their ability to learn at school and can therefore be considered a socio-emotional barrier to learning. Lastly, a lack of outside support from service providers such as state hospitals, the police and the education department, was identified as an additional socio-emotional barrier to learning.

The case study school has established a network of support in order to address the socio-emotional needs identified above. This system of support relies upon each and every staff member at the school. This is consistent with the guidelines in Education White Paper 6 where educators are viewed as the primary resource for achieving an inclusive education system (Department of Education, 2001). At the base level of the support structure, at the case study school lie all sixty-eight educators. It appears that all educators, but particularly the Life Orientation educators provide a base level of support and then refer more serious socio-emotional matters to the psychologists either directly or via the house heads. The educators, particularly the Life Orientation educators and members of the SBST, appear to be the first point of entry as many learners appear to first seek assistance from their educators. In addition, as the educators appear to spend the majority of time with the learners, they are also often the first to pick up on socio-emotional issues or concerns. Qualified Life Orientation educators at a high school level have at least two years of psychological training at a university level thus they could potentially play a vital role in the provision of socio-emotional support to high school learners.

However, in order for all educators to fulfill their essential role as stipulated in Education White Paper 6, they need to improve their skills and knowledge. Therefore, staff development at the school and district level is critical (Department of Education, 2001). Staff development at the case study school is given high priority. However it must be noted that when outside organisations provide training to the school, the cost of this training is provided by the school governing body (SGB). Thus it must be acknowledged that many schools in South Africa may not be able to afford such training. The training that the educators at the case study receive allows them to offer base level support to learners with socio-emotional needs. The educators then either deal with socio-emotional issues themselves or refer these matters to the psychologists either directly or through the SBST.

According to Education White Paper 6, the core function of the SBST is to support all learners and educators by identifying support needed and designing intervention strategies to address the challenges faced by the educators (Department of Education, 2001). As mentioned previously, the learners in the case study school are divided up into six houses. Each house has a house head. The house head is an educator who is in charge of the socio-emotional well-being of the learners in their house. The SBST is made up of the following members: the six house heads, the three psychologists (one clinical psychologist and two educational psychologists) and a deputy principal in charge of the SBST. The SBST meet regularly to discuss learners' socio-emotional needs and strategies to address these needs, which usually requires the services of the three psychologists.

With the inception of Education White Paper 6, school-based psychologists in government schools in South Africa are generally employed by the school governing body (SGB) or are private consultants attached to schools (Department of Education, 2001). The three psychologists at the case study school are employed by the school governing body (SGB). Their primary roles within the school system are to offer counselling, psycho-educational assessment, remedial assistance, career and subject choice guidance and studying support services. The skills offered by the three psychologists are in accordance with the scope of practice highlighted in the amendments made to the Health Professions Act (Department of Health, 2011).

Although the case study school was able to employ three full-time psychologists, many schools in South Africa cannot afford to do this. As a result there is an unequal distribution of psychological services with educational psychologists mostly found in urban areas, with the highest concentration in the more financially secure schools who can afford to retain these services. Furthermore, with the limited number of educational psychologists it is not possible for every school in South Africa to employ these professionals at their school. However, while there is a severe shortage of educational psychologists and psychological resources and thus educational psychologists could not be positioned in all schools in South Africa, this doesn't mean to say that it should be excluded completely at the school level.

In addition, educational psychologists are envisaged to be part of the DBST, but Education White Paper 6 does not clearly define their role nor does it acknowledge the specialised role of the educational psychologist or specify the use of psychological services in the education system. Educational psychologists are seen to be a part of the DBST and are not seen to be positioned at the school level. Thus the majority of schools are dependent on district health services for psychological services and as such the district based support teams are under enormous strain due to the demand for their services. In a study conducted by Du Toit and Forlin (2009), it was found that the educators in the study were concerned that their learners needed support over and above that which they could provide. These educators were concerned over the lack of a strong and cohesive support system within the Department of Education. Educators reported that the response rate by the Department could even be as much as two to three years upon request for a psycho-educational assessment, and as a result they arranged for parents to take their children to a state funded hospital for a psycho-educational assessment to be conducted. These sentiments were supported by the current research.

In addition to the role of school psychologists, principals have been cited as the single most influential individuals in creating inclusive school culture and climate (Swart & Pettipher, 2001). At the case study school, the three deputy principals, as well as the principal form a base level of support to learners and also refer matters to the psychologists or assist the psychologist with service delivery. Without their leadership the establishment and functioning of the support structure would not be possible. Furthermore, collaboration between members of the staff is viewed as essential and communication, both structured and informal, is also a key component of the structure of support.

5.2. Recommendations

Educators are often not skilled or trained to provide adequate socio-emotional support to high school learners. Thus school-based support teams that comprise of educators alone cannot address the increasing volume of emotional needs of high school learners and they require the services of trained and skilled professionals such as educational psychologists, remedial educators and social workers. Ideally these professionals should be positioned at the school level.

This is supported by the literature that states that the *Norms and Standards* can be construed as asking educators to serve children in roles that are ideally filled by social workers, community practitioners and other specialists. Morrow (2007, 96) states that the document "inflates the work of educators beyond the capacity of all but the exceptionally talented and obsessively committed". In addition, a study conducted by Williams (2010) found that SBSTs struggle to pull together a cogent response to the overwhelming number of needy children, and educators find themselves trying to fashion ad-hoc solutions to the problems presented by their learners.

Therefore perhaps educational psychologists could be employed by the Education Department and be attached to a few neighbourhood schools. In addition, perhaps educational psychologists could offer group counselling to learners as well as more indirect service delivery. For example educational psychologists could provide training to educators, particularly Life Orientation educators and members of the SBST's. Alternatively, NGOs that offer training on basic counselling skills and the detection of mental illnesses could perhaps be funded by the Education Department or by the business sector to provide such training to Life Orientation educators and members of the SBST. Furthermore, schools such as the case study school, which are able to employ three full-time school psychologists could establish partnerships with neighbouring schools whereby these psychologists offer training to the educators at the neighbouring schools.

The Salamanca "Framework for Action" (Unesco, 1994) states that the government should offer a continuum of support services to support the development of inclusive schools (UNESCO, 1994). However, the DBSTs appear to be overwhelmed by the volume of work required from them and are also not fully skilled or trained to perform some of the tasks required of them. For example the department of education has not employed social workers in the DBST and thus the DBST is faced to source these professionals themselves or take on their roles when they are unable to source these professionals. Thus the researcher strongly believes that it is imperative that trained and skilled personnel are employed by the Department of Education to address the socio-emotional needs of learners. Employing trained and skilled professionals such as social workers, educational psychologists and remedial educators, would ensure that the Department of Education would be able to provide more readily available and accessible

psychological services which was suggested to be lacking. The case study school also needed the Department of Education to help them with the application process and to assist them to get learners into remedial schools. However, the South African reality is that there is a shortage of these trained professionals; therefore, the existing support base, the educators, the LO educators, the SBST's, need to be empowered.

According to Creese, Daniels and Norwich (2000), the idea of schools which aim to develop support structures that allow professionals to interact and share knowledge with fellow educators, is likely to have positive outcomes. The findings of this study correspond with the findings of research conducted by Thabana (2004), who carried out a case study on a school in a disadvantaged area. This study found that the entire staff and the SBST expressed the need for support from social workers and psychologists. In addition, they believed that the Department of Education should ensure that the above-mentioned specialists are available in each school because they cannot affectively deal with the problems they experience without help from other professionals. This is further consistent with research conducted by Williams (2010) who found that nearly everyone interviewed at both schools expressed a strong desire to have greater access to social workers and other experts to treat the psychosocial issues their learners were grappling with.

The current research found that in addition to the Department of Education the case study school needed more assistance from other government departments such as the police department and state hospitals. This is consistent with Education White Paper 6 which emphasises intersectoral collaboration and a need for all Government Departments to work collaboratively (Department of Education). Furthermore it appears that parents need to play a greater supportive role in their children's lives. This is consistent with the guidelines stipulated in Education White Paper 6 which state that partnerships must be established with parents (Department of Education, 2001). Great effort needs to be made to include parents where possible and to educate and guide them in how to successively provide support to their children. Education White Paper 6 states that parents must be provided with information, counseling and skills, in order to play a more active role in the learning and teaching of their own children (Department of Education, 2001).

Educational psychologists could have a pivotal role in providing parents with this training, skill development and counselling.

Lastly, although all participants felt that Life Orientation was a subject of enormous worth, Life Orientation educators felt that the subject was undervalued by other educators, parents and learners. Thus a focus on making Life Orientation a core subject that is taken seriously by educators, parents and learners is needed. Life Orientation needs to become a subject that is valued and that is worthwhile. It is recommended that Life Orientation educators receive basic counselling training and workshops that can empower them to offer base level support. It is recommended that the Life Orientation curriculum be flexible in order for schools to be able to address their most pertinent issues. In addition, Life Orientation educators employed to teach this learning area need to be passionate about the subject that they teach, including those that teach the Physical Education component.

5.3. Limitations of the study

The research utilised a case study design of one government high school in Gauteng and as such the sample group of participants was limited in size. The research involved a school principal, a member of the SBST, a member of the DBST, three psychologists and eight Life Orientation educators. Due to the limited sample size the findings of the research may not correlate to the broader population. In addition the case study school can be considered a ‘resourced’ school. The school-governing body is able to afford three full-time psychologists and other resources such as a computer centre, fields, laboratories and a library as well as highly qualified educators. Thus the results of the study may not be transferable to other schools in South Africa. Additionally, the findings related to parent involvement and participation may not be reliable as there was a lack of access to parents’ perspectives on this area of research inquiry.

5.4. Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended that future research examine the role parents play within the structure of socio-emotional support. Future research could examine what factors prevent or allow for parent participation and what can be done to encourage more parent participation. In addition, future research could provide a case study of a 'disadvantaged' school, examining the structure of support available to high school learners. Furthermore this sort of research could examine whether the recommendations made by the current research are viable and realistic. A comparative study could be conducted whereby various different forms of structures in schools to support learners with socio-emotional needs are compared. The study focused primarily on Life Orientation educators' views, thus future research could conduct a study which examines other educators' perspectives on what socio-emotional support is needed in high schools in South Africa. Future research could expand on the current research by conducting a quantitative study. A quantitative research study could examine a number of different schools both resourced and under-resourced alternatively the study could examine schools in different provinces. Additionally, future research could provide some training to Life Orientation educators or members of the SBST with regards to providing base level support to learners with socio-emotional barriers to learning. A researcher could then use a pre and post-test design together with a control group and examine the effectiveness of the training from the perspective of the Life Orientation educators or members of the SBST as well as perhaps other relevant stakeholders.

5.5. Conclusion

South African youth face a variety of challenges and barriers to learning. The prevalence of learners with emotional and behavioural barriers to learning (EBD) in South African schools is significantly increased due to the disadvantaged circumstances that many of the learners live in. Therefore, South African schools have a pivotal role to play in addressing the social issues present in the lives of vulnerable children, as schools have incomparable access to youth and are therefore natural places to reach vulnerable children. Education White Paper 6 aims to enable education structures and systems to meet the needs of all learners; these include learners with socio-emotional barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001). Education White paper 6

states that educational structures of support should be established to provide support to these learners. These structures of support include; the school based support team (SBST), educators, the principal, the school management team (SMT), educational psychologists, the school governing body (SGB), families, communities, professionals such as health care workers, social workers, non-profit organisations (NGOs). Thus, the research provided a case study of one government high school in Gauteng with the primary aim of examining the structure of support available to address the socio-emotional needs of high school learners. In addition, there is limited information on the role of Life Orientation educators within this structure of support. Thus the research examined what role Life Orientation educators could play when working collaboratively to provide socio-emotional support to high school learners. After an examination of the research results a number of recommendations were made. The researcher believes that these recommendations could potentially enable schools and district based support teams (DBST) to reach more students. In addition, the recommendations made could improve the ability of schools and district-based support teams to respond to student's socio-emotional barriers to learning.

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Appendix 1

Letter to Seek Permission: School Principal

A Structure of Support to Address the Socio-emotional Needs of High School Learners: A Case Study of One Government High School in Johannesburg

To whom it may concern

My name is Emma Brand and I am an Educational Psychology master's student studying at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). I am conducting research as part of the requirement for the completion of my degree.

The primary aim of the research is to explore the structure of educational support services required to address the numerous socio-emotional needs of high school learners, within one *resourced* government high school in Johannesburg. The research aims to examine the following:

- What support is needed
- What supportive relationships exist
- What support could be strengthened?

In addition, the research aims to add to the literature and research done on this topic. Additionally, the research aims to examine how best to support LO educators, in the provision of socio-emotional support to high school learners.

I would like you and your school to participate in my research. For participation in this study, all Life Orientation educators would partake in one focus group session of approximately 60 minutes. In addition, all school psychologists would partake in a focus group session of approximately 60 minutes. Furthermore a member of the school based support team (SBST) as well as the school principal would each partake in a one on one, face to face semi-structured interview of approximately 60 minutes. As I aim to use a case study research design, I would like to participate in observation, conduct a document review and a reflective journal.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and no one will be disadvantaged or advantaged for choosing to participate or choosing not to participate in this study. Due to the nature of this study, there are no inherent risks or dangers to you, your educators or your school. There are also no inherent benefits. Participants may choose to withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to answer specific questions. Anonymity will ensured in the recording of data. The results will be processed by myself (the researcher) and my supervisor. If direct quotes are used from

the questionnaire responses, no identifying information will accompany that quote. Neither the name of the school nor the participant names will be used when the research data is published.

General feedback from the results of the study will be presented in a summary and will be sent to your school once the research is completed. A copy of the final report will be sent to you as the principal.

I formally request your permission to conduct this research project at your school. Space is provided for you to sign on the next page should you decide to grant permission for this study to proceed.

Kind Regards

_____

Emma Brand

Appendix 2

Letter to Seek Permission: School Governing Body

A Structure of Support to Address the Socio-emotional Needs of High School Learners: A Case Study of One Government High School in Johannesburg

To whom it may concern

My name is Emma Brand and I am an Educational Psychology master's student studying at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). I am conducting research as part of the requirement for the completion of my degree.

The primary aim of the research is to explore the structure of educational support services required to address the numerous socio-emotional needs of high school learners, within one *resourced* government high school in Johannesburg. The research aims to examine the following:

- What support is needed
- What supportive relationships exist
- What support could be strengthened?

The research aims to add to the literature and research done on this topic. Additionally, the research aims to examine how best to support LO educators, in the provision of socio-emotional support to high school learners.

I would like your school to participate in my research. For participation in this study, all Life Orientation educators and all school psychologists would partake in a focus group interview of approximately 60 minutes each. A member of the school based support team (SBST) and the school principal would each partake in a one on one, face to face interviews for approximately 60 minutes. As I aim to use a case study research design, I would like to participate in observation, conduct a document review (over a three month period) and a write a reflective journal.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and no one will be disadvantaged or advantaged for choosing to participate or not in this study. Due to the nature of this study, there are no inherent risks or dangers to you, your educators or your school. Participants may choose to withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to answer specific questions. Anonymity is ensured as no identifying information is asked for. The results will be processed by myself (the researcher) and my supervisor, so confidentiality is ensured. If direct quotes are used from the questionnaire responses, no identifying information will accompany that quote. The results obtained from this research may be used for publication.

General feedback from the results of the study will be presented in a summary and will be sent to your school once the research is completed. A copy of the final report will be sent to you as the principal.

I formally request your permission to conduct this research project at your school. Space is provided for you to sign on the next page should you decide to grant permission for this study to proceed.

Kind Regards

_____

Emma Brand

Appendix 3

Participant Information Sheet

A Structure of Support to Address the Socio-emotional Needs of High School Learners: A Case Study of One Government High School in Johannesburg

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Emma Brand and I am currently completing my masters in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). Part of the requirement of the completion of this degree is the submission of a research report.

The primary aim of the research is to explore the structure of educational support services required to address the numerous socio-emotional needs of high school learners, within one *resourced* government high school in Johannesburg. The research aims to examine the following:

- What support is needed
- What supportive relationships exist
- What support could be strengthened?

In addition, the research aims to add to the literature and research done on this topic. Additionally, the research aims to examine how best to support LO educators, in the provision of socio-emotional support to high school learners.

Should you agree to participate in this study, I will require approximately **60 minutes** of your time to partake in a face to face interview. Alternatively, if you are a Life Orientation educator or school psychologist I would require approximately **60 minutes** of your time to participate in a focus group. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and no one will be advantaged or disadvantaged for choosing to participate or not in this study. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage and to not answer specific questions should you so choose. Due to the nature of this study, there are no inherent risks or dangers to you, your learners or your school. There are also no direct benefits for the participants. You will remain anonymous as no identifying information is asked for in the questionnaire. The results of this study will be processed by myself (the researcher) and my supervisor, so that anonymity is ensured. If any direct quotes are used in the final report from your questionnaire responses, no identifying information will accompany that quote. The results obtained from this research may be used for publication.

General feedback from the results of the study will be presented in a summary and sent to your school once the research is completed. A copy of the final report will be sent to the principal of your school.

I hereby, formally request your permission to be involved in this research. Space is provided for you to sign on the next page should you decide to grant permission to partake in this study.

Kind Regards

_____

Emma Brand

Appendix 4

Participant Consent Form (Recording)

I, _____, having read the participant information sheet, consent to participate in the interview and have my interview recorded by Emma Brand. In doing so I understand that:

- My participation in this study is voluntary
- I have the right to not answer a question(s)
- I may withdraw from the study at any time
- My interview will be recorded
- My interview recording will be subject to an analysis
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report
- My recorded interview will only be heard by the researcher and her supervisor
- My recorded interview will be kept in a safe place (a locked cabinet)
- I am aware that the results of this study will be reported in the form of a research report for the partial completion of the degree, Master of Educational Psychology, and may be published in a scientific journal

Signed: _____

Date: _____