UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

OF INTERVENTIONS TO BUILD SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

-   A PILOT STUDY

KAMILLA V. RAWATLAL

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- A PILOT STUDY

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Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology)

at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Howard College

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is being submitted in fulfilment of the degree Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This research work has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University. All sources used in this work have been duly acknowledged according to the guidelines of the American Psychological Association (6th edition).

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DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

I, KAMILLA VARSHA RAWATLAL, declare that

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2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Signed

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all those who, despite all the odds,

work towards making this a better world.

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My family and friends, especially Vivek Surrendra and Kesaven Kisten for your interest and support in my work.

My brother, Prof. Randhir Rawatlal, Seema and nephew, Karul Veer Rawatlal, for their presence and blessings in my life.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Department of Education in South Africa has adopted the concept of whole school development in the delivery of basic education. Social connectedness in the school environment is central to this concept and is protective of mental health wellbeing, promotive of academic motivation and can contribute to reducing high risk behaviour in adolescents. The aim of this study was thus to pilot interventions to build school connectedness. Given the disappointing findings from individual, single focused initiatives in schools and the escalating incidents of high risk behaviours and deviance reported in many South African schools, this study, using the ecological framework, piloted multi-systemic, contextual interventions to enhance school connectedness and improve adolescent's resilience.

Method: This study utilised a mixed methods evaluation research in an intervention and control school, involving three phases. Phase one involved qualitative formative evaluation. Four focus groups with 10-15, Grade 10 learners and four semi-structured interviews with managers and teachers were conducted in the intervention school to inform intervention. Phase two involved the development and implementation of the intervention in the intervention school. Phase three involved evaluation of the outcomes of the pilot intervention using a quasi-experimental design as well as qualitative process evaluation of the intervention piloted. The latter involved four focus group sessions with Grade 10 learners, four key informant interviews with teachers and managers and lesson plan analysis. The outcome evaluation quasi-experimental study used a before and

after matched control design. This involved 137 pre-post outcome measures administered in the intervention school and 123 pre-post surveys in the control school.

Results: The evaluation results were discussed within the ecological framework that informed the development of the interventions. At the intrapersonal level, the results of the formative evaluation highlighted, *inter alia*, the need for interventions to strengthen academic motivation. The intervention focused on strengthening 'inner resources' in adolescence. Learners were receptive to the self-assessment and self-regulation exercises. The outcome evaluation indicated an improvement in sense of academic motivation in the intervention school compared to the comparison school. Themes from the qualitative process evaluation suggest the usefulness of the interventions at this level for strengthening 'inner resources' and promoting a sense of improved future orientation and emotional competence. At the interpersonal and community levels, the need to address anti-social capital groups and promote positive influences in adolescent life as well as strengthen learner teacher connectivity emerged from the formative evaluation. At the interpersonal and community school levels, the outcome evaluation indicated an improvement in learners' sense of school membership in the intervention school compared to the control school. The qualitative process evaluation suggests that this was aided by improved interpersonal connectivity between learners as well as learners and staff at the interpersonal level. The establishment of a peer mentor programme and learner staff liaison group assisted through providing the space for opening channels of

communication between learners as well as learners and teachers/management, enabling a shift in thinking from 'top-down' to cyclical and collaborative approaches in school management.

Conclusion and Recommendations: This pilot study provides a model for intervening at multiple levels within the school system to promote school connectedness in South Africa. It is recommended that future research explore the role of such a systemic approach in promoting mental health and reducing risk behaviours in adolescents; and how such strategies can be embedded with the whole school approach that is being advocated by the Department of Education. This would be particularly important for schools serving deprived areas, given the role that school social connectedness can play in the promotion of mental health wellbeing and the prevention of high risk and deviant behaviour in adolescents.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Adolescent	A young person in the process of developing from a child into an adult
Learner	Individuals who gain knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through experience or study
Student	One who is enrolled or attends classes at a school, college or university
Grade	Level of academic development in a primary, middle, or secondary school
Psychological Intervention	Methods used to facilitate change in an individual
Connectedness	The measure of how people come together and interact
Belonging	Psychological membership in the school or classroom
School Membership	Belonging, either individually or collectively, to a group
Mental health wellbeing	A state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stressors of life, can work productively and make a contribution to his/her own community
Academic motivation	A students desire or level of interest regarding subjects
Risk factors/influences	Any phenomenon which can serve to stimulate or encourage someone to carry out a specific behaviour

ACRONYMS

AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
DOE	-	Department of Education
GPA	-	Grade Point Average
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPS	-	Health Promoting Schools
LO	-	Life Orientation
SACENDU	-	South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use
SSDP	-	The Seattle Social Development Project
YRB	-	Youth Risk Behaviour
WHO	-	World Health Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 School Connectedness

The construct of the psychological sense of school membership or school connectedness was first indicated as a critical factor in school retention or dropout (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). In addition to connectedness to family, a sense of connectedness to school during adolescence has been identified as key to building protective factors for positive outcomes and lower rates of health behaviours (Resnick, 2000; Blum & Libbey, 2004; Resnick, Harris & Blum, 1993;). Research has also indicated that adolescents who feel connected to school report higher levels of emotional and psychological well-being (Resnick, Bearman, Blum et al., 1997). The school has been identified as a particularly important social and learning environment, which impacts not only on academic and vocational pathways, but also on mental health and well-being.

When adolescents experience feeling connected or cared for by people at their school and feel like a part of the school, they are less likely to use dangerous substances, engage in violence, or initiate early sexual activity (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). The Institute of Medicine (IOM) indicates that a healthful psycho-social environment in school maybe more important than classroom health education in keeping students away from engaging in high risk behaviour.

School connectedness has been defined by Goodenow (1993) as "the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school environment" (p.80). Goodenow (1993) indicates that this construct is

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particularly important for adolescents as they rely less on the family as part of the individuation process and come to rely more on extrafamilial relationships such as those found in the school, with friends and others.

Blum (2005) indicates that although connecting students to school is important at all grade levels, it is especially crucial during the adolescent years. He further indicates that in the last decade, educators and school health professionals have increasingly identified school connectedness as an important factor in reducing the likelihood that adolescents will engage in health compromising behaviours.

Blum (2005) highlights that there is a depth of research on school connectedness but because this research spans so many fields such as medicine, education, psychology and sociology-and because it tackles so many related concepts, such as student engagement, school attachment and belongingness, the concept of school connectedness does not offer a clearly defined empirical base. He indicates that in this era of accountability and standards, school connectedness can seem like a 'soft approach' to school improvement. Blum (2005) however argues that school connectedness can have a substantial impact on the measures of student achievement for which schools are currently being held accountable.

1.2 Defining Adolescence

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines adolescence, as the second decade of life, between the ages 10 and 20 years (WHO, 2005). Adolescence has developmentally, been identified as both a challenging and exciting time. It is

characterised as a period in which adolescents experience major biological, cognitive, social and psychological changes. These changes occur while adolescents are trying to construct a sense of self concept and at the same time assert their sense of freedom and autonomy (Flisher & Gevers, 2010). Flisher and Gevers (2010) further indicate that as adolescents face the task of accepting their changing bodies they also begin to assume more responsibility for their health. Adolescents also develop cognitive abilities like thinking and reasoning about events, concepts, events and objects. Cognitive facilities take time to develop and adolescents may benefit from learning decision-making skills so that they can facilitate positive choices. Furthermore socially, adolescents face the developmental task of initiating new and more mature relationships with peers of both sexes and achieving emotional independence from their primary caregivers (usually parents). Although parents retain some influence over their adolescent children, peers significantly become more influential, impacting on adolescents' self-concept, behaviour and other choices in various life domains (Flisher & Gevers, 2010).

Adolescence has in the past been described by researchers as a period of 'storm and stress' (Hall, 1904). The severest of problems manifested by a few adolescents were generalised as normative experiences for all in the age group (Freud, 1958). However, the transition adolescents experience has been argued to be neither universal nor inevitable. Research has shown that adolescents do manage to negotiate successfully with the developmental demands of the period, although the demands typically generate more turmoil than other developmental periods (Resnick et al. 1997). Arnett (1999) identifies three central aspects of how the turmoil is characterised and increases during the period of adolescence. Mood disruptions, risk behaviours, and conflict with parents were identified as central aspects. Although adolescents manifest

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major individual differences in these areas, mood disruptions and increased risk taking are considered not atypical of this period of development and suggest that the associated behaviours linked to internalising and externalising forms of psychopathology are in ascendance. The field of developmental psychopathology indicates that many adult mental disorders and mental health problems are rooted in early life experiences. For example, 25 percent of adult mental disorders begin at 7 of younger, and half of adult disorders can be traced back to adolescence (Swartz & Herrman, 2010). McLellan, Skipper, Campbell and DuPont (2008) indicates that one of the key challenges for work on prevention of serious mental disorders in adulthood is tracing the pathways of risk as far as back as prenatal influences and even to genetic influences. Swartz and Herman (2010) thus indicate that a long-term view needs to be taken and that in order to prevent disorders and promote mental health in adults, we need to start earlier in the life span. Many adult mental disorders and mental health problems have their roots in earlier life experiences with 25 per cent of adult mental health disorders beginning at age 7 or younger (Swartz & Herman, 2010).

1.3 School connectedness, attachment and belonging

As the study of school connection has expanded, so too has the lexicon of terms, concepts and measurement tools. Terms that have been selected are based on the conceptual and component interrelatedness and a definition similar to that of school connectedness. Measures will also be described in respect of their interrelatedness.

School attachment represented a common term of reference for a sense of connection, and was used as a single variable as part of a larger construct. Mouton (1995) describes school attachment as students reporting the degree to which people at school

like them. Alternatively, Goodenow (1993) defines school attachment as a subscale of a larger construct. Goodenow (1993) developed the Psychological Sense of School Membership survey to measure "school membership" based on Wehlage et al. (1989) theory of social membership. Within this theoretical framework, school attachment measured student-teacher relationships, whether the students cared what others think, and their investment in meeting other people's expectations.

A sense of belonging has also been thought to be an important aspect of education. The concept of belongingness is referred to as a broad one and can be described in many different ways. Belongingness can also be referred to as relatedness, support and identification, a sense of classroom membership and a sense of community, (Osterman, 2000). Goodenow (1992) indicates that the experience of a sense of belonging refer to feelings of being included, supported and accepted and relates to others members in the school community. Perceived friendliness from others and a sense of being valued personally are indicated as necessary, but not sufficient for success. Research indicates that a psychological sense of school belonging has a strong influence on the educational adjustment of adolescent students (Finn, 1989; Goodenow, 1992). A sense of support from encouraging adult mentors (teacher, counselor, coaches) has been indicated to have beneficial outcomes on adolescents' college attendance, school attendance, and educational aspirations (Flaxman, 1992). A psychological sense of school belonging is defined as the extent to which adolescents perceive themselves to be welcomed, valued, and respected members of the school (Goodenow, 1992).

A lack of belonging on the other hand was indicated to be associated with a higher incidence of mental and physical illness. Resnick et al., (1997) reported that an

adolescent's sense of belonging to family and school was significantly associated with lower rates of emotional distress, suicidality (defined as a recent history of suicidal ideation and attempts), violence, substance abuse, and sexual activity. Eccles and Midgley, (1989) indicated however, that ironically, as children reach adolescence, such school support declines. It is thus indicated that in promoting a sense of belonging and support, extra effort and support is needed from the school community in secondary schools.

1.4 Belonging and Motivation

Goodenow (1992) argues that it is important to acknowledge the relationship between sense of belonging and motivation. She indicates that not only are they related, but they are also reciprocal. Thus if students feel themselves to be full and valued members of the school, they will be willing to put forth more effort and commitment to realizing the purposes of the school. As they become more engaged in academic work and learning, they receive more acceptance and respect from the school and the people who work in the school. Goodenow (1992) indicates that because sense of belonging and motivation are so intertwined it is difficult to say which is the cause and which the effect.

Goodenow (1992) concludes that if students believe others within the environment are supporting them, are on their side, and are willing to help them if necessary they can also believe that they have the resources they need to be successful. Expecting to be academically successful is not only a matter of students' sense of their own individual abilities, but also a sense of access to supportive resources, and the encouragement and help they feel they can secure from others. This is especially important for at-risk

students. Goodenow (1992) concluded in her research that for the development and maintenance of academic support from family or neighbourhood, a sense of experiencing belonging and membership in the school, and a sense of warm personal connection to teachers and others are essential. She indicated that this general sense of belonging and support in school can even override the influence of students' friendship networks. She further indicates that a school that can function to create a sense of community where early adolescent students feel personally known, important, and encouraged to have a voice can serve as a potentially more powerful influence than the influence of individual dyadic or clique ties (Goodenow, 1992).

Many researchers interested in school belonging and motivation have referred to the work of Maslow (1999) as a theoretical basis for understanding the notion of belonging. The premise of this theory is that without first experiencing a sense of belonging and acceptance from those in their immediate environment a student cannot progress to a subsequent stage of growth and knowledge. According to Maslow, (1970) in order for a student to realize his or her potential, students must be motivated to some degree.

 A sense of future orientation has been associated with motivation and used to measure learner's attitudes and motivation toward school and learning. Broomfield (2007) in a study of resilient youth attributed positive outcomes to teachers who provide guidance in creating and attaining future goals. Future orientation (e.g. their hopes, aspirations and expectations) are argued to be important factors in adolescent development as they contribute strongly to influencing their identity formation, decision making, goal setting, and ultimately their behaviour (Kerpelman & Mosher, 2004). Future orientation is a multi-stage, ongoing process in which an individual sets

goals and aspirations based on their values and create expectations for the future (Nurmi, 1991; Troosdorff, 1983). In turn, such expectations provide motivation for youth to engage in achievement behaviours, and contribute to delaying gratification (Trommsdorff, Lamm, and Schmidt, 1979). Keough, Zimbardo, and Boyd (1999) found that a more positive future orientation was related to decreased alcohol, drug, and tobacco use.

Researchers use a variety of names and methods to measure student attachment and being part of a school. However, some consistent themes emerged. Themes identified include that a student's sense of belonging and being part of school, engagement in current and future academic progress, level of teacher supportiveness and caring, presence of good friends in school, fair and effective discipline, and participation in school activities can be traced across several measures of school connection (Libbey, 2004). Libbey (2004) indicates that what is important within the extensive literature on school connectedness, is that these factors, measured in different ways, were associated highly with student outcomes. She further indicates that whether examining academic performance or involvement with a range of health behaviours, young people who feel connected to their school, that they belong, and that teachers are supportive and treat them fairly, do better.

1.5 An ecological view of school connectedness

Contemporary theory conceives and defines school connectedness as an ecological concept (Rowe et al. 2007). The ecological view of school connectedness considers the quality of connections among multiple and diverse groups in the school community. It also recognizes the cohesiveness among different groups, such as

students, families, school staff, and representatives of health and community agencies. This cohesiveness is characterised by strong social bonds, featuring high levels of interpersonal trust and norms of reciprocity, otherwise known as social capital (Kawachi and Berkmann, 2000; Putnam, 1995; Wilkinson, 1996). Social capital is highlighted as a feature of social relationships in a school community that provides the building blocks for connectedness. The accumulation or amassing of social capital has been shown to lead to an elimination or reduction in social conflict (e.g. bullying), an abundance of associations that bridge social divisions (e.g. tolerance of diverse cultures), and the presence of systems that promote conflict management (e.g. a fair behavior management system whereby processes for resolving disputes involve investigation and/or discussion) (Kawachi & Berkmann, 2000).

1.6 School connectedness and the health promoting schools framework

Although school connectedness is widely accepted as important, *how* to promote it remains poorly understood. Battistich, Schaps, Watson, Solomon 2004; Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott and Hill, 1999) argue that a comprehensive whole-school approach to promoting school connectedness holds the most promise. Existing research, although limited, indicates that the health promoting school (HPS) framework can provide an effective framework for implementing mental health promotion in school (Lister-Sharp, Chapman, Stewart-Brown & Sowden, 1999). This perspective encompasses structural elements of the whole school and includes broader community context as part of the school community.

A growing body of evidence identified indicates that a whole-school approach, embodied by the health-promoting school (HPS) model, is effective in the school setting for promoting connectedness that features social capital (Sun & Stewart,

2007). The Health Promoting Schools framework (HPS), developed in 1995 by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2005), indicated the relation between a young person's health and wellbeing and the quality of the social environment. In 1995, the World Health Organisation (WHO) launched the Global School Health Initiative. One of the aims of this initiative was to create health promoting schools around the world. This approach, which links democracy, participation and health, has gained acceptance as one of the most powerful approaches to promoting health, empowerment and action competence in and with schools.

The National Policy Guidelines for Youth and Adolescent Health in South Africa (2001) specify that each of the five general intervention strategies enumerated by the World Health Organisation can be applied to health promotion in the school setting. The intervention strategies include: providing a safe and supportive environment i.e. positive role models, improving the quality of relationships in the school (between teachers and students); providing sport and recreation facilities and information to assist young people and significant adults to recognize mental health problems and obtain the necessary assistance; building skills, i.e. include in existing life skills programmes measures that promote mental health and provide counselling, i.e. increase access to counselling opportunities within the school context, and ensuring access to youth friendly health services. Lastly, to ensure appropriate referral pathways to health systems the HPS framework emphasises the importance of multilevel community health programmes in schools.

The WHO classification of life skills (WHO, 1994) covers programmes such as decision making, problem solving and coping with stress. It also covers other aspects of psychological health such as the development of self-awareness, self- esteem, self-

efficacy, empathy, interpersonal skills, communication skills, critical thinking, creative thinking and coping with emotions (WHO, 1994).

The Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework addresses the school as a whole and includes consideration of the curriculum, teaching and learning; school policies, procedures and organization-physical and social environment, and links with families and the broader community, including health services and community agencies (Clift & Bruun Jensen, 2006; Rowe et al., 2007; Sun & Stewart, 2007).

In the whole school approach on which the HPS is based, the explicit (or formal) curriculum and the hidden curriculum (what is learnt at school from norms, values and school life) are targeted (Went, 1991). The formal curriculum includes the material presented in the classroom setting together with enabling and skill development programmes (Liser-Sharp et al. 1999). Skills development may include both generic (life skills) and specific skills (road crossing).
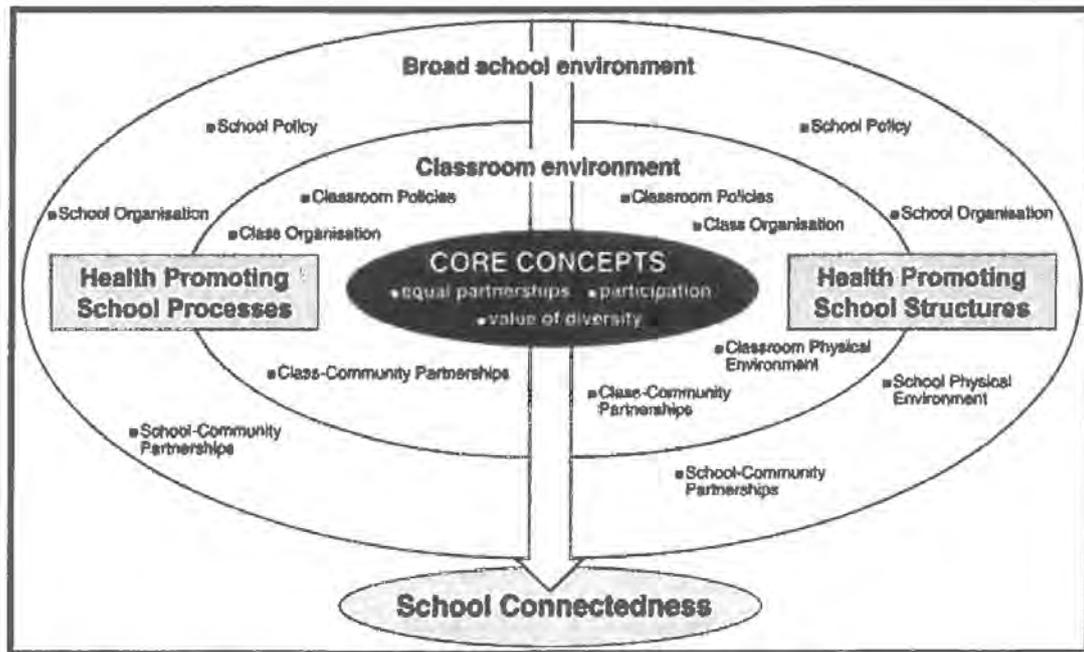
Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the influence of the health-promoting school on school connectedness (Rowe & Stewart, 2009).

1.7 Health Promoting Schools and Social Capital

Research identifies that a key strategy to building collaboration and practice in the HPS framework is one that is characterized by the key element of social capital. Social capital recognizes that health related behaviours are shaped and constrained by a range of social and community contexts and that the ways in which an individual relates to social networks and communities have important effects on their health and well-being (Campbell, 1999; Morrow, 1999, 2000; Gillies, 1998; Baum, 2000; Hawe & Shiell, 2000). Social capital has been defined in numerous ways and refers to sociability, social networks, social support, trust, reciprocity and community and civic engagement (Morrow, 1999). Putnam (1993) expanded the concepts of social capital in his book on civic traditions in modern Italy to theorise about trust and participation. Putnam (1993) defined social capital as 'features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-

ordinated action' (p.167). Stewart (2007) indicates that there is a link between HPS action and social capital in the school context. He indicates that the HPS and social capital contributes to a "clustering effect" in that interventions using the HPS framework may lead to changes in school organizational structure, school policy, health service provision, curriculum and school-community relationship (Stewart, 2007). The concept of social capital is expanded in Chapter 3, Theoretical framework.

1.8 Outcomes associated with school connectedness

Research indicates that feeling connected to one's school during adolescence promotes concurrent and long-term positive youth development (Resnick et al. 1997), including fewer behavioural problems, greater mental well-being (Eccles et al. 1993), and better academic outcomes (Osterman, 2000). The outcomes associated with enhancing adolescent's sense of school connectedness are discussed below.

1.8.1 School connectedness and mental health promotion

Research indicates that school connectedness is linked to mental health and emotional well-being during adolescence. Paternite (2005) indicates that in schools addressing the mental health needs of youth, it is important to emphasise that schools cannot, and should not, be held responsible for meeting every need of every student. Greenburg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zinds, Fredericks, Resnik, and Elias (2003) however indicates that most educators, parents, youth, and communities "support an educational agenda that involves enhancing not only academic skills but also 'students' social-emotional competence, character, health, and civic engagement", (p.466) and it is imperative that schools meet the challenge when the need directly affects learning and school

success (Carnegie Council Task Force on Education of Young adolescents, 1989; Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003). Meaningful relations have been identified to facilitate psychological well-being (e.g. Lee & Robbis 2000; Townsend & McWhirter, 2005; Offer, 2013). Connectedness has also been identified to act as a protective agent to prevent and resolve intra and interpersonal disturbance (Karcher, 2005). Anderman (2002) found that higher levels of connectedness in students were significantly related to higher levels of optimism and lower levels of depression, social rejection, and school problems. This was confirmed by other authors (Smetana, 2011; Allen & Bowles, 2012). Several authors have also indicated that school connectedness promotes a sense of well-being and good behavior of the adolescents (Blum & Rinehard in Portwood et al. 2005; Jose et al. 2012). Townsend and McWhirter (2005) also indicated that connectedness to school and family buffers adolescents against emotional anguish, suicide ideation, aggression, substance abuse and age of first sexual encounter.

Goodenow and Grady, (1993) indicate that individuals who report low school connectedness are at risk for a number of mental health problems. Students who feel connected to school have reported lower levels of physical and emotional distress during adolescence compared to adolescents with less school connectedness (Resnick et al., 1997).

According to Stewart, Sun, Patterson, Lemerle and Hardie (2004) the role of the school has been regarded, as an important environment for promoting the psychological wellness and resilience of adolescents both nationally and internationally. Kopela and Clarke (2005) also indicate that although schools traditionally have been concerned with the provision of educational services, current

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research and practice based perspectives assert the importance of mental health to learning, as well as to the social and emotional development of students.

Rickwood (2007) also indicates that within the school context, positive mental health promotion should focus on enhancing protective factors that contribute to the social-emotional growth of adolescents and decreasing specific risk factors that impede psychosocial development. Clonan, Chafouleas, McDougal and Riley-Tillman, (2004) indicate that "the emergence of positive mental health perspectives has shifted the focus of educators and health professionals from a preoccupation with repairing weakness to enhancement of positive qualities" (p.101). Such qualities include investigation of positive individual traits, positive personal experiences or enabling initiatives that help enhance the quality of life of adolescents, and prevent or reduce the risk of developing mental health related concerns (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). School connectedness interventions that have been found to promote mental health are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, Literature review.

1.8.2 School connectedness and academic motivation

In terms of academic variables, findings indicate that students' sense of school belonging and school connectedness is associated with a range of adaptive motivational beliefs (Anderman, 2011). Students sense of school connectedness has been found to be positively associated with their intrinsic interest in school, academic efficacy and academic achievement (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Osterman, 2000; Anderman, 2002; Anderman & Freeman, 2004; Nicholas, 2008), as well as future orientation (Crespo, Jose & Kielpikowski 2013).

Students' sense of connectedness and belonging in a particular class has been associated with higher expectations for success in that class; higher perceptions of

class tasks as being interesting, important and useful; and intrinsic and mastery goal orientations related to the class (Anderman, 2011). It has also been associated with more general measures of school related motivation, self-reported effort, and reduced absenteeism. Goodenow (1992) indicated that belonging and connectedness maybe especially important for academic motivation, engagement and performance for adolescents coming from ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged families.

Goodenow (1993) indicates that students' academic interest, success or failure is not influenced by only individual intelligence or ability but also by situational and contextual factors. Deci (1992) indicates that interpersonal relationships that provide students with a sense of belongingness can contribute to the motivation of children's interest in school. Thus supportive relationships are likely to enhance educational and personal development. Baumeister and Leary (1995) and Sharf, (2004) indicate that supportive relationships also impact in the lifestyle of a child by affective overall adaptation in later life. Given that schools are the primary place where most adolescents spend their life, the opportunity to experience connectedness and belongingness should be most important. Research indicates that adolescents who do not experience positive peer and adult connectedness are often at risk for academic failure (Goodenow, 1993; Osterman, 2000). Research by Anderman (2002), Battistich (1995), and Goodenow (1993) using the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) indicated a relationship between academic achievement and belongingness. Perceived support from teachers is an important factor when measuring academic achievement. While peer and family support have been an important influence on students' academic achievement, teacher support has been found to have a greater impact on student engagement and school connectedness (Goodenow, 1993; Osterman, 2000; Tuner, Meyer, Midgley & Patrick, 2003; Wentzel, 1997).

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Motivation has also been identified as the most powerful determinant of students' achievement in school (Hardre, Crowson, Teresa, 2007). Student motivation can also be conceptualized as a process that it stimulated if the individual human need for belonging is met. Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of human needs illustrates belongingness as being one part of the five basic needs that humans have. Maslow's (1970) theory highlighted that our need to belong or be part of a social network is universal and provides humans the ability to satisfy other needs such as self-actualization. In this perspective, everyone has an innate need to belong, so until basic social needs for belonging are met, higher motives (e.g. learning) will not be satisfied.

Braddock and McPartland (1993) identify other factors that contribute to students' motivation:

1. Opportunities for success (e.g. extra help from teachers, peers, tutors)

2. Relevance of school work to current interest and future goals (e.g. a curriculum that is associated to real world situations and a wide range of career alternatives

3. A caring and supportive environment (e.g. positive and supportive relationships between teachers and students)

4. Help with personal problems (e.g. availability of support systems and an integration with social services and social learning teams)

Deci et al., (1999) thus indicate that in a school environment that stimulates motivation in its students, the production of broad learning, adjustment and personal development occurs. Students are more intrinsically motivated when they are connected to their school, which is positively correlated with achievement (Connell &

Wellborn, 1990; Gottfried, 1985; Haywood & Burke, 1977, Lyod & Barenblott, 1984).

1.8.3 School connectedness and accessing psychological support services?

Research also identifies that promoting mental health awareness in the school setting through school connectedness improves the referral pathway of students who require psychological services. Promoting mental health in schools has also been highlighted as providing families of adolescents increased opportunities to access psychological and treatment services for their children (Paternite, 2005). Paternite (2005) indicates that a mental health awareness approach facilitated by school connectedness offers the promise of improving access to diagnosis of and treatment for mental health problems of adolescents and removing issues of stigmatization around mental illness.

The increased access to psychological services or school linked services is significant given the high rates of mental health disorders reported amongst many South African learners. Kleintjies, Flisher, Fick, Railon, Lund, Molteno and Robertson (2006) included provincial data from the Western Cape on the extent of the burden of mental health disorders. Their study indicated that 17% of children and adolescents in this province suffer from psychiatric problems, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (5%), major depressive disorder (8%) and post-traumatic stress disorder (8%) (Kleintjies et al.,2006). While the National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey does not provide information about the prevalence of clinical disorders, data form the latest survey of grades 8-11 learners indicate that, in the six months before the survey, 24% of youth had sad or hopeless feelings; 21% admitted to suicidal thoughts; 17% had a suicide plan; and 21% had made at least one suicide attempt. The Cape Mental Health release – July 2012 indicated that in South Africa, there are many factors which could

hinder the mental and physical well-being of individuals, especially on a daily basis. The association indicates that unemployment, substandard education, poor living conditions, low morale, substance misuse, risky sexual behavior, bullying, violence, inadequate access to health care are but a few examples of the challenges that could impact on young people's mental well-being (Cape Mental Health release, 2012).

Mental wellness promotion through school connectedness thus has the potential to enable collaboration between schools and psychological services, mental health centres, health departments and university affiliated centres (Paternite, 2005). Positive mental wellness thus also has the promise of building strong connections between adults in the school, school psychological services and health departments and assists in moving a community towards a system of care. These linkages provide an opportunity for developing more comprehensive and responsive programmes and services which should be established and utilized.

1.8.4 School connectedness and prevention of adolescents' engagement with high risk behaviours

Bosch and Guzman (2007) refer to high-risk behaviours as behaviours that can adversely affect the development and well-being of youth. High risk behaviours are also indicated as activities that may prevent adolescents from achieving future success. Bosch and Guzman (2007) refer to these behaviours, as behaviours that can cause immediate physical injury. (e.g., fighting), as well as behaviours which result in cumulative negative effects such as substance use. Risk behaviours also can affect adolescents through disruption of their normal development or preventing them from participating in 'typical' experiences of their age group (Bosch & Guzman, 2007).

Factors that predispose adolescents to risk behaviour at the intrapersonal level or individual level, include adolescents who are part of negative peer groups and adolescents who experience poor school engagement and low educational aspirations. This level is also characterised by adolescents experiencing low self-esteem. The interpersonal level is characterised by a lack of family support, the experience of poor parent-child communication, and a lack of parental support. Research has also indicated that when parents themselves engage in risky behaviours, teens are more likely to do so. Finally, at the community or social level, extra-familial variables also play a role in the risk behaviours of youth. Adolescents who experience a negative school climate, poor (or no) relationships with non-parental adults, a poor quality neighbourhood, accompanied with low socioeconomic status, are indicated to be more risk for engaging in negative behaviours (Bosch & Guzman, 2007).

Patel et al., (2008) indicates that there is a variety of both risk and protective factors to which adolescents are exposed. Factors that undermine optimal mental health include socio-economic deprivation, violence, family disruption and psychopathology, early childhood trauma (both physical and psychological), difficult temperament and intellectual impairment (Patel et al., 2008). Flisher and Gevers (2010) however indicate that these risk factors are not the only targets for interventions and it may not be possible to eradicate them: therefore, it is vital to balance programmes with attention to protective influences. Influences may include adequate educational opportunities, supportive relationships, positive adult role models, optimistic attitude and psychological autonomy (Commission on Positive Youth development, 2005: Jessor, Donovan & Costa, 2003; Patel, Flisher, Nikapota & Malhotra, 2008).

Flisher and Gevers (2010) indicate that in supporting and promoting the mental health and well-being of adolescents it is important that all social influences at all levels are harnessed because adolescents are particularly susceptible to influence during the transition. It is thus seen as important to engage the multiple levels of influence. In exploring risk behaviour in adolescence using an ecological systemic perspective, different levels of influence are identified (Breinbauer & Maddaleno, 2005).

Individual Level Influences

At the individual level of influence, adolescents are also exposed to a biological vulnerability to impulsive decision making. Research indicates that adolescents are more likely to pursue new and stimulating situations (i.e., novelty-and sensation seeking) more eagerly than younger and older individuals (Steinberg, 2007).

At the individual level of influence, interventions to develop creativity and general life skills are aimed to create behaviour change within individuals (Patel et al., 2008). Reference was thus made to self-awareness, empathy, appropriate coping and stress management, assertiveness decision making, adaptability constructive problem-solving and conflict resolution, creative and critical thinking, effective communication, respectful interpersonal relations skills and, the capacity to establish positive goals and take actions to pursue them (Mangrulkar et al., 2001). In South Africa, the Department of Education has mandated the inclusion of life orientation classes in the national curriculum, with skills building in the health promotion, social development, personal development, physical development and career orientation domains. Schools have some autonomy to choose specific content for these domains

that best addresses the most relevant issues of their school population (Flisher & Gevers, 2010).

Interpersonal level influences

The Interpersonal level recognise the influence of the adolescents' environment and various role players such as family, parents, peer role models, supportive peer groups in encouraging positive relationships with peers, caregivers and other community members. The interpersonal level is referred to as a powerful arena to address adolescent health promotion and implement prevention interventions (Moore & Zaff, 2002). The strong influence of peers on adolescent behaviour has led to the increased use of peer education in health promotion programmes (Breinbauer & Maddaleno, 2005). The peer group can be crucial in adolescent development by responding to the adolescent's need to be accepted, belong to a group, and develop identity (Breinbauer & Maddaleno, 2005). Interventions at this level of influence can help adolescents in developing relationships with parents, peers, siblings, teachers and mentors, and with other family or community members that are positive. These relationships thus serve as protective and promotive mechanisms that contribute to adolescent mental health.

Community level influences

Community level, influences can be strengthened through creating supportive atmospheres through, school level programmes and providing opportunities that facilitate positive extracurricular or service involvement. The influence of positive media, adolescent programmes as part of religious institutions activities or other agencies, is also seen as contributing to an overall supportive atmosphere promoting adolescent well-being. Breinbauer and Maddalano (2005) indicate that intervention at

this level may provide opportunities for recreation, well-being, skill building, employment and also provide developmentally appropriate access to information and resources. Mutually respectful relationships amongst students, school staff, parents and community members, as well as between these groups, also support adolescent mental health and well-being (Kutash, Duchnowski and Lynn, 2006). When adolescents experience feelings of worthiness security and connectivity within their family and community environments, they are better able to cope with daily stressors and able to succeed at becoming pro-social members of the community (Flisher & Gevers, 2010).

1.9 Connectedness and mental health promotion in South African schools

Adolescents generally are more prone than other age groups to participate in high risk behaviours (Flisher & Gevers, 2010). In South Africa, research has indicated that a large proportion of high school students and drop-outs in the Cape Peninsula are involved in high risk behaviours that include suicidal behaviour, cigarette smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, interpersonal violence and unsafe sexual behaviour (Flisher & Reddy, 1995). The 2nd South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey of high school earners further indicated that 24.4% of young girls have fallen pregnant (Reddy, et al., 2010), Data from the National Antenatal Sentinel HIV and Syphilis Prevalence Survey (National Department of Health, 2010) indicated that 14% of those aged 15-19 years and 9.4% of those aged 10-14 years who were pregnant, were also HIV positive (Children's Rights Centre, 2011).

In addition to high risk behaviours, adolescence is also a vulnerable period for the development of mental disorders (Flisher & Gevers, 2010). Research has also indicated that although mental health problems are estimated to affect 10-25% of

adolescents, mental health care is globally neglected (Merikangas, Burstein, Swendensen, Avenevoli, S, Case, B, Georgiades, et al. 2010., Kieling, Baker-Henningham and Belfar, 2011). Reddy, et al., (2010) also found that 21.4% of young people at school have attempted suicide once or more in the previous 6 months in South Africa.

Lieu, Newacheck and McManus (1993) argue in response that barriers to accessing mental health care and sexual and reproductive services should be overcome and that these services need to become more accessible to adolescents.

Adolescence is thus a critical developmental stage for engaging adolescents in interventions that promote mental and behavioural health, with behaviours acquired in adolescence often persisting throughout adulthood. Within the health sector, resources for mental health care as well as the promotion of mental and behavioural health in South Africa as a whole are, however in short supply. With regard to human resources, per 100.000 population, (Burns, 2011) has indicated that the country has 0.32 psychologists 0,28 psychiatrists, 0.4 social workers, 0.13 occupational therapists and 10 nurses.

Burns (2011) further indicates that resources for the treatment of children and adolescents is also inadequate with only 1.4% of outpatient facilities, 3.8% of acute beds in general hospitals and 1% of beds in psychiatric hospitals indicated for children and adolescents. While the percentage availability of psychiatrists for the child and adolescent populations varies drastically from one region to another the availability has been indicated as few (Burns, 2011). He indicates that in KwaZulu-Natal (which has a population of 10million) only two such specialists were placed within the public health system.

It is widely acknowledged that an adequate number of mental health specialists, such as psychologists and psychiatrists will never be available to meet the needs required of children in low-to middle income countries such as South Africa, and even in high income countries such as the United States (Kelleher & Long, 1994). Flisher et al., (2005) indicate that for adolescents tertiary mental health services are very limited and only available in a few metropolitan areas in South Africa, while services for the majority of the child and adolescent population were indicated as almost non-existent. He further indicates that no province has a formally established and structured child and adolescent mental health team, despite the fact that national Policy Guidelines for Child and Adolescent Mental Health call for 'consultation, supervision and training to personnel on the other tiers' (Flisher, 2005, p.77.) These same national policy guidelines recognise that the health system is not the only setting in which mental health services can be delivered.

Flisher (2005) identifies the school as a particularly important alternative setting for the provision of mental health interventions since it has the potential to reach many young people in a cost effective manner. Flisher and Reddy (1995) estimated that by the year 2020 between 14 and 17 million young people will be enrolled at schools in South Africa. This readily accessible group provides an opportunity for health promotion that would impact on the health of both adults and adolescence (Flisher & Reddy, 1995).

Most interventions in school settings have however, focused on strengthening individual level assets on single issue high risk behaviours such as substance abuse, AIDS, suicide etc. (Gallant & Maticka-Tyndale, 2004). While some of these programmes have been successful in changing knowledge and attitudes, behaviour

change has been much more difficult to achieve (Gallant & Maticka-Tyndale, 2004). A response to the disappointing findings from individual, single focused initiatives in schools has been a call for a shift in practice to comprehensive, holistic, contextual approaches that address prevention and health promotion.

School social connectedness is an important contextual protective influence that can be strengthened as part of the need to address broader, ecological, systemic approaches to prevent high risk behaviour. Evidence suggests that school connectedness can serve as a protective influence against adolescents engaging in high risk behaviour (Patton et al., 2003; Shochet, Dadds, Ham & Montague, 2006). If adolescents' psychological needs for connectivity, competence (social and emotional skills) are met, they are less likely to engage in high risk behaviour (Patton et al., 2003; Shochet et al., 2006). Learners who felt connected to school also indicated greater levels of emotional and psychological well-being (Patton et al., 2003; Shochet et al., 2006). In promoting the behavioural and mental well-being of South African adolescents, strengthening the protective influence of the school thus holds much potential.

The purpose of this study was thus to advance understanding of how best to promote broader, ecological, systemic approaches through the development, implementation and evaluation of a pilot study that sought to build school social cohesion. The importance of exploring the connectedness of South African adolescents is indicated by the fact that their risk behaviours, which could be related to a lack of school connectedness, include violent criminal behaviour (Wild, Flisher,

Bhana & Lombard, 2004); risky sexual behaviour (Flisher et al. 1996) and substance abuse (Caldwell et al. 2007).

1.10 Summary of chapter and motivation for the current study

Promoting school connectedness has been identified as a critical factor in school retention and drop-out rates. School connectedness has also been identified to impact not only academic and vocational pathways, but also adolescents' mental health and well-being. Adolescence has been identified as a period characterised by major transitions and identity development. It has also been characterised as a period of increased risk taking. A need to strengthen adolescents' resilience in this critical period was identified given that many adult mental disorders and mental health problems have their roots in earlier life experiences.

The study of school connectedness has expanded so too has the interrelatedness of concepts, terms and measurement. School attachment identified by Mouton (1995) described attachment as students reporting the degree to which people at school like them. Goodenow (1993) defined school attachment as a subscale of a larger construct and developed the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM). The PSSM is a measure of perceptions of school connectedness and questions are focused around issues of inclusion, acceptance, respect, encouragement, and sense of belonging. Research also indicates that a psychological sense of school belonging has a strong influence on the educational adjustment of adolescent students. Beneficial outcomes include greater school attendance and educational aspirations. Outcomes such as higher grades and an increase in academic motivation have also been linked to experiencing a sense of belonging.

The ecological view of school connectedness recognises the interconnectedness of school connectedness concepts and considers the quality of connections among multiple and diverse constructs that shape communities. This interconnectedness is developed through norms of reciprocity and social bonds that operate in a cyclical or transactional pattern as opposed to a linear, narrow progression. Social Capital is seen to emerge from this interconnectedness and is identified to provide the building blocks for connectedness.

Research indicates the importance of school connectedness however the promotion of school connectedness is seen as a challenge. The Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework has been identified to provide an approach to promoting school connectedness in the school setting. The HPS recognises multiple levels of influence and levels of intervention. It also recognises the importance of developing social capital, which considers the way in which an individual relates to social networks and communities as having an impact on health and well-being.

Identified outcomes with enhancing adolescent's sense of school connectedness include

1. Enhancing adolescent's ***mental health and emotional well-being***. Implicit is a focus on enhancing protective factors and skills that contribute to the socio-emotional growth of adolescents and decreasing risk influences that impede psycho-social development. The emergence of positive mental health perspectives from a focus on 'repairing' weakness to enhancement of positive qualities i.e. investigation of positive individual traits, positive personal experiences or enabling initiatives that help enhance the quality of life for adolescents.

2. Adolescent students' sense of school connectedness has also been indicated to be positively associated with student's ***intrinsic motivation in school, academic self-efficacy and academic achievement***. Factors that have been identified to contribute to students' motivation include: opportunities for success; (support from teachers, peers) relevance of school work to current interest and future goals; a caring and supportive environment; help with personal problems.

3. School connectedness has also been identified to positively influence ***adolescents help seeking behaviour and access to psychological support*** services.

4. Promoting school connectedness and promoting positive mental health ***through enhancing skills to resist high risk behaviours***

Penfold & Govender (2008) indicate that although much research around the area of school connectedness has been conducted and its positive effects upon adolescents behaviour and mental well-being have been evidenced (Bond et al., 2007; Goodenow, 1993; Libbey, 2004, McNeely & Falci, 2004; Patton et al., 2006; Shochet, Dadds, Ham & Montague, 2006; Springer, Parcel, Baumler & Ross, 2006) there is a need to investigate school connectedness within a South African context as the majority of the studies have been conducted abroad. Further they observe that since the associations between school connectedness and risky behaviour are indicated to be similar to international evidence, it is probable that international interventions to improve levels of school connectedness, such as the Gatehouse Project (Paton et al., 2003) will also be successful.

Motivated by the international literature that indicates the efficacy of school connectedness in promoting the mental health well-being and academic motivation of adolescent learners and the few studies conducted in South Africa on perceptions of school connectedness in relation to adolescent high risk behaviour (Penfold & Govender, 2008; Govender et al., 2013) this study aimed to explore the systems, processes and mechanisms that are thought to enhance school connectedness within the South African education landscape. The piloting of school connectedness interventions, located within the Health Promoting Schools framework (HPS) and informed by the ecological approach allowed the researcher to engage in multiple levels of influence and pilot interventions to enhance school connectedness in a South African high school.

1.10.1 The overall aims of the study was thus :

- To explore the psychological processes, systems and mechanisms that enhance and impede school connectedness in a South African high school

- To promote the mental health well-being and academic motivation of adolescent learners through a school connectedness approach

- To pilot and evaluate the efficacy of mental health well-being and academic motivation interventions in promoting school connectedness through outcome and process evaluation.

1.10.2 The overall objectives of the study to enhance adolescents' school connectedness were:

- To enhance adolescent learners mental health and emotional well-being

- To strengthen adolescent learners academic motivation

- To promote adolescent's help seeking behaviour from influences such as trained peers, teachers/adults and thereby increase adolescents access to psychological support services

- To reduce the risk of adolescent learners engaging in high risk behaviours

1.10.3 This study is divided into three phases, which sought to:

- Understand factors (psychological processes, systems and mechanisms) that impede and enhance school connectedness as perceived by managers, teachers and learners (Phase 1)

- Develop and implement interventions that enhance school connectedness based on the findings of Phase 1 (Phase 2)

- Evaluate the implementation of these interventions in a pilot study using process and outcome evaluation methods (Phase 3)

1.10.4 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises of ten chapters, structured as follows.

Chapter One – Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study, key terms and concepts, study objectives and key questions which guided the study.

Chapter Two – Literature review

Chapter two begins highlights the literature on school connectedness, mental health well-being, and academic motivation. High risk behaviour amongst South African adolescents and clustering effects are also explored. The literature points to the potential of whole school, multi-systemic approaches to prevention. The literature abroad indicated the relevance of school connectedness in addressing multi-systemic approaches and thus formed the motivation of this study.

Chapter Three – Theoretical framework

In Chapter three, the ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) adapted by Petersen & Govender (2010) is drawn upon as the principal theory which guided this research. Within this framework, at the Intrapersonal level the Goal setting theory, the Self-Regulation theory and the Challenge model was adopted to inform the study, (Breinbauer & Madelleno, 2005), at the Interpersonal level, Social Support theory was identified, (Beinbauer & Madellono, 2005) and at the School Community level, Social Capital Theory (Carpiano, 2006) was utilised.

Chapter Four – Methodological approaches used

This chapter presents an outline of the different methodologies approaches used different phases. The study used evaluation research using mixed methods: qualitative methods (action research, focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews, document analysis) for the formative evaluation and process evaluation components and quantitative (a quasi-experimental pre-and post- test intervention design) for the outcome evaluation.

Chapter Five – Phase 1 - Results of the Formative/Situational Analysis

In this chapter, results from the formative evaluation of this study are presented. Qualitative findings reported are supported by verbatim quotes from participants (learners, teachers and managers). Key findings and recommendations are presented that informed the development of the intervention.

Chapter Six – Phase 2 (Development and Implementation of intervention)

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the development and implementation of interventions to promote school connectedness. Due to strike action across South African schools in 2010, implementation of the interventions was delayed and was implemented in 2011. Key findings from Phase one that were used to inform the development and implementation of interventions at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and community school levels are presented.

Chapter Seven –Evaluation

The evaluation chapter is separated into two different sections. Section one, is the Outcome Evaluation. In this section the researcher discusses the pre-post outcome evaluation results with the intervention and the matched control school. In Section two*,* the researcher reports on the results of the qualitative process evaluation study conducted as well as the findings using verbatim quotes from managers, teachers and learners participants as well as responses from lesson plans and workshops.

Chapter Eight– Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations

In this chapter, the research conclusions based on the formative, process and outcome evaluation of the pilot study are summarised and recommendations made for future

research and how to inform the development of connectedness programmes in South

African schools. Limitations of this thesis are also presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Structure of the Literature Review

This chapter explores research conducted on school connectedness in relation to mental health promotion and academic motivation of adolescent learners. It explores risk behaviours and clustering effects and the need to provide holistic, comprehensive, multi-level approaches to address health and wellbeing issues in adolescence. In exploring mental health promotion and the South African Education System the review also discusses the implications, expectations and limitations of the Life Orientation subject area. The review also identifies a gap in the local literature with few studies identified on school connectedness conducted in South African high schools and a depth of research conducted on whole school development and school connectedness conducted internationally.

2.2 Mental health promotion and school connectedness

More recent literature identifies that transitions into and out of adolescence have been identified as key times when young people's positive mental health and well-being can be compromised (Smith et al. 2011) They assert that despite this increased vulnerability, most young people successfully navigate these transitions and report high self-esteem and relatively low rates of negative mental health outcomes such as extreme stress, self-harm and suicidal ideas or attempts (Smith et al., 2011). It has been indicated that a number of studies have found that social support and connectedness to family, peers, school and community are important in promoting the mental health of young people (e.g., Blum & Rinehart, 1998; Catalano et al., 2004) and that youth engagement is a key protective factor in promoting positive mental

health (Toumbourou, Patton, Sawyer, Olsson, Pullmann, Catalano et al., 2000). Smith, Stwart, Poon, Hoogeveen, Saewyc, McCreary Centre Society, 2011) in their study of factors that promote mental health of youth in Grades 7 through 12 found that protective factors most strongly associated with positive mental health for youth included the presence of supportive adults inside and outside the family, feeling skilled and competent, having friends with health attitudes to risky behaviours, feeling connected to school and family, engaging in extracurricular activities, and feeling listened to and valued within those activities.

Research in the area also indicates that despite the evidence of mental health promotion efforts that have been evidence to promote protective factors, many youth programs instead have aimed to prevent negative mental health outcomes by reducing or preventing key risk factors such as alcohol use (Foxcroft, Irelan, Lister-Sharp, Lowe, & Breen, 2002) or violence (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Buehler, 2002). These programmes that have focused on single risk behaviours have been identified to be successful in reducing specific risk behaviour but have found limited effect on young people's overall mental health behaviours. Komro and Stigler, (2000); Saewyc and Stewart, (2008) thus indicate that young people should rather be supported to develop adaptive coping skills, positive attitudes and values, health behaviours, and supportive social networks by changing the emphasis of programs from reducing risky behaviours to promoting positive mental health and building resilience. As a result, health risk behaviours are less likely to be taken up or to become lifelong patterns (Komro & Stigler, 2000; Saewyc & Stewart, 2008). Shochet et al., (2006) in a limited prospective study, has demonstrated a causal association between school connectedness and mental health in adolescents, while Springer et al., (2006) cite

several studies which show that social bonding between school students, a caring and supportive school climate and student-school connectedness, are associated with the prevention of a range of risk behaviours in youth These risk behaviours include sexual behaviours, substance use, delinquency and aggression. Comprehensive school programmes, which aim to develop a positive school climate and foster a sense of identity and connectedness for students have been found to promote mental well-being, competence, social skills and school achievement as well as reduce aggression and bullying in youth (Jan ′e- Llopis, et al., 2005). Further, creating partnerships or alliances, such as between students and teachers, has been posited as a strategy for creating health-enabling context (Gillies, 1998).

A systematic review carried out by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (Stewart-Brown, 2006) revealed that school based programs that promote mental health "are particularly effective if developed and implemented using approaches common to the *health promoting schools approach"* (Cushman, 2008, p.232). This review highlighted 17 studies that evaluated interventions involving all students and that included the promotion of some aspect of positive mental health. School based health promotion activities ranged from single intervention classroom-based approaches to the implementation of comprehensive programs that involved classroom, school-based initiatives that adopted a whole school approach and that included major characteristics associated with the health-promoting schools model (e.g., students skills development, collaboration, changes in the school environment, participation of parents and members of the local community).

Other studies of the HPS promoting positive mental health include A study of school communities, by Patton (1990) in Queensland, Australia conducted between October 2000 and April 2002 was conducted to investigate (Check study reference.

1. What 'structural' aspects of the HPS approach, defined as tangible artifacts or programs within the school community, influence school connectedness

2. What 'process' aspects of the HPS approach, defined as the methods of operationalising structures, influence school connectedness at both the school and classroom level

Case study methodology was used in this study of school communities (Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994). The school community, included school staff, students, parents and carers, as well as representatives of health service and community agencies. A two phased, time series design was employed in each of the three schools, such that the relationships between aspects of the HS and indicators of school connectedness could be followed over a certain period of time. Data on these relationships were collected using in-depth interviews with representatives of key groups within the school community. A purposes sampling framework was used to select interviewees, such that those who were interviewed were the most involved in the implementation of the HPS approach in that school (Patton, 1990).

The central finding of this research supported and validated the use of whole-school approaches for promoting connectedness. It also provided insight into the three levels of influence of a whole school approach; at the school, class and school class interface, such as the bonds that can form between classes and between classes and the school community. Findings indicated the importance of classroom activities for developing interaction and direct connection between students and the school physical

environment e.g. programmes, engraving pavers with names, contributing to a school ethos. Class-community partnerships that encouraged links between classes and links to other school staff were also viewed as important. This finding was also seen as representing another advance in understanding menchaisms for promoting connectedness. Specific structures that support the development of these relationships, such as collaborative curriculum planning between classes in the context of a whole school community and team teaching were identified as creating strong relationships in the school (Hunt et al., 2000; Kugelmass, 2001; Weller, 2000). This study also highlighted the importance of class organisation *processes* that led to school connectedness in which staff and students worked and developed reciprocal relationships. Informal school staff-student interactions that arose from these processes also gave staff insight into students' personalities and thereby, increased staff perceptions of value of students.

The study also identified that a range of school policies and organisational structures can influence school connectedness, such as multi-strategic approaches to prevent bullying, peers support programmes, extra-curricular activities, support structures for school staff, and a fair behaviour management system. This research also reinforced the recognition of the significance of partnerships in the school community, and in particular it highlighted the influence of relationships between students and school staff along several indicators of school connectedness, including mutual reciprocity, perceptions of value, rust, school satisfaction, reduced absenteeism and even reduced bullying and aggressiveness in the school environment. This research contributed to the theoretical understanding of how to promote school connectedness as it argued for a whole school approach, embodied by the HPS model for building school

connectedness. The conception of school connectedness as an ecological concept, drew upon social cohesion and social capital (Kawach & Berkmann, 2000) for its theoretical basis and represented a conceptual development in the fields of sociology, public health and education (Patton, 2009).

The major limitation of this study was its exploratory nature of the research design and approach, which limited the number of schools and phenomena that could be investigated. The theoretical developments offered by this research were thus viewed as a starting point for further exploration. This research was also viewed as significant in understanding the mechanisms and processes involved in promoting school connectedness, which as positive effects on the mental well-being and educational outcomes of young people (Patton, 2009).

2.3 Academic self-efficacy, motivation and school connectedness

In the context of the school, academic self-efficacy is indicated as the belief in one's ability to manage one's own educational experiences through academic mastery and self- regulated learning strategies (Bandura, 1973). Throughout the literature, academic self-efficacy has been identified as an important predictor of many indices of school functioning including academic achievement, aspirations (e.g. Pajares, 2008; Schunk, 2001; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992), and school retention (Carprara et al., 2008). Maintenance of high academic self-efficacy has also found to have positive influence on youth career trajectories and continuing academic performance throughout college (Bandura, 1973). Research on school connectedness and academic self-efficacy indicated numerous outcomes related to healthy adjustment, including academic performance, school retention, and reduced

depressive symptoms (Roeser, Eccles & Sameroff, 1996). Some researchers have indicated that relationships between components of school connectedness and academic self and motivation are reciprocal (Uwah et al., 2008). These authors indicate that as students' sense of connectedness and engagement with school increase, they may participate in activities and observations that build their efficacy for managing their own learning and academic performance. Likewise, they indicate that as students feel more efficacious and successful in accomplishing their goals, they may increasingly care about and commit to school (Uwah et al., 2008).

Of the studies that have examined both connectedness (or related constructs) and academic efficacy in the school setting some positive findings emerge. Roeser et al., (1996) tested a mediational model examining the relationship between teacher-student relationships, belonging in school, academic self-beliefs, and academic achievement in early adolescence. Findings revealed that sense of belonging positively mediated the association between teacher and student relationships and academic self-efficacy, which in turn predicted student performance.

Goodenow & Grady (1993) indicate that adolescents who feel more connected to their schools show better academic outcomes. Feeling connected to school in adolescence is also associated with higher levels of academic motivation and lower levels of classroom misbehaviour (Goodenow & Grady, 1993).

In more recent studies which also involved addressing adjustment of students with disabilities, McMahon et al., (2008) found support for a model demonstrating the impact of school conditions (social risk and protective factors) on school belonging as

well as on the central role of belonging in explaining how school conditions can affect both academic self-efficacy and feelings of depression. McMahon et al., (2009) furthered the research in this area by examining the impact of classroom environment on school belonging and academic self- efficacy in low income children. The results revealed differential effects of classroom environment characteristics on sense of belonging and self-efficacy for academic mastery suggesting that student perceptions of the school setting are important to consider in relation to academic outcomes (McMahon, 2009). Other research also identified that specifically school connectedness is associated with academic achievement, including students' overall grades and scores on standardised tests Klem & Connell, 2004; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). A review by Osterman (2000) also found a relation between school connectedness, student motivation, self-regulation, and student attitudes toward school. Battin-Pearson et al., (2000) identified that connected students are more likely to display higher attendance rates and stay in school longer, which increases the likelihood of academic, occupational, and life success.

2.4 High risk health behaviour of adolescents in South Africa and the need to promote school connectedness

In South Africa, high risk health behaviours include drug abuse and alcohol and marijuana use (Brook, Morejele, Pahl and Brook, 2006). Early sexual debut (Flisher, Ziervogel, Chalton, Leger, and Robertson, 1996; Palen, Smith, Caldwell, Flisher, and Mpofu, 2006), as well as violent crime (Wild, Flisher, Bhana, and Lombard, 2004) are also listed and unpacked below. Internationally socioeconomic deprivation, family disruption and psychopathology, early childhood insults (physical and psychosocial),

childhood temperamental difficulties, violence and intellectual impairment are all widely recognised risk factors (Patel et al., 2008).

Substance Abuse

The South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU; Parry et al., 2004b) provides an indication of trends in admissions. SACENDU has shown regional variations in drug use trends. The SACENDU (2004) study revealed that for young patients in treatment centres in Gauteng during the second half of 2009, the most common primary substances of abuse were cannabis (57%), alcohol (14%) and heroin (6%). For Durban, they were cannabis (48%), heroin (22%) and alcohol (20%). For those in Cape Town, the most common substances were cannabis (43%), methamphetamine (39%) and alcohol (3%).

Two school based studies with nationally representative samples in which rates of substance use among school students were reported as part of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRB) for 2002 (Reddy et al., 2003) and 2008 (Reddy et al., 2010). The substances reported to have had the highest rates of lifetime use in 2002 were alcohol (56% and 43.5% for males and females, respectively), tobacco (40% for males) and (23.0% for females) and cannabis (20.2% for males and 7.0% for females). In 2008, they were the same substances, alcohol (54.4%) and 45.1% for males and females,), tobacco (40.0% for males) and 23.0% for females and cannabis 20.2% for males and 7.0% for females. Morojele, Rich, Flisher, and Meyers (2012) indicate that while students' rates of use of most drugs were relatively stable between 2002 and 2008, the increases in rates of past 30-day alcohol use and binge drinking for both males and females are a cause for concern. Flisher et al., (2006) also found

changes in the prevalence of use of other drugs. Their research reported secular trends in substance use among Grade 8 students in Cape Town between 1997 and 2004. They concluded that there were significant increases in the prevalence of past-month use of cigarettes for males (from 23.0% to 31.5%) and cannabis for both males (3.1% to 17.2%) and females (1.9% to 5.2%). Richter et al., (2006) indicates that close to a third of young people (29.3%) drink alcohol at least once a week and that alcohol consumption rates are more than double among young men (29.1%) than among young women (15.9%).

Ostrowsky and Messner, (2005) emphasise that substance abuse is associated with many interrelated risk and protective factors. At the individual level, Jones, (2005) & Eisenberg (2005) showed that in adolescents' vulnerability to substance abuse, abuse and substance abuse disorders there are great individual differences. Swendsen et al., (2002) & Elkins et al., (2004) argues that certain personality characteristics are associated with substance abuse. These characteristics include feelings of alienation, aggression, low levels of constraint and high stress reactions (Swendsen et al., 2002; Elkins et al., 2004). Morejele et al., (2012) indicate that individual factors associated with adolescent substance use include rebelliousness, antisocial behaviour, tolerance of delinquent behaviour and impulsivity. They further indicate that individuals who develop negative feelings of self-worth and who have experienced marginalisation and isolation (rejection and failure) often turn to drugs or alcohol in an attempt to moderate the experience of such emotions. Brook et al., (2006) indicates that while the use of the drug serves as a coping mechanism which results in temporary gratification, it generally averts the development of healthy coping mechanisms. Morejele et al, (2012) indicate that the main individual-level protective factors for

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drug use include high impulse control, good coping skills, good mental health and strong religious beliefs.

At the level of the environment, the role of the family is drawn upon. Risk factors that involve the family include various forms of deviant behaviour such as poverty, parental and sibling drug use, low educational levels, family stress, poor parenting practices, and weak family structure (Jones, 2005; Anderson, 1998; Brook et al., 2006;). Madu and Matla., 2003). Adolescents who were more likely to engage in drug use behaviour were those who lived with families and experienced high levels of family conflict. Families that also placed a lack of emphasis on moral and religious values also resulted in adolescents engaging in drug use behaviour (Madu & Matla, 2003).

Certain peer risk and protective factors were also associated with drug use (Morejele et al., 2012). Also indicated was that adolescents seek approval and admiration by participating in group approved behaviours, including substance use (Anderson,1998; Steinberg and Monohan, 2007; Engerman et al., (2006). It was also further indicated, affiliation with non-deviant peer groups may discourage delinquent behaviour and risky or substance use behaviours amongst adolescents and serve as a protective factor by creating feelings of acceptance and encouraging the adoption of healthy norms and values (Gardner & Steinberg, 2005., Engerman et al., 2006). Interaction with peers who are learning oriented or goal directed was also seen as providing adolescents with the prospect of forming positive peer models who will encourage the adoption of positive goals, such as academic achievement (Engerman et al., 2006). Risk and protective factors for drug use also exist within the school system. Flisher et al, (2010)

indicate that heavy drinking by adolescents was significantly associated with academic failure, absenteeism and risky sexual behaviour. Rutenberg (2001) indicates that when an adolescent feels a sense of connectedness and experiences a positive attitude to learning they are less likely to engage in risk taking behaviour, such as substance use.

Morejele et al, (2012) also indicate that there are various characteristics of communities that serve as risk or protective factors for substance use among adolescents. Communities in which formal activities such as sports clubs, study groups, church groups and youth groups are offered are seen as providing socialising opportunities for young people. These activities are thus seen as providing adolescents with socialising opportunities in healthy environments and are regarded as important structures (Morejele et al., 2012). Rutenberg et al., (2001) indicates that this encourages community connectedness and social cohesion, which reduces the possibility of antisocial behaviour, including substance use. Anderson, (1998) indicates that certain individuals are at a heightened risk of resorting to substance abuse to cope with their problems. He indicates that risk factors at the community level include individuals who are marginalised socially (that is, in a disadvantaged / marginalised economic, social or cultural situation relative to mainstream society, major groups and/or other entities around them).

Adolescent Violence

Ward, Van der Merwe and Dawes (2012) observes the importance of an ecological approach to understanding the development of adolescence violence in South Africa. Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified that in terms of socializing opportunities, the

everyday contexts of adolescent development are the most powerful. Ward (2012) indicates that adolescents are subject to various levels of risk that influence violent behavior.

At the interpersonal level of influence the role of the family is significant. Cast, Schweingruber and Berns (2006) indicate that in later intimate partner relationships and violence against one's own children, violence in the family of origin has been shown to predict physical and psychological abuse (Dietz, 2000 ; Ferrari, 2002 ; Straus and Kaufman-Kantor, 1994).

International research by Patterson et al., (1997) indicates that harsh or inconsistent disciplinary practices, including severe physical punishment and abuse are key factors in the development of antisocial, including violent behavior. Ward et al., (2012) also indicates that social environments (such as friends of the caregiver or sibling) that model and/reward deviant behaviour provide adolescents with direct role modeling of deviant behaviour (that may include violence). Ward et al., (2012) indicates that the relationship between large family size, low maternal age, low maternal education and youth violence sometimes leads to harsh or inconsistent disciplinary practices, poor monitoring and supervision of child activities and poor family management practices,.

At the level of the school, Gottfredson and Hirschi, (1990) and Sampson and Laub, (1997) indicate that children who drop out, who are not committed to school, who have low educational aspirations, and who change schools often, are more likely to engage in violent behavior. They further indicate that each of these indicate reflect

poor attachment to school. Dawes and Van der Merwe (2004) indicate that conversely, attachment to school protects against youth violence.

Masten and Coatsworth (1998) observe that schools which successfully promote academic competence are those that have a clear mission and high quality instruction monitor students' progress and emphasise staff development.

Chisholm (2004) finds however that many South African schools are chaotic and also challenging environments which do not achieve the standards required. Teaching time is also limited by the many other functions educators are required to perform (Chisholm, 2004).

According to Wegner, Flisher, Muller & Lombard (2006) leisure boredom is a substantial contributor to risk behaviours (including violence) among young people. Wegner (2011) indicates that leisure boredom is being experienced by young South Africans and can influence aspects of their lives that lead to a greater risk of dropping out of school. Wegner (2011) conceptualizes leisure boredom as occurring when individuals perceive their leisure experiences as not sufficient to satisfy their need for optimal arousal. Free time and leisure according to Wegner (2011) can also be utilized for risky pursuits or unhealthy activities. He further indicates that a deficit in the experience of, or inability to engage in, meaningful occupations increases the likelihood of ill-health, dysfunction and risk behaviors. Wegner (2011) indicated that elements of monotone, repetition, lack of meaning and having no choice in activities were all evident in the participants' utilisation of their free time, and contributed to their experiences of boredom. This study also evidenced involvement in substance

use, including use of cigarettes, alcohol, dagga, and heroine (to a lesser extent) among all of the participants.

Affiliation with a delinquent peer group or siblings, and particularly gang membership consistently predict youth violence (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996).

Leaschut and Burton (2006) points out that although there is no data than can indicate how many South African youth are affiliated with delinquent peer groups, it is concerning that in the National Youth Victimisation Survey, those young people who indicated that they had been threatened or hurt at school, typically indicted that the perpetrators were either other learners or other young people from outside of the school.

At the social or community level the role of the neighborhoods and mass media is also important. Sampson (1992) indicates that socially disorganized communities are unable to realize common prosocial values among their residents and so they are unable to maintain effective social controls. Ward, van der Merwe and Dawes (2012) also indicates that social disorganization also affects parenting, by reducing the amount of social support parents may receive from neighbours. Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott and Hill (1999) further indicates that children who are raised in poor families and in neighbourhoods where the majority of families are poor are more likely to engage in violence.

Ward et al., (2012) indicates that another important socializing influence for young people is the mass media. Research globally indicates that where children are exposed

to violent images on television and where they live in an environment that does not have strong anti-violence norms, they are likely to become more aggressive (Buvinic et al., 2000; Huesmann, et al., 1994 ; Sampson, 1991).

HIV /AIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Report (2004) indicates that HIV represents the most critical threat to the health and overall well-being of South African youth. Research also shows that about 10% of 15-24 year olds are HIV positive (Pettifor et al., 2004; Shisana et al., 2002; Shisana et al., 2005).   Universal awareness of HIV among the youth in South Africa has been achieved through large-scale media interventions such as LoveLife, Soul City and Komanani. Trends from antenatal data show a decline in HIV prevalence among young woman aged 15-19 years and 20-24 years (Harrison, 2008). Harrison, (2008) also indicates that HIV prevalence among 15-19 year olds may have peaked in 2004 at 16.1%, declining thereafter to 12.9% by 2007.

Research that can enable better understanding of adolescents' sexual risk behaviors in order to contribute to stemming the epidemic is urgently needed. Brook et al.,(2006) attempted to addresses this gap in the literature by testing a developmental model of adolescent risky sexual behavior. Consistent with various mediational models of adolescent problem or risk behaviors (Brook, et al., 2006), the model suggested multiple (three) types of predictors of risky sexual behavior. Factors range from socio-demographics such as age and family poverty to intermediate, proximal predictors (including peer and individual personality and behavioral factors) and concerns (family– related factors)

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This study's findings support the view that in reducing sexual risk taking among adolescents in South Africa, multi-level intervention programs and approaches are required. Domains implicated in adolescent risky sexual behavior include poverty (distal level), compromised parent–child relationships (intermediate level), vulnerable personality and behavioral attributes, and associating with deviant peers (proximal level). To intervene at a proximal level, Brook et al., (2006) indicated that because the most direct predictor of their risky sexual behavior was peer deviance (which includes peer drug–taking and other problem behaviors) more attention should be focused on peer group involvement in adolescents.

Brook et al., (2006) argue that health programs and life skills are the most important for addressing the individual risk factors that were identified in their project. Such programmes were deemed to have been effective in changing knowledge, perceived self–efficacy and condom use behaviors among adolescents in South Africa although they were indicated to have mixed results (Magnani et al., 2005). The findings indicated that personal factors such as depression, rebelliousness and impulsivity, should be addressed through life skills programs and that the mental health needs of adolescents which are of equal importance, should also be addressed. Magnani et al., (2005) also suggests that programs should seek to foster parenting behaviors that may have a positive influence in reducing adolescents' engagement in risky sexual behaviors. Potentially useful interventions were also indicated to be those that encourage parents to be more child–centered and interventions that communicated clearly the expectations about sexual and other behaviors. This was consistent with the observations of other researchers about desirable parenting behaviors (e.g., Paruk,

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Petersen, Bhana, and McKay, 2005). The researchers further indicated that any efforts that can increase adolescents' sense of identification with parents should potentially hold promise for reducing their risky sexual behaviors (Paruk, et al., 2005).

Also related to adolescent risky sexual behaviours is a high prevalence of unplanned teenage pregnancy. In a nationally representative household survey, Pettifor et al.,(2005) found that 15.5% of 15-19 year old women reported having ever been pregnant (including pregnancies resulting in abortion, miscarriage and birth). Local data (Moultrie and McGrath, 2007) indicates that, in the Demographic Surveillance Site in rural KwaZulu-Natal, teenage fertility rates feel from just over 100 births per 1000 teen-aged women in 1995, to 88/1000 and 73 / per 1000 respectively in 2001 and 2005 (Moultrie & McGrath, 2007). The 2003 South African Demographic and Health Survey indicated that pregnancy rates decreased with increased education. The study revealed that 20% of 15-19 year-old women with a grade 6 to 7 education, and only 7% with a higher education, reported having ever been pregnant.

Macloed and Tracey (2010) argue that the rate of teenage fertility is lower in South Africa than the overall rate in sub-Saharan Africa. They contend that that it is comparable to many middle-income countries, but higher than most European countries. Makiwane and Ujdo (2006) indicate that a sociological difference between teenage fertility in South Africa and other sub-Saharan countries, is that in South Africa child-birth to teen-aged women tends to take place outside of marriage. Pettifor et al., (2005) indicated that more young teen-aged women have unwanted pregnancies than do older women. However, low rates of termination of pregnancy (3%) were reported in the national household survey.

Macloed & Tracey (2010) indicate that the potential consequences of teenage pregnancy include the disruption of schooling and that the relationship between early pregnancy and school disruption in complicated. Data by Macloed (1999) revealed that many young women who became mothers in fact left school before pregnancy. Manzi (2006), more recently indicated that 20.6% of pregnant teenagers had left school prior to conceiving. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2010) indicated that there are numerous factors, besides pregnancy, leading to school leaving. Major reasons for leaving school before the end of Grade 12 included factors such as poverty, frustration associated with the inexperience of teachers, a lack of relevance of the curriculum and teaching material, the absence of parents at home and the need to care for siblings or sick family members.

Studies that debunk the assumption that were young women not to conceive, they would continue their education include that of Grant and Hallman (2006). They focus on the concept of disengagement from school in which young women perceive few opportunities emerging from participating in education. Also associated with disengagement was little incentive to participate in school, hence little incentive to avoid pregnancy. Macloed & Tracey (2010) conclude that school engagement and school attendance is a protective factor against pregnancy.

2.4.1 Determinants of adolescent high risk behaviours amongst South African adolescents

Peltzer et al., (2000) conducted a study on cross cultural attitudes toward suicide among   366 South African secondary school pupils with 150(41%) males and

216(59%) females and three cultural groups, 141 Blacks, 112 Whites. 112 Asians. Measures utilised included the socioeconomic and family background (14 items), suicide data (4 items), and a 30-item Multi-Attitude Suicide Tendency Scale for Adolescents (MAST-12). Peltzer et al., (2000) found a significant correlation between suicide ideation, suicide intent, and history of completed suicide in family or friends, parents who were divorced, family size and suicide attempt. This study highlighted socioeconomic status, age, gender and ethnicity as sociocultural context factors that are determinants of risk behaviour

In a study by Amoateng et al., 2014 study on the effect of socio-demographic factors on risky sexual behaviours they sought to examine individual and contextual factors that determine sexual risk behaviours among Black African adolescents in a poor community of the North West Province of South Africa. The data for the survey included 1065 school-going adolescents in Grades 9 and 11. Among the individual and contextual factors examined in the survey were age, gender, religion, residence, living arrangements, household income, parent-child relationship, peer influence, school, use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The findings of this study corroborate existing empirical evidence that adolescent development in general, and adolescents anti-social behaviours in particular are affected by both personal characteristics and broad societal conditions such as family, school and peer influences. At the individual level, the study indicated that males and adolescents in Grade 11 are more likely than females to report risky sexual behaviours as life time sexual activities, recent sexual activity and involvement with multiple sexual partners than their female and Grade 9 counterparts. At the level of contextual factors, the role of the family, in the form of

parental values of children, school attachment, peer influence, the media and religion all affect adolescent development.

Ghuman, Weitz and Knight, (2012) studied the prevalence and predictors of alcohol use and abuse among secondary school students in KwaZulu-Natal looked at the role of demographic factors and the influence of parents and peers as determinants of risk behaviour. Their study utilised a cross sectional survey during 2007. The sample comprised 807 students in Grades 11 and 12. The age range of learners was between 16-18. The researchers developed and administered a questionnaire based on socio-demographic items, such as sex, age, race and perceived socio-economic status. Alcohol use among adolescents in terms of frequency and quality was also investigated. The questionnaire also investigated significant others and influence on alcohol consumption (Ghuman, Weitz & Knight (2012). The study found that about 14.5% of students started consuming alcohol before the age of 13. The data suggested that youth of 13-16 years of age are at particular risk to initiate alcohol use and about 51% of the sample started using alcohol before they turned 17. Ghuman, Weitz & Knight (2012) thus indicated that interventions should therefore focus on the primary prevention of alcohol use in the age group.

The study supported the significant gender and age differences reported in other studies conducted among adolescents in South Africa that males and older adolescents being more likely to use alcohol and to engage in binge drinking that females (Ghuman, Weitz & Knight, 2012). The authors however indicate that the overall increase of alcohol use and abuse among young women deserve attention as their drinking maybe hazardous (Ghuman, Weitz & Knight, 2012). The study also

indicated that students viewed alcohol use and abuse as a way to have fun and to cope with problems at home. These findings suggest that interventions should aim to help young people, especially students of low economic status make informed decisions about alcohol use when socialising but more so when used as a coping strategy.

The influential role of peers was also recognised in the study as peers were indicated to have offered most respondents their first alcoholic drink, and those who perceived their friends to drink often were twice as likely to have consumes alcohol in the preceding month (Ghuman, Weitz & Knight 2012). Students also perceived parent to be influential in their own attitude to alcohol use. Some parents were also found to introduce their children to alcohol. However, it was highlighted that adolescents seem to drink less alcohol when they obtain ir from their parents than when the source is their peers or others (Nesser, et al., 2003; Haynes et al., 2004). The powerful influence of parents as role models as indicated in the data as the perceived frequency of parent/guardian alcohol abuse played a significant role in adolescents engagement in binge drinking while the abuse of alcohol by fathers was indicated as a significant predictor in students' alcohol use in the preceding month (Ghuman, Weitz & Knight, 2012).

2.4.2 Risk behaviour and clustering effects

Flisher et al., (2000) indicated that involvement in one risk behaviour increased the chances of involvement in other risk behaviours and there is therefore a need for more holistic, comprehensive multi-level approaches to address mental health well-being. Taylor et al., (2003) found that high school students in KZN who used alcohol or smoked cigarettes were two or three times more likely to be sexually active. In a study

among high school students in the Cape Peninsula it was found that, in comparison to learners who reported no risk behaviour, those who engaged in any one of the following risk behaviours were more likely to engage in some of the others. Risk behaviours included such as cigarette smoking, sexual intercourse, going out at night beyond the neighbourhood and walking home alone as well as attempting suicide (Flisher et al., 2000). Ghuman et al., (2012) also found that the increase of alcohol intake among South African adolescents is a major cause for concern. Alcohol abuse has been linked to other risk behaviours, such as unsafe sex with an increased risk of immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school and delinquent or criminal behaviour (Arata et al., 2003; Karim et al., 2009). The existence of this co-variation between risk behaviours has been confirmed in several subsequent studies. For example, adolescents who had used methamphetamine in the past 30 days were more likely to have engaged in vaginal, oral and anal sex (Pluddemann et al., (2008). In a study of eight grade, eight pupils in South Africa, Palen et al., (2006) found that during most recent sexual encounter, 39% of the adolescents reported using alcohol or marijuana. Among those who used these substances, 23 % reported that substances influenced their decision to have sex, and 26% reported using substances in order to feel more comfortable with their partner; youth who had ever used alcohol or marijuana in their life time were significantly more likely to have had sexual intercourse (Palen et al., 2006).

Also, there are strong grounds to conclude that mental-ill health and risk behaviour are associated with each other. A recent literature review identified 89 studies published between 1990 and 2007 that reported an association between substance use and psychopathology among adolescents (Saban, Flisher & Distiller, 2010). Similarly

a study among Cape Town high school students found that exposure to violence is associated with depressions, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (Flisher et al.,2006).

Flisher et al., (2000) thus indicate that the health risks associated with engaging in risk behaviours are amplified by additional and simultaneous involvement with other risk behaviours. Sharp & Dellis (2010) also note that although the evidence for a causal relationship may not be conclusive i.e. it maybe that the different risk behaviours share the same underlying constituents. The existence of this co-variation between risk behaviours and recognition that risk behaviours may share the same underlying constituents thus also highlighted the need for multi-systemic, comprehensive, holistic interventions that address the entirety of mental health wellness as opposed to single determinants of high risk behaviours.

2.5 Mental health promotion in the South African Education System

Most school based mental health promotion and risk reduction interventions in the South African context focus on the health education of the individual. Health education interventions have been used to address specific issues such as substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and suicide etc. As such these programs have focused on strengthening individual level assets and have largely been a-contextual. As interventions they have been identified as single focus initiatives and have resulted in fragmented approaches and interventions.

It is clear from reviewing the risk influences for high risk behaviour in South Africa that learners are also faced with environmental and personal stressors that place them

at risk for emotional, behavioural and academic difficulties. In paying attention to contextual demands, a shift is thus required from the traditional medical treatment oriented approach towards an ecological systemic health promotive approach (Engelbrecht, 2004).

Realising the importance of adolescents developing emotional and behavioural skills to cope with personal and environmental stressors, the Department of Education (2000) introduced the subject area Life Orientation into the curriculum.

The expectations are that the subject area provides a holistic, ecological systemic approach that recognises and promotes the multi-faceted nature of the human being who interacts and impacts on the environment. As is discussed in this literature review a comprehensive, holistic approach requires more than Life Orientation to be considered a whole school approach.

2.6 Life Orientation: Addressing adolescent developmental needs through a broader framework

In South African, the development of Life Orientation (LO) programmes has brought educational planners and educators to the realisation that the only hope of reaching out to the at-risk adolescent population lies in a support system that is holistic in practice (Engelbrecht, 2004). Research from South Africa, the United States and Europe indicates the need for orientation programmes that prepare learners adequately for the complex and dynamic life in the 21st century. Such programmes should include religious, socialising, self-development components as well as address survival skills and life skills training (Pretorius, 1998; Engelbrecht, 1998; Le Roux, 1994;

Mwamwenda, 2004; Eggen & Kauchak, 1997; Department of Education, 1992; National Educational Policy Investigation, 1993; White Paper on Education and Training, 1995 ; Republic of South Africa, 2000).

The Department of Education (2003) defines the learning area of LO as follows :

> *"Life Orientation is the study of the self in relation to others and to society. It applies a holistic approach. It is concerned with the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners and the way in which these dimensions are interrelated and expressed in life. The focus is the development of self in society, and this encourages the development of balanced and confident learners who will contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy, and an improved quality of life for all. Life Orientation guides and prepares learners for life and for its responsibilities and possibilities. This learning area addresses knowledge, values, attitudes and skills about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a health and productive life, social engagement, recreation and physical activity and career choices.* (South African Department of Education, 2003, p.9).

Within this quotation, while it is identified that the subject area is important to promote prevention of high risk behaviours and promote adolescent learner's mental health well-being, the definition does not engage the role of the school setting or environment in promoting such development through its activities and practices. It is acknowledged that the self develops in relation to interaction with others and in relation to society. The adolescent learner interacting with the school community and

structures also needs to be acknowledged and so do practices and activities that can enhance the development of adolescents in the school setting. The definition however places very little emphasis on the causal relationship of the adolescent interacting both with formal and informal structures in the school in developing such skills such as citizenship, social engagement etc.

2.6.1 Limitations of the Life Orientation subject area

While the intention is lauded as it moves the curriculum away from a focus on individual memorisation of facts and concepts in students learning, to emotional competence development, the impact is seen as limited. Preliminary indications are that Life Orientation programmes in South African are struggling to achieve their potential (Kelly, Parker & Oosi, 2001; Khulisa, 2000; Makhoba, 1999; Mashimbye, 2000; Rooth, 2001; Toddun, 2000, Wentzel, 2001). Life Orientation was seen as a 'free period' by learners (Rooth, 2001), and similar to previous perceptions of the school subject referred to as 'Guidance' (Mashimbye, 2000). Chisholm, (2004) also indicates misconceptions about the content and the role of HIV/AIDS and sexuality education as adding further negative publicity to Life Orientation. Rooth (2001) notes that in some instances Life Orientation issues were mentioned in the final 3minutes of a period, and this may have been seen as 'integration'. Her study also indicated that Life Orientation educators did not present standardised understandings and definitions of Life Orientation, nor the same descriptors. Life Orientation was not necessarily referred to as Life Orientation as Guidance and Life Skills were still used by some educators. Educators tended to focus on aspects of Life Orientation such as HIV and AIDS, health, values and morals. Most educators did not define the learning area as a whole but focused on single aspects only like human rights, gender and violence.

Within the same schools, different educators had vastly differing understandings of Life Orientation. Life Orientation appeared to be fragmented and not understood holistically.

Within the context of this study, while the learning area, Life Orientation addresses non-academic abilities such as knowledge, attitudes and behaviours necessary for successful living and learning it is argued that it fails to address the influence of the school setting in achieving these outcomes. The de- contextual, nature of the subject area as well as the fragmentation of individualised psycho-social areas such as AIDS, Substance Abuse, Human rights, Values, and Morals in to a single, subject area is seen as counterproductive to promoting an holistic approach to adolescent development.

2.7 Whole school development in South African schools

As indicated in the previous section on the 'heavy' and unrealistic expectations on the Life Orientation subject area in promoting adolescent learners emotional and psychological well-being, the need for a broader, ecosystemic approach which recognises the psycho-social school climate and which encompasses policies related to discipline, opportunities for meaningful student participation in school activities, practices and supportive interpersonal relationships is highlighted. The importance of developing a school community that allows students to develop emotionally, socially, mentally, as well as academically is noted

Pillay and Wasielewski (2007) also suggest that an ecosystemic, whole school development and health promoting view on the provision of Psychological Support

Services should be adopted if schools are to make effective use of such psychological services. In keeping with the theory of whole school development, the Department of Education (1997) has stated that holistic institutional development approaches are needed to ensure that supportive and inclusive learning environments are fostered in all centres of learning. Health promotion is concerned with the development of all aspects of wellbeing and quality of life for all, not only those with difficulties (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002).

In South Africa, research on Whole School Development and provision of Psychological services is limited. In addressing specific issues such as tobacco use, substance abuse, sexual health most school based interventions have typically used health education strategies. Given that schools provide a universal access point to young people at a time when behaviours and emotional problems with far-reaching effects on health are emerging such approaches are understandable. However, the evidence to date has been that it can prevent the onset of risk behaviours though there is less evidence for changing existing behaviours (Patton et al., 2006).

One response to the disappointing findings is located within the Ottawa Charter and draws on the principle of a more comprehensive and systemic "whole of school" approach (WHO, 1986). The Charter outlines five areas for Health promotion: developing personal skills, creating supportive environments, reorientation of health services, strengthening community action and advocacy. These five areas have implications for the quality of social relationships within the school setting and affect health related behaviour, emotional well-being, and social development of students.

The Ottawa charter thus identified a more comprehensive, multisystemic approach to promoting mental health and well-being.

Westraad (2011), in "Changing Schools in Challenging Contexts, documents the experience of piloting a "Whole School approach" within the South African Education system. The Learning Schools Initiative was conceptualised from an attempt to draw the GMSAF's (General Motors South Africa Foundation) individual education projects into a holistic framework. Westraad (2011) indicates that while the foundation acknowledges the strength of individual projects that targeted specific groups of principals, educators or learners across schools, the benefits of working at a more systemic level, within schools, was also highlighted. The project was piloted between 2003-2005 in two South African schools and elicited lessons about whole school development and evaluation in the South African Education context

Westraad's (2011) initial formative evaluation revealed that secondary schools and secondary school teachers are more focused on curriculum delivery (especially when curriculum changes are in process) and do not have much time to be involved in whole school development initiatives. He indicates that many schools do not have a clear idea of what a 'good' school should look like or what essential polices or systems should be in place. Further, poor leadership or bad relationships between staff members can be the downfall of any school development initiative. Schools, according to Westraad, (2011) need to have a motivational vision (or statement of intent) and to embrace it within a culture of professionalism, support, problem-solving and continuous improvement. School development should be incorporated into the culture of the school and not be an 'add on' separate process.

Westraad (2011) indicates key mechanisms identified during the course of the implementation of the pilot study. Firstly, developing a positive and a supportive organisational culture was highlighted in either supporting or undermining school improvement. She indicates that since schools are social organisations where so much of what happens involves relationships at a number of levels and that in essence, the way people interact with one another, how they solve disagreements and conflict all work towards creating a positive educational context. She further indicates that a set of sound values together with a motivational and current school vision and mission statement are essential in laying the foundation for a positive school culture.

Secondly, Westraad, (2011) affirms the proposition that little meaningful development can ever take place in schools that lack effective leadership. Fullan, (2001) accordingly indicates that a lack of effective leadership in schools not only influences development and change, but also includes all aspects of school effectiveness.

Westraad (2011) that education is a social phenomenon that involves individuals and relationships at all levels throughout the system. Davidoff et al.,(1994) also highlight the position of human agency and state that a school's capacity for development depends upon the capacity of its staff members, both in terms of their individual capacity as well as the ways in which they work together. Her research also indicates that at the heart of quality education is what happens at the classroom level between educators and learners. She points out that if the ultimate outcome of education – learner performance – is to be improved, and then all school development needs to

have improving the quality of teaching and learning as its ultimate goal (Westraad, 2011) . Hopkins (2001) also advocates that, given the different levels of performance of different schools, this may not be the first point of intervention in all schools and further that interventions need to be structured around improving the quality of teaching and learning as the end goal.

Westraad's (2011) study also revealed that education in all its forms requires a high level of accountability and support that needs to be evident throughout the system. She indicates that the experience of the Learning Schools initiative was that the pilot schools required support from an external agency to initiate the process of whole school development and that all of the schools responded well to the attention of an outside agency (Westraad, 2011). In essence it appeared that they needed someone non-threatening to look in from the outside, take an interest in what they were doing, provide guidance and expertise where required and praise them as deserved (Westraad, 2011).

2.8 Perceptions of school connectedness amongst South African high school learners

Within the local South African context, Govender, Naicker, Meyer-Weitz, Fanner, Naidoo and Penfold (2013) study investigated the relationship between school connectedness and health risk behaviours, specifically substance abuse, violence relate behaviours, sexual risk behaviours, and suicidal ideation among school going adolescents in Durban, South Africa. Set against the background of high prevalence rates of risk behaviour that South African youth have been found to engage in, the

researcher investigated factors that may protect adolescents from engaging in high risk behaviours.

The study also identified the school context and school connectedness as not only important for the development of academic pathways, but also to provide a protective environment for the social, psychological and physical well-being of learners (Bond et al., 2007; Patton et al., 2003). The study was conducted in two public co-educational high schools in the Durban metropolitan region of KZN, South Africa in April 2008. A purposeful sample of 241 secondary school adolescents was taken from the two neighbouring schools (N=127 from school A; N=114 from school B). In investigating the association among four repeated high risk behaviours i.e. substance abuse, violence, sexual risk and suicide ideation and perceptions of school connectedness as a protective factor four different measures were used. The first risk behaviour to be measured was school connectedness, the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) was utilised. In measuring violence and violence related behaviours, the Violence index adapted from Reddy et al., 2003 was used. In measuring substance abuse, the Substance abuse index adapted from Reddy et al., 2003 was utilised and lastly in measuring suicidal ideation, the Positive and Negative Suicide Ideation (PANS) inventory was used. The study found that perceptions of school connectedness in the sample of learners correlated significantly (negatively) with violence ($r=0.33, p<.01$), substance abuse ($r= -0.15$, $p<.05$), and suicidal ideation ($r= -0.39$, $p <.01$). Stronger perceptions of school connectedness were therefore associated with lower levels of exposure to health risk behaviours. Govender et al., (2013) thus indicated that attachment and belonging to the school environment is associated with reduced engagement in risk behaviours.

The study also evidenced significant associations among 3 health related indices. Suicide ideation was positively correlated with both violence and substance abuse (r=.36,p<.01 and r=.35, p<.01, respectively and violence and substance abuse were positively correlated (r=.52, p<,01). Govender et al.,(2013) indicate that whereas these measures provide concurrent validity for this study, the findings also point to the clustering effect of risky behaviours partly due to similar underlying social determinants and the fact that risk behavios sometimes serve the same psychosocial functions for adolescents (DuRant, Smith, Kreiter & Krowchik, 1999). The study also supported the idea of other studies that indicate the clustering of health risk behaviours can be associated with particular adolescents who are in some ways predisposed or exposed to multiple risk factors (physiological, genetic, social or environmental, perceived behavioural) implying heightened vulnerability (DuRant et al. 1999 & Jessor, Donovan & Costa, 1991).

Although the findings from this study provide support for the growing literature emphasising the benefits of school connectedness as a protective factor against engagement in various adolescent health risk behaviours, Govender et al., (2013) indicate that one cannot underestimate the central importance of contextual factors that might influence mental health outcomes. Contextual factors cited included an education system which is in a process of transformation from apartheid education to a democratic and inclusive structure which has undermined networks of authoritarian power, but has not yet been fully replaced with systems of democratic management in schools (Harber, 1998). High academic stress (Mantzicopoulos, 1997), interracial tensions, crime and sexual violence (Smith, 2007), lack of positive role models and

supportive relationships (Blum, 2005) and rigid and patriarchal school culture (Steyn, 2003) and poor prospects of job employment in the larger South African economy (Meel, 2009) can all be seen as contributing to the generation of marginalised and alienated school-going adolescents (Govender et al., 2013). This study thus indicated that health risk behaviours tend to have a clustering effect, and that they can be part of a complex set of sociocultural circumstances. The study indicated that a school based intervention that goes beyond simply reducing engagement in specific health risk behaviours and addresses the various agents of change in the school system (learners, teachers, school management, principal and parents) would be more effective and sustainable in impacting health promoting behaviours among learners. They contend that developing a positive school climate and a sense of belonging among learners by endorsing social inclusion practices should systematically underpin "the whole school" approach (Govender et al., 2013)

2.9 International Whole School Development

Research on Whole School Approaches has been limited to studies abroad in schools identified from low to middle income communities which are exposed to a variety of psycho-social stressors and challenges.

Much of the international literature recognises that school connectedness is an established protective factor for child and adolescent health, education and social well-being. A sense of connection and belonging to the school environment is widely recognised abroad as promoting children's and adolescents' mental and emotional well-being (Bond et al., 2007; Hawkins et al., 2005; Resnick et al., 1997; Rutter et al., 1979) and protecting against health compromising behaviours such as substance use,

violence, sexuality, heavy alcohol use, and intention to drink alcohol (Bisset et al., 2007; Kliewer & Murrelle, 2007; Patton et al., 2006; Springer et al., 2006).

The Seattle Social Development Study, **(2001)** explored the effects of increasing school social bonding amongst elementary school students. The Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP) included intervention within a longitudinal panel study. The intervention was guided by the social developmental model, which is a theory of behaviour that integrates elements of social control, social learning, and differential association theories. The social development model hypothesises that families and schools that provide youth with opportunities for active, contributing involvement, that ensure that youth develop competency or skills for participation, and that consistently reinforce effort and skilful participation in school and family, produce strong bonds between young people. Following control theory, the social development model hypothesizes that strong bonds to school and family protect youth against socially unacceptable behaviours, including early sexual intercourse and unprotected sexual behaviour (Abbot, Catalano, Hawkins, Kosterman & Lonczak, 2002).

The SSDP examined the effects of the intervention on changes in school from middle school through high school, using hierarchical linear modelling, during the elementary grades. A full intervention group (Grades 1-6), a late intervention group (interventions in Grade 5 and 6 only), and a control group were compared. The full intervention group was found to be significantly more bonded to school than the control group at ages 13 and 18. With regards to school bonding, the intervention group evidenced a curvilinear change decreasing to age 16 and then increasing to age

18, whereas bonding to the school in both the late intervention groups and control groups continued to decline from age 13 to age 18.

The SSDP provided evidence that a theory-based intervention that promoted improved classroom management and instruction, parenting practice and children's social competence, can reduce potentially dangerous sexual behaviours and their outcomes among young people. By age 21 years, those in the SSDP full-intervention group reported significantly fewer lifetime sexual partners. The delay in age of sexual onset by half a year for those in the full-treatment group was indicated as an important finding. This study found significant positive effects on drug use, delinquent behaviours, and precocious sexual activity as well as improved academic attitudes and achievement.

The SSDP results indicated the importance of social development mechanisms in affecting subsequent sexual behaviour change among young adults and youth. The promotion of academic success, social competence, and social connectedness, promoted through such mechanisms was indicated as important for the prevention of risky sexual behaviour.

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (2002) recognised that when adolescents feel cared for by the people at their school and feel like a part of their school, they are less likely to use substances, engage in violence, or initiate sexual activity at an early age. In an analysis of risk and protective factors for eight different health risk outcomes among adolescents, Resnick, Bearman, Blum (1997) identified

school connectedness as the only school related variable that was protective for every single outcome. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health adopted the stage-environment fit perspective to explore ways in which schools can enhance school connectedness. Stage-environment fit theory suggests behaviour modification and mental health are influenced by the fit between the developmental stage of the adolescent and the characteristic of the social environment. Adolescents are thus not likely to feel connected to school if they are in a school that does not meet their developmental needs. Conversely, school connectedness is maximised when the social environment meets their core developmental needs. The main development needs of middle and high school students include steadily increasing opportunities for autonomy, opportunities to demonstrate competence, caring and support from adults, developmentally appropriate supervision and acceptance by peers.

This study recognises the challenge for public health professionals and school leaders to identify and promote school attributes and policies that correspond to adolescents' developmental needs (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). The analysis used data from a nationally representative sample of 7th -12th grade students to test the association between connectedness and several features of schools positively linked, both theoretically and empirically, to developmental needs of adolescents. This study offers the only current, nationally representative data set that contains information on both students' feelings of connectedness and school attributes (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). The study measured the following variables :

Outcome Variables (Responses related to school connectedness 'I feel close to people at this school', *school-level variables* (structural and environmental features of schools linked theoretically and empirically to the developmental needs of

adolescents, i.e. demographics, discipline policies of school, structural characteristics-class size, urban/rural, private/public), *individual level variables* (Demographics, participation in extra-curricular activities).

The analysis revealed that school connectedness in lower in schools with difficult classroom management activities. Intervention research has shown that classroom management climate can be improved through teaching and discipline reforms. When teachers are empathic, consistent, encourage students' self-management and allow students to make decisions, the class management climate improves (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). On average, students in smaller schools were found to feel more attached to school than students in larger schools.

The study also found that school connectedness is relatively high in racially or ethnically segregated schools and lowest in integrated schools. This result confirms the finding of Moody and Bearman (1998) who demonstrated that in racially integrated schools, friendship groups often are racially segregated because there are ample students from each race group to form friendships internal to the group. When friendship patterns are segregated by race, students of all racial groups feel less attached to the school.

This study also confirms the association between individual characteristics and school connectedness. Students, who participate in extra-curricular activities, receive higher grades and feel more attached to school. McNeely, Nonnemaker and Blum (2002) also found that as students grow older, they feel less attached to school. Eccles, Frasier, Belansky and McCarthy (1997) document the decline in student engagement

and motivation between elementary school and junior high. They demonstrate how changes in the school environment between 6th and 7th grade decreases students' opportunities for autonomy and relatedness. Results from this analysis suggest that stage-environment mismatch continues to worsen through junior and high school. This study thus demonstrated that four school attributes-classroom management climate, school size, severity of discipline policies, and rates of participation in extracurricular activities were associated positively with higher school connectedness.

The Child Development Project, by Battistich et al., (2004) was found to have significant preventative effects on student's engagement in problem behaviours in the middle school years. It was also found to promote children's general positive development. Both programs identified students' experiences of belonging to school as a primary basis for their positive effects (Battistich et al., 2004).

The program aimed to promote core values, schoolwide feeling of community and prosocial behaviour,. The four elements the programme consisted of included: class meeting lessons, "homeside" activities, schoolwide community and cross-age "buddies" programs. In getting to know one another, discuss issues, identify and solve problems collaboratively class lessons played a significant role. Cross-age buddies activities, paired whole classes of older and younger students for recreational and academic activities allowed for the development of caring cross age relationships and contributed to creating a schoolwide climate of trust (Battistich et al., 2004). Homeside Activities included short conversational activities that are sent home with students for them to do with their parent or caregiver and then to discuss back in school, incorporate the families' perspectives, traditions and cultures, thereby

promoting interpersonal understanding. School-wide community building activities bring students, parents and school staff together to create new school traditions (Battistich et al., 2004).

The program was developed based on research-supported claims that students' academic, social, and ethical development benefit from: caring school communities; having their psychological needs for autonomy, belonging, and competence met: having a better sense of "connectedness" to schools (that is, students like school, have trust and respect for teachers and have high educational aspirations); co-operative rather than competitive learning environments; and social support and guidance from teachers in formal and learning situations (Battistich et al., 2004). All four components were designed by the researchers to be introduced over the course of one year. Class lessons were designed to teach core values, including fairness, helpfulness, caring respect and personal responsibility (Battistich et al., 2004).

The Gatehouse Project ((Bond, et al., 2004) was developed to address some of the limitations in earlier school health promotions work, building on whole school change programmes. The Gatehouse Project is a primary prevention programme which includes both institutional and individual focused components to promote the emotional and behavioural wellbeing of young people in secondary schools (Bond, Patton, Glover, Carlin, Butler, Thomas & Bowes, 2004).The intervention was based on an understanding of risk processes for adolescent mental health and risk behaviours that were derived from social environments. The major aims of the study were to and reduce rates of substance abuse and increase levels of emotional wellbeing known to be related to emotional wellbeing (Bond et al., 2004).

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School based health education has drawn heavily on the social learning paradigm in recent decades (Resnick, Bearman & Blum, 1997). Attachment theory was thus indicated by the researchers as providing an attractive alternative. It proposes that secure emotional connections provide a base for psychological and social development. Although much recent work on attachment theory has been in early childhood, sound attachments underpin well-being throughout life (Resnick, Bearman & Blum, 1997). Emotional and behavioural problems are more likely to arise when social and interpersonal bonds are threatened or insecure. A sense of connectedness, good communication and perceptions of adult caring have emerged in studies of schools and families as related to a wide range of behavioural and health outcomes (Resnick, Bearman & Blum, 1997). Social context, security, communication, and participation, underpin an individual's sense of attachment and were the focus of the Gatehouse Project.

The Gatehouse project brought together a team with backgrounds in education, psychiatry, welfare, psychology and public health. The primary aim of the project was to prevent or delay the onset of depressive symptoms through the promotion of a more positive social environment (Patton, 2000). The strategy sought to make changes in the schools' social and learning environment, introduce relevant and important skills through the curriculum and strengthen the structures within schools. Three interrelated strategies underpin the whole school intervention : 1) the development of a school profile; (2) establishing a health base team; (3) the identification and implementation of feasible and effective intervention strategies.

Building sense of security and trust, increasing skills and opportunities for good communication and building a sense of positive regard through valued participation in aspects of school life were identified as priority areas. The establishment and support of a school based adolescent health team; the identification of risk and protective factors in each school's social and learning environment from were also identified as effective strategies to address school connectedness.

Individual components of the intervention included the development of cognitive and interpersonal skills that underlie emotional wellbeing relevant. The classroom and whole school components attempted to change the schools' environment to enhance security and trust, communication and social connectedness and positive regard. Questionnaires surveys on mental health status, substance use, academic outcomes, social connectedness, interpersonal conflict, school connectedness, family measures were used to understand the relationship between school social cohesion and high risk behaviour.

The study evidenced that young people are more likely to have mental health problems and to use substances in the later years of schooling if they report low school connectedness and interpersonal conflict in early secondary school (Bond et.,al 2007). In this study, it was indicated that young people who were socially connected yet not connected with school are more likely to become regular smokers. Later drinking was also associated with low levels of both school and social connectedness. Thus, those who do not have good school connectedness, but do have good social relationships, are at greater risk of engaging in health risk behaviours.

The study indicated that there is substantial overlap between school and social connectedness and that there were poor outcomes for high social connectedness and low school connectedness. The findings suggest that future work should strive for greater coherence between the language of constructs and the language of measurement to better understand school and social connectedness and to inform and evaluate interventions focusing on increasing connectedness (Bond et al., 2007).

In contrast the Gatehouse Project focused on the school social environment and the individual student within that context with benefits across a range of adolescent health risk behaviours (Bond et al., 2007). The strategies used in the intervention according to Bond et al., (2007) have incorporated innovations from health promotion and educational practice, including (a) the use of a theoretical framework of attachment theory that allowed a focus on the individual within his or her social context (b) development of standardized intervention process rather than a standardized, one, one-size-fits-all intervention (c) the incorporation of data feedback to individual schools to allow priority settings (d) the development of school based action teams to c-ordinate program development (e) the use of repeated cross-sectional surveys within a cluster randomized design to allow assessment of school change (Bond et al.,2007)

2.10 Conclusion of Literature Review

Adolescence is identified in the literature review as a critical period of transitions when young people's mental health and well-being can be compromised. Social support and school connectedness has also been identified as important protective protective factors that reduce adolescent learners vulnerabilities to engaging in high risk behaviour. The literature review identifies that school based health programmes

that utilise a Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework that promote school connectedness also promote the mental health well-being of adolescent learners. Academic motivation is also identified in the literature as a predictor of school connectedness.

The literature review also highlighted a high prevalence of adolescent engagement with risk behaviours and the role of promote school connectedness to prevent such behaviours. In understanding engagement with high risk behaviours the literature review also highlights determinants of high risk behaviours through focusing on more recent South African studies. Research on risk behaviours and clustering effects is also highlighted to motivate for holistic, multi-systemic and comprehensive approaches to intervention and promotion of adolescent well-being.

The researcher then reviewed support for mental health well-being in the South African Secondary School context. Initiatives such as Life Orientation were identified to provide a broad framework for learners to develop emotional, social and psychological skills and competencies. Although the cause promoted was identified in the literature as laudable, the subject area and outcomes has nonetheless been critiqued for not engaging the adolescent learner within the school environment as an active contributor and participant. This has been identified as being detriment to adolescents experiencing a sense of mental health well-being and academic motivation. The importance of promoting a 'whole school development' approach in South African high schools which is critical of and engages with multi-systemic factors and structures as well as collaboration with multiple role players is also

highlighted. Lastly, the literature identifies recent South African research on perceptions of school connectedness and a depth of international research conducted.

2.10.1 Motivation for the Present Study

In summary, studies have indicated that students who experience social connectedness are less likely to experience subsequent mental health issues and are less likely to engage in health risk behaviours. The research indicates that such students are more likely to have good educational outcomes as a result. School connectedness, however, includes relationships with peers, teachers and learning. "Thus the challenge is not whether school or social connectedness is more important, but how we can promote both school connectedness and social connectedness in forms that promote learning and well-being" (Bond et al. 2007, p.357)

The literature also indicated a scarcity of attempts to pilot 'whole school' and school connectedness interventions in the South African context. Also indicated was a scarcity of studies that utilised both quantitative and qualitative methods in evaluating the efficacy of school connectedness interventions. A review of the literature revealed that many interventions abroad have been informed by quantitative findings (surveys, school climate profiles and questionnaires (Bond et al. 2007; Patton et al. 2006).

This study, thus attempted to address the gap in the literature which reveals a scarcity of piloting whole school interventions or school connectedness interventions in the South African Education context. As such it represents a shift from a focus on individual level interventions to community school level interventions. This study thus also attempted to expand our local knowledge of school connectedness through

the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and marks a shift from a dominance of quantitative research on school connectedness. This study is thus based on the premise that if the associations between school connectedness and promotion of mental health well-being, and academic motivation are shown to be similar to international evidence, it is probable that international 'whole school' intervention approaches will be successful in South African schools.

CHAPTER 3:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Ecological Framework

The ecological metaphor encourages researchers to recognise the 'embededness' of people in contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1997; Rappaport, 1977). This conceptualisation helps to shift the focus from individualistic explanations that are prone to victim-blaming towards more holistic, system oriented models of explanation. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory was concerned that developmental psychologists paid little attention to environmental influences on human development. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory embraces the person-in environment perspective by focusing on the individual and the context in which the individual functions (Fraser, 2004). Specifically, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that adolescents development is strongly influenced by the family, school, peer, neighbourhood and community contexts in which they live and interact. These environments significantly contribute to the healthy development of youth. Such environments present the opportunity to promote or cultivate positive overall youth development. In contrast, disruptions and instability in the primary settings (i.e., family school, community) in which adolescents' competence and character are developed are risk factors inhibiting the healthy development of young people (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Bronfenbrenner's theory views adolescents as developing within a complex system of relationships influenced by multiple levels of the surrounding environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Each system is seen to impact not only each other but also on individual development (Berk, 2009; Fraser, 2004). Bronfenbrenner's theory is often depicted in an illustration of concentric circles or nested ecologies with

the individual youth in the centre (Berk, 2009; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In Bronfenbrenner's original (1979) conceptualisation of ecological theory, the environmental contexts included the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as discussed below :

- Microsystem : the most immediate context for individual development (e.g., family, schools, peers). Microsystme contexts consist of the activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships of the individual.

- Mesosystem : the interaction between two or more microsystems (e.g. parent involvement in schools, school community partnerships)

- Exosystem: one or more setting that do not involved the developing person but may indirectly impact the person (e.g., school policies, neighbourhood programs)

- Macrosystem: the broadest level, the wider social environment (e.g., cultural values; poverty)

  Beginning with the individual's immediate context and expanding in broadening circles, Bronfenbrenner's environmental contexts were classified according to their level of influence (i.e., proximal; distal) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The microsystem and mesosystem were found to have the most direct or proximal influence on adolescent development, while the exosystem and macrosystem were found to exert an indirect impact on adolescent development. To illustrate this, the systems are typically depicted as nested layers of influence with the individual in the middle (Darling, 2007). See figure 2).
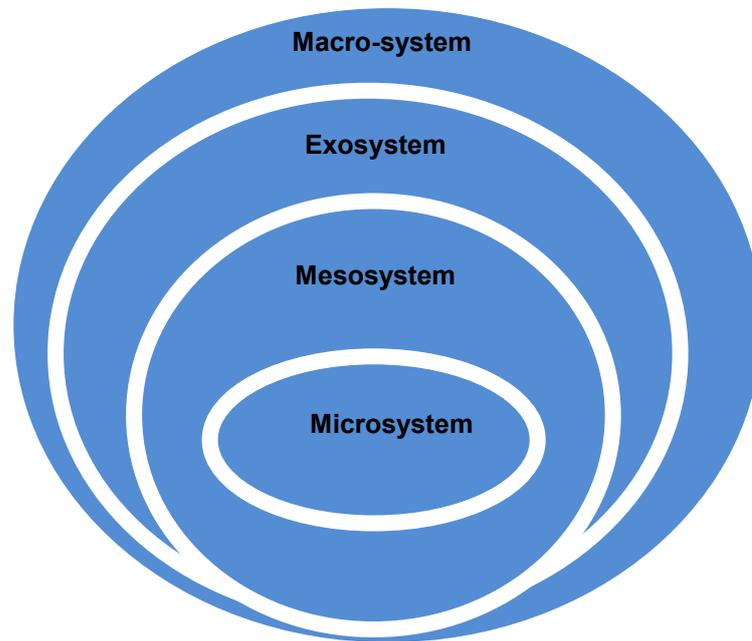
Figure 2: Nested system level influences in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Theory

In later versions of Bronfenbrenner's work, he became concerned that the individual was being lost in the emphasis on context and stressed that the individual is an active, not passive, participant in environmental interactions (Darling, 2007). Instead of the environment, the person is the center of later iterations of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of development (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1993) thus positioned individual characteristics which play out in various contexts. The individual component of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993) ecology model can be considered to be the personal experiences and characteristics that students bring with them to their school experiences. Bronfenbrenner (1993)

indicated that, 'the attributes of the person most likely to share the course of development, for better or for worse, are those that induce or inhibit dynamic dispositions toward the immediate environment," and he referred to these key attributes "developmental instigative characteristics" (p.11). Individual level characteristics may thus include factors such as gender, race, and sexual orientation.
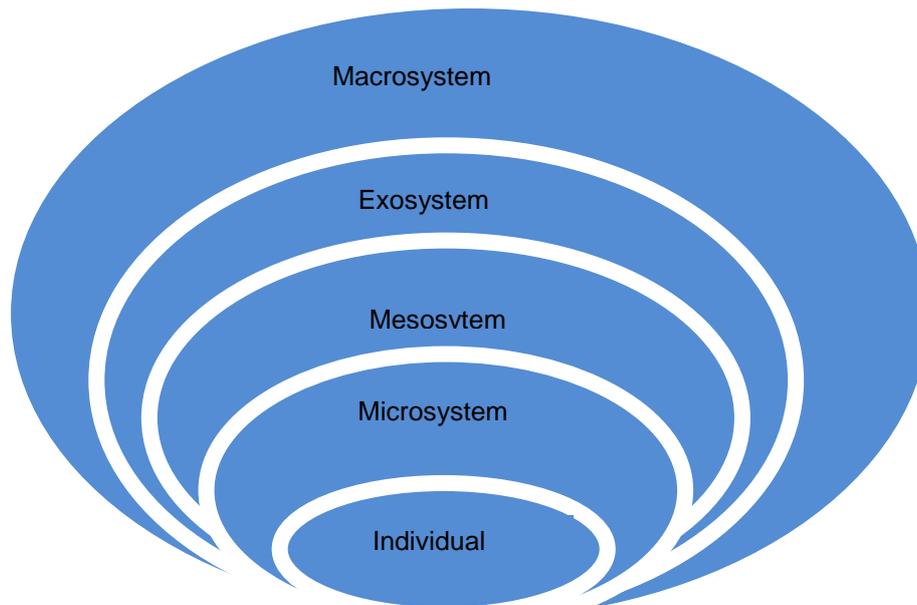
Figure 3: Nested system level influences in Bronfenbrenners's later ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994)

3.2 Concepts central to Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Ecology of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner's work uses ideas from the 1970's or 1980's and 1990's. The full theory in its developed form deals with the interrelations among concepts which are discussed below.

Proximal processes

Proximal processes is argued by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) to play a crucial role in development. This concept highlights that human development takes place through a process of reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). To be effective, the authors, indicated that this interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. These enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Bronfenbrenner & Morris (1998) however indicates that the nature of proximal processes varies according to aspects of the individual and of the context-both spatial and temporal (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, 1999, 2001/2005; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Person

Bronfenbrenner indicated the relevance of biological and genetic aspects of the person (Bronfenbrenner, 2001/2005; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). He devoted more attention, however, to the personal characteristics that individuals bring with them in any social situation (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). He divided these characteristics into different types, which he termed *demand, resource, force and time* characteristics. Demand characteristics are those to which he referred in earlier writings as 'personal stimulus' characteristics, those that act as immediate stimulus to another person, such as age, gender, skin colour and physical appearance. These types of individual characteristics may influence initial interactions because of the expectations formed immediately (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

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Resource characteristics are not immediately apparent as they related to mental and emotional resources such as past experiences, skills, and intelligence and also to social and material resources (access to proper nutrition, housing, caring parents, educational opportunities). Force characteristics are those that have to do with differences of temperament, motivation, persistence, and the like (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The final element is time. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) wrote about time as constituting micro-time (what is occurring during the course of some specific activity or interaction), meso-time (the extent to which activities and interactions occur with some consisyency in the developing person's environment) and macro time (developmental processes are likely to vary according to the specific history of events that are occurring as the developing individuals are at one age or another.

3.3 School connectedness and an ecological conception

Waters, Donna and Theresa (2009) provided a description of the influence of the school environment within the ecological model. In the school ecological model, interpersonal characteristics of schools can be represented by the relationships between students, between staff and between students and staff. Such relationships can range from collegial and respectful to didactic and authoritarian and have been shown to affect the way young people feel about school, achieve academically at school and participate in school activities (Lee & Smith, 1999; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Organisational features of a school can be described in three broad categories : structural, functional and the built environment.

Contemporary theory thus conceives and defines school connectedness as an ecological concept (Rowe et al., 2007). An ecological view of school connectedness takes in to account the quality of connections among multiple groups in the school community and recognises the cohesiveness among different groups, such as families, students, school staff and representatives of health and community agencies.

The ecological environment, in the school setting according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, would include: the *microsystem* which refers to social networks of family, friends, teachers and peers; the *mesosytem* which refers to school management processes and teaching practices that determine the school culture; the *exosystem* referring to broader community interaction and the *macrosystem* referring to education policies and laws. A major factor influencing the outcome of human development within these systems is thus timing of biological and social transitions as they relate to the culturally defined age, role expectations and opportunities throughout life (Bronfenbrenner, 1999)

An ecological perspective recognises the advantages of multilevel interventions that combine behavioural and environmental components (Glanz, Rimer and Lewis, 2002). The perspective identifies different levels of influence for health related behaviours. At the *Intrapersonal level* factors such as attitudes and skills as well as acquisition of knowledge, have been the traditional emphasis of health education activities. The second level of influence, is *interpersonal processes* and primary groups that provide social identity, support and role definition. *Institutional factors* such as rules and regulations that guide conduct of members within organisations constitute another level of influence. *Community factors* such as connections among

groups within geo-political borders comprise the fourth level of influence. The fifth and final level of influence includes *policy factors* such as laws at the national, state, and local laws and *cultural beliefs and practices* (Glanz, Rimer & Lewis, 2002) .Taken together, the ecological framework suggests that the potential for changes in individual lifestyle would be greatly enhanced through multi-level health promotion programs (Glanz, Rimer & Lewis, 2002).

3.4 The present study and operationalising the ecological model

Drawing from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological development model, Petersen & Govender (2010) provide a further conceptualisation for guiding mental health promotion and prevention interventions in scarce resource contexts. This conceptualisation identifies key points of intervention utilised to enhance school connectedness within the HPS framework as in this study. In this section, the researcher firstly begins by highlighting the points of intervention within this framework to allow the reader an understanding of this how this study was located. Secondly, in operationalising the ecological approach, concepts such as reciprocal determinism and social capital are discussed to give the reader an understanding of the outcomes the researcher wanted to achieve in this study.

Petersen and Govenders (2010) adapted model is utilised as this model highlights the *points of intervention* that facilitated the *process* of enhancing school connectedness.

This framework mirrors the four ecological levels of influence identified earlier: within the *intrapersonal system* (individual level), within the *microsystem* (interpersonal level), within the *group/cultural system* or *organised system*

interventions are concerned with facilitating community and societal level change, harnessing group processes as the starting point for initiating change from the grass roots level.

For the purposes of this study though, due to accessibility, interventions were not developed to involve parents at the school community level nor the policy system level. Interventions were developed to impact behaviour within the school environment. It was therefore thought appropriate to involve key role players (teachers, managers, learners) directly responsible for influencing behaviour in the school to explore the protective influence of relationships, systems and structures in the school environment. Implications for addressing the policy level are however discussed as part of the recommendations emanating from the study. Interventions were developed to impact levels listed below.

3.4.1 Intrapersonal Level

The intrapersonal level encompasses the development of individual characteristics in preventing adolescents engaging in high risk behaviour. The scope for integrating this level acknowledges the role schools can play in developing behavioural and emotional competence in adolescence and equipping young people for adult life. The focus on this level is strengthening the personal influences or assets that a person brings to a situation such as coping skills and cognitive abilities (Petersen & Govender, 2010). Interventions at this level focus on strengthening the self-efficacy a person brings to bear on a situation. Self efficacy is indicated to be central to a number of health promotion models, including the Health Belief Model (Becker,

1974), Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986), Ajzen's theory of unplanned behaviour (1991), and the theory of triadic influence (Flay & Petraitis, 1994).

3.4.2 Interpersonal Level

The interpersonal level is concerned with strengthening the protective influence of relationships with significant others. Interventions at this level are aimed at increasing social support within the context of microsystems (Petersen & Govender, 2010). This can occur firstly through psycho-education and training of significant others in the microsystem system to provide support. Secondly, through providing people with information on the benefits of social support and how to develop socially supportive relationships, interventions can encourage people to develop and maintain relationships that provide social support (Petersen & Govender, 2010). Lastly, interventions can focus on developing new socially supportive relationships for people at risk. Petersen & Govender (2010) identify mentorship programmes, peer advisor groups, whereby people who live in the same community as the people at risk are trained to provide advice, assistance and referrals (Breinbauer & Maddaleno, 2005).

3.4.3 Community Level

Petersen and Govender (2010) indicate that while promoting the influence of individual and groups can build resilience through strengthening the resources on which a person can draw in their immediate social environment, a focus on inserting *critical consciousness theory* at the community level can provide a mechanism for facilitating more distal protective influences at a structural and cultural/social normative level. Campbell & MacPhail (2002).   Petersen and Govender (2010)

indicate that mental health promotion interventions need to harness the social bonding that occurs within networks and groups to promote the process of conscientisation, as suggested by Campbell and MacPhail (2002). The process of conscientisation enables group members to exercise agency in relation to their existing social or cultural differences (Patel, 2005). Freire (1993) identified that two processes are involved in consciousness raising. The first is the development of a critical consciousness. Through critically analysing their problems, group members are able to develop a critical consciousness. Freire (1993) argues that this a form of psychological and intellectual empowerment, whereby members become invested in the joint production of meaning that can serve as an ideological critique and a catalyst for social transformation. Freire (1993) noted a second process, that of social action. Through the development of a collective critical consciousness, group members are more likely to be able to collectively engage in actions to challenge the material bases of ill health at community and structural levels (Freire, 1993).

Within the ecological systemic understanding three different points of intervention will be utilised in this study : within the *intrapersonal system* to strengthen the assets a person brings to the situation; within the microsystem *(interpersonal level interventions)* to strengthen the protective influences of relationships with significant others; community school group systems which, from within a competency-enhancement approach have a two pronged effect of promoting change at a proximal community level, as well as at more distal socio-cultural and structural level.
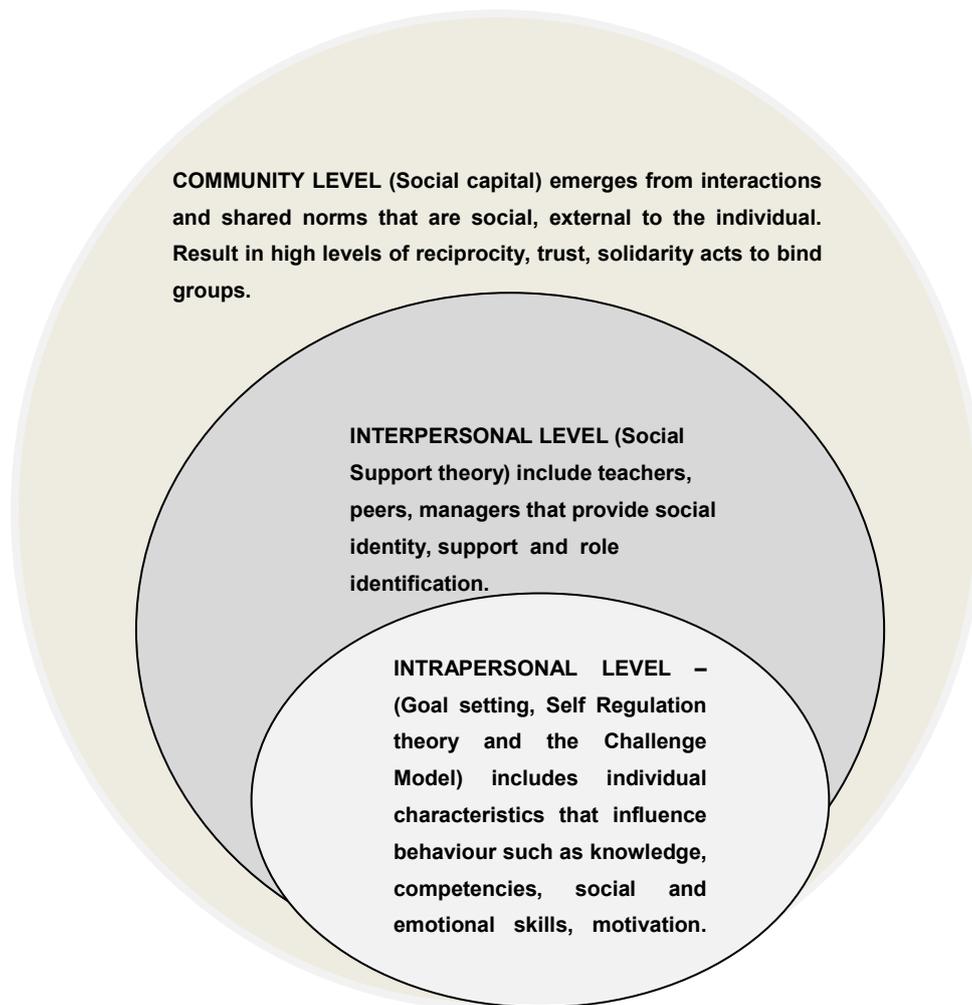
Figure 4: Ecological levels of influence (adapted from Petersen & Govender, 2010, p.32)

3.4.4 Reciprocal determinism

The Social Cognitive or Learning Theory according to Albert Bandura (1974) emphasized how cognitive, behavioural, personal, and environmental factors interact to determine motivation and behaviour. Bandura (1974) believed that human function was a result of the interaction of all three of these factors. In Social Learning theory, causal processes are conceptualised in terms of *reciprocal determinism*. Reciprocal determinism is proposed as a basic analytic principle for analysing psychosocial

phenomena at the level of interpersonal development, interpersonal transactions, and interactive functioning of organisational and social systems (Bandura, 1974).

At the intrapersonal level, people's conceptions of influence, what they perceived and do, and their conceptions are in turn altered by the effects of their actions and the observed consequences accruing to others (Bandura, 1977). At the interpersonal level, behaviour and how people reciprocally determine each other's actions is highlighted (Bandura et al., 1960). At this level, reciprocal processes involve cognition as well as action. At the broader societal level, reciprocal processes are reflected in the interdependence of organisational elements, social subsystems, and transactional relations (Bandura, 1973; Keohane & Nye, 1977). Here the matters of interest are the patterns of interdependence between systems, the criteria and means used for gauging systematic performances, the mechanisms that exist for exercising reciprocal influence, and the conditions that alter the degree and type of reciprocal control that one system can exert on another.

Bandura (1973) analysed behaviour thus in terms of reciprocal determinism. He indicated that the term is used to signify the production of effects by events, rather than in the doctrinal sense that actions are completely determined by a prior sequence of causes independent of the individual. Further he contends that because of the complexity of interacting factors, events produce effects probabilistically rather than inevitably (Bandura, 1973). He highlights the fact that in transactions with the environment, people are not simply reactors to external stimuli and there is the notion that people can exercise some influence over their own behaviour and change their environment (Bandura, 1973).

According to Bandura (1994, 1997) a person's attitudes, abilities and cognitive skills comprise what is known as the *self- system.* The self-system has been identified to strongly influence the power a person has to face challenges competently in the environment and the choices a person is likely to make (Bandura, 1973). Performance and motivation are in part determined by how effective people believe they can be (Bandura, 1973). The self-system thus comprises the following listed below:

- Self-Observation – Can be used to assess one's progress toward goal attainment as well as motivates behavioural change

- Self-Evaluation – Compares an individual's current performance with a desired performance or goal

- Self-Reaction – Reaction to one's performance can be a motivating if progress is deemed acceptable, leading to a feeling of self-efficacy with regards to continuing and will be motivate towards the achievement of their goal.

- Self -Efficacy – Refers to people's judgments about their capability to perform particular tasks

According to Bandura (1973) what is known about reciprocal causation, is that behaviour can be influenced both by the environment and the person/self. Each of the three variables : environment, person, and behaviour all influence the others.

From the perspective of reciprocal determinism, the common practice of searching for the ultimate environment cause of behaviour is argued to be an idle exercise because, in an interactional process, one and the same event can be a stimulus, a response, or an environmental reinforce, depending on where in the sequence the analysis arbitrarily begins (Bandura, 1973).

Bandura's (1973) social cognitive or learning theory stressed the importance of observational learning, initiation and modelling. His theory integrated a continuous interaction between behaviours, cognitions and the environment (Bandura, 1973). Wood & Bandura (1989) indicated that academic performances (behavioural factors) are influenced by how the students themselves are affected (cognitive factors) and by the school organisational structures (environmental factors). According to Bandura (1973), in reciprocal causation, behaviour can be influenced by both the environment and the person. Each of these three variables: environment, person, behaviour thus influence the others.

3.4.5 Social capital

Social capital is regarded as a feature of social relationships in a school community that provides the building blocks for connectedness. Accumulation of social capital has been shown to lead to an elimination or reduction in social conflict and the presence of systems that promote conflict management whereby processes for resolving disputes involve investigation and/or discussion (Kawachi & Berkmann, 2000).

Social capital which is seen to emerge from social structures has been described as a resource that resides in the relationships that people have with each other, and that individuals within a social structure can draw upon to achieve certain actions (Kawachi & Berkmann, 2000; Veenstra, 2005). It has been described as "features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1993, p. 35), enabling people to act

collectively (Woolcock, 2001). The World Bank (2001) also indicated that for young people, schools are characterized as social organisations that are uniquely suited to a wide range of interventions needed to promote positive health outcome through enhancing social capital. Onyx and Bullen (2000) indicate that the building blocks of social capital in most models include : trust, engagement and connection, collaborative action, shared identity, shared values and aspirations. Moore (1999) indicates that social capital provides an opportunity for young people to be seen as active agents, who shape the structures and practices around them.

In the measurement of social capital one can differentiate between structural and cognitive social capital. Structural social capital reflects the connectedness of individuals within a given community (participation in organisations and networks etc.), while cognitive social capital taps into the feelings of a sense of community (perceptions of reciprocity, norms, and trust etc). Because of the multi-component nature of social capital different indicators assessing the relationship to school connectedness is noted. Indicators such as school belonging, school membership, school attachment are often referred to in school connectedness. Harpham et al., (2002) argues that because of the complexity of measurement of these social capital indicators both quantitative and qualitative measures need to be used when evaluating outcomes.

Research indicates that through strengthening school connectedness, one would also be strengthening the potential of the school to have a protective influence in terms of mental health, the engagement of high risk behaviours, motivation and academic outcomes. It would also enhance learners help seeking behavior to access mental health resources/psychological services at the broader level.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4. Outline of research design

The purpose of the following chapter is to provide an outline of the research design. In exploring the effects of the pilot study intervention, programme evaluation (Bhana and Govender, 2010) was deemed appropriate. In this chapter, the researcher presents an outline of the different methodologies used in the different phases. Add on here The use of a mixed method, qualitative (action research, semi-structured, focus group interviews, document data sources) and quantitative (quasi-experimental research) is drawn upon to evaluate the efficacy of the pilot study intervention. The specific methods will be described in this chapter. The various phases of the study, the various outcome indicators and methodology to be used at each level are also discussed in this chapter.

4.1 Pilot Study

The Concise Oxford Thesaurus, defines a pilot project or study as an experimental, exploratory, test, preliminary, trial or try out investigation (Waite, 2002). Pilot studies are referred to as 'vanguard trials' (i.e. pre-studies) intended to assess the safety of treatment or interventions (Thabane, 2010). Pilot studies are a necessary first step in exploring novel interventions and novel applications of interventions (Leon, 2012). The term pilot study is used in two different ways in social science research. It is referred to as a feasibility study in which there maybe "small scale version(s), or trial

runs (s), done in preparation for the major study" (Polit et al., 2001). However, (Baker, 1994) indicates that a pilot study can also involve e the pre-testing or 'trying out' of a particular research instrument (Baker, 1994). Pilot studies can be based on quantitative and or qualitative methods. Thus, the researcher may start with 'qualitative data collection and analysis on a relatively unexplored topic, using the results to design a subsequent quantitative phases of the study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

Prescott and Soeken (1989) indicate that pilot studies are likely to be under-discussed, underused and underreported. Full reports of pilot studies are rare in the research literature (Linquist, 1991; Muoio et al, 1995; van Teijlingen et al., 2001). Too often research papers refer only to one element of the pilot study, for example, to the 'pre-testing' or 'pilot testing' of a questionnaire (De Vaus, 1993). It has been indicated that researchers have an ethical obligation to make the best use of their research experience by reporting issues arising from all parts of a study, including the pilot phase. Well-designed and well conducted pilot studies can inform us about the best research process and about likely outcomes (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). Teijlingen & Hundley (2001) thus indicate that researchers should be encouraged to report pilot studies.

4.2 Programme Evaluation

In evaluating the effectiveness of mental health promotion interventions piloted in this study to inform the HPS framework the challenge was to identify a methodology that allows for an exploration of the processes that enhance school connectedness. A programme is defined as any group of related, complementary activities that are

implemented together in order to achieve specific, pre-determined outcomes. Potter (2006) indicates that psychologists may find programme evaluation relevant both theoretically and methodically. He indicates that the methodology draws on a number of fields, which include management, organisational theory, policy analysis, education, sociology, social anthropology and the literature on social change. Potter (2006) thus indicates that the literature on programme evaluation may have value for psychologists planning evaluations of social programmes.

Programme evaluation is the 'systematic gathering, analysis and reporting of data about a programme to assist in decision making' (Scriven, 1991, p.1). Programmes are evaluated for several reasons: to judge their effectiveness and the impact they have on their target population, to ensure accountability to the stakeholders, to identify ways in which to improve the programme (through determining what works or not and for what reasons), and to be able to compare it with other programmes that provide the same or similar services (Van Marris & King, 2006). Evaluation is a process that establishes the 'merit, worth and value of things', and goes beyond mere data collection (Scriven, 1991, p.1).

In monitoring and evaluation, monitoring refers to the *routine* tracking of a plan, whereas evaluation refers to a *systematic means of appraisal* to assess the value, worth or effectiveness of the policy, plan or intervention. Bhana and Govender (2010) indicate that the reason for conducting evaluations is to assess programme effects for the local context, and to improve the programme so that it has fit to the local context, and to improve the programme so that it has better fit to the local context, and to improve the programme so that it has a better fit to the local context (Bhana &

Govender, 2010). The approach to evaluation within health promotion reflects and integrative mixing; that is to say, qualitative process evaluations and other non-quantitative approaches are often integrated with quantitative analysis (Wynn et al., 2005). In evaluating intervention programmes, three main categories are identified (Bhana & Govender, 2010).

1) Formative Evaluation

2) Process Evaluation

3) (Summative) Outcome Evaluation

4.2.1 Formative Evaluation/Situational Analysis - focuses mainly on programmes that are under development. It is conducted during the planning phases of a programme and involves all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the programme is developed according to stakeholder needs. Formative evaluation includes such elements as needs assessments, evaluability assessments, programme logic models, pre-testing programme material, audience analysis and evaluability assessments (Van Marris & King, 2006).

4.2.2. Process Evaluation - are generally conducted at strategic intervals, taking into account the lifespan of a programme, and during which data from interviews, focus groups and direct observation are available frequently enough for corrections to be made while the programme continues (Bhana & Govender, 2010). Qualitative methods used in conjunction with quantitative outcome measures may be especially helpful in understanding programme intervention outcomes particularly if the intervention programme failed to show the desired changes. While each of the data collection methods has limitations in its own right, their combined and complementary use helps to overcome any individual limitations. From this

perspective, there is no single hierarchy of research methods, and knowledge is gained by sequential use of complementary research methods. Both process monitoring and process evaluation are often seen as the most important type of 'monitoring and evaluation', as they aid in identifying those aspects of the programme that are successful (and must therefore continue), as well as those defects that need to be corrected (UNAIDS, 2007).

4.2.3 A summative (or outcome or effect) evaluation- focuses on programmes that are already under way or have been completed. It investigates programme effects (both intended and unintended). It should ideally involve experimental or quasi-experimental designs, which identify differences in programme outcomes, both with and without the intervention. This will generally involve a comparison between the group that received the intervention (experimental group) and one that did not (control or comparison group).

The function of programme evaluation is to enable the evaluator to answer two questions:

1. How do indicators of the desired programme effects compare, before and after the implementation of the intervention ?

2. Can change observed in the targets be ascribed to the intervention ?

The first question requires a design in which evaluators are able to measure programme outcomes before both before and after the programme has been implemented. Sometimes, more than one follow up is needed to monitor how long it takes for changes to occur or for how long changes are sustained (Bhana & Govender, 2010). This evaluation also requires that objectives are defined, namely, measurable outcomes that lead to the achievement of a goal. Activities are actions that are taken

in order to achieve the outcomes. Outputs are the services that are delivered by the programme (Bhana & Govender, 2010).

Bhana and Govender (2010) also indicate that in evaluation research, it is important to ensure that the treatment and control or comparison groups are able to be compared on all aspects that are salient to the evaluation. They further indicate that while experimental methods are better at determining cause and effect situations, they are often not possible given cost and contextual constraints. In such instances quasi-experimental designs maybe used (Bhana & Govender, 2010). The most significant threat in using non-experimental designs is seen as selection bias or the absence of an equivalent control group. The researchers however indicate that evaluators must expect the groups not to be equal and must assume that they cannot begin to know all the dimensions on which the group will differ (Bhana & Govender, 2010).

4.2.4 Challenges in evaluation

'Intervention fidelity' refers to the degree to which a match is achieved between an intervention as it was intended to be implemented and the intervention as it was actually delivered under real world conditions (Bhana & Govender, 2010). Fidelity is viewed as a broad term that may deal with features of an intervention other than content or the way in which the intervention is implemented (Hill et al., 2007). Questions of fidelity generally pertain to process evaluation because they deal with the way in which a programme was implemented (Bhana & Govender, 2010). They indicate that a possible way to deal with fidelity issues is to separate core elements of programmes from key characteristics; core elements are critical features of an intervention's intent and design considered responsible for its effectiveness, while key

characteristics are the crucial activities and methods of delivery that can be tailored to the unique context of the population (Glossary, 2000). For a programme to be successfully implemented, the core elements must be implemented with fidelity (Bhana & Govender, 2010).

In relation to the role of theory, the content of evidence-based programmes is developed using theory that has been tested over a range of studies. The theories underlying programme content is expected to link to programme outcomes that are measured (Ahmed et al., 2006). Programme developers thus choose specific content based on theoretical understandings that are understood to result in certain outcomes.

Bhana and Govender (2010) indicate that unlike experimental designs, where control over most extraneous variables is possible, with quasi-experimental designs, there is less control over many potential extraneous variables, even when comparison groups are used. Given that experimental designs are expensive and difficult to conduct in community settings a community programme may, in fact, be effective, despite the fact that an evaluator may not be able to find empirical evidence to support this claim. Barry and McQueen (2005) concur, stating that just because there may not be 'evidence', as shown by scientific outcome measures, does not mean that there is no good practice. Potvin and Richard (2001) indicate that no 'magic bullet' exists for evaluation of interventions implemented in communities. Instead, design issues have to be informed on an examination of the characteristics of the community and the evaluation questions that have to be answered.

4.2.5 Developments in programme evaluation in South Africa

Over the past 25 years and more recently, the area of programme evaluation has begun to receive much attention as the potential impact of evaluation on the socio-political contexts of programmes (Weiss, 1998), as well as the potential of development evaluation for developing a social psychology that is relevant to community needs becomes more apparent (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001; Patton, 1994; Potter & Kruger, 2001). The debates in social and community psychology suggest a need for psychology to move out of the laboratory and into the arena of social development (Oskamp, 1984; Duffy & Wong, 1996; Kelly & van der Riet, 2001). The literature on participatory and empowerment evaluation (e.g.., Choudhary & Tandon, 1988; Cousins, Donahue, & Bloom, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992, 1995; Feterman, 1993, 1994, 2001), for example, is based on the assumption that evaluation has a developmental function and makes suggestions as to ways in which researchers can engage with social programmes so as to promote personal and group empowerment (Potter, 2006). In addition, approaches to evaluation based on the development of critical ability (e.g. Carrr & Kemmis, 1986; Grundy, 1984, 1987; Habermas, 1984) have also provided relevance in proposing ways of developing capacity to criticize the social order and that evaluation has a critical function (Potter, 1994).

Programme evaluation was not widely recognized in South African prior to the 1900s. Meyer and Hofmeyer (994), Potter (1991, 1996) and Louw (1998) to suggest that programme evaluation in Southern Africa is an underdeveloped field of inquiry. Potter (2006) indicates that in South Africa it can be characterized as under-recognised, diffuse and fragmented as an area of social research, with a lack of

researchers working full-time in the area and the lack of a broad-based professional association contributing to the underdevelopment of the field. Potter (2006) however indicates that this situation however shows promise of improving with more universities offering training in the field.

Green (1994) thus indicates that the literature in the field shows that programme evaluations can be based within a number of paradigms, which she characterizes as follows: postpositive, based on systems and measurement theory; pragmatic, based on multimethod and eclectic assumptions; interpretive, based on assumptions of pluralism and understanding diversity; and critical, normative science, based on participatory and emancipatory assumptions directed at empowerment and facilitation of social change.

The literature thus identifies that different forms of evaluation research can contribute to a psychology in South Africa which deals with multiple values ad issues (Bhana & Kanjee, 2001; Cook & Shadish, 1986). Potter (2006) indicates that both traditional measurement-based evaluation methods, as well as qualitative, interpretive and critical constructivist evaluation methods have uses relating to different facets of social programmes. In addition, democratic participatory and empowerment evaluation strategies may contribute to new directions in community development (Potter, 2006).

4.2.6 Programme evaluation informed by social ecology and social system concepts

Researchers have suggested that programme evaluation be informed by ecological and systems principles (Gruenwald et al., 1997; Mcleroy, 1998). Social ecology and systems theories have been identified to accentuate the individual, social, and environmental dynamics that underlie human behavior (Gruenwald et al., 1997; According to these theories, complex health issues like substance abuse, teen pregnancy, violence, or chronic disease should be viewed as interwoven into the social fabric. Programs that address such issues effectively often intervene at different levels simultaneously to influence individual knowledge, attitudes, and behavior; social support systems and networks; community capacity to mobilize effective initiatives; coalitions of cooperating organisations; and alliances that affect politics and policy through the media (Israel et al. 1995; Winett et al.1989). Consequently, the assessments of programs should also take into account the multiple levels at which they occur including; the intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community and public policy (McLeroy et al., 1988).

Goodman (1998) indicates that the importance of the ecological and systems perspectives is that evaluation should be conceptualized across two dimensions; first, the multiple social levels at which interventions are directed (intrapersonal, interpersonal, organisational, community, and public policy); and second, the stage of programe development (initial mobilization, establishing organizational structure, building capacity for action, implementing, refining and institutionalizing). He points out that more traditional approaches e.g. randomized control studies may not besufficient for assessing complex interventions and that evaluating programmes may

require increased reliance on qualitative approaches and the combinations of these methods with experimental and quasi-experimental research designs (Goodman,1998).

4.2.7 Action research in programme evaluation

Goodman, (1998) indicates that when involving community members in the development and implementation of the evaluation, the researcher acts as a collaborator and builder of capacity. These roles thus facilitate program development as well as evaluation. Goodman (1998) further indicates that if the program stakeholders perceive the evaluation as an integral part of the program, it can enhance community understanding, stakeholder commitment, and utilization of results can be enhanced. The distance between the researcher and the community is thus reduced when local stakeholders are involved in collaboration (Goodman, 1998).

The community engagement process thus requires skills in effective interpersonal communication, team building, group process, and negotiation, teaching skills, political acumen, and the ability to gain cooperation and trust (Goodman, 1998). Approaches such as action research incorporate these skills into the evaluation process.

Koshy, (2010) highlighted the following features of the action research approach:

- Action research is a method used for informing practice. It involves action, evaluation and critical reflection and-based on the evidence gathered-changes in practice are then implemented.

- Action research is participative and collaborative; it is undertaken by individuals with a common purpose

- It is situation based and context specific

- It develops reflection based on interpretations made by the participants

- Action research can involve problem solving, if the solutions to the problem leads to the improvement of practice

- In action research findings will emerge as action develops, but these are not conclusive or absolute.

Reason and Bradbury (2006) describe action research as an approach used in designing studies which seek both to inform and influence practice. The authors indicate that action research is a particular orientation and purpose of enquiry rather than a research methodology. Hopkins (2002) indicates that action research combines a substantive act with a research procedure and that it is action disciplined by enquiry and a personal attempt at understanding, while engaged in a process of improvement and reform.

Meyer (2000) contends that *participation* is fundamental in action research as it is an approach which demands that participants perceive the need to change and are willing to play an active role in the research and change process.

Niewenhuis (2007) indicates that action research has a collaborative and participative dimension and the focus is on a practical problem experienced by participants for which a practical solution is sought. In undertaking action research an understanding of the context as well as of possible solutions to the problem is considered. The researcher acts as a mediator to assist participants plan and implement interventions that seek to alleviate the problem under investigation. Evaluating or assessing the

effectiveness or success of the intervention becomes an important focus of the research. What makes action research a qualitative research design type is the strong focus on understanding the problem and developing an intervention with the people involved. It deals with the 'why' and the 'how' questions. Very often action research is based on the use of mixed methods ((Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

Action research is indicated to be typically cyclical in terms of data collection and analysis, and starts with identifying a problem, collecting data (through the use of a variety of data gathering techniques), analysis of the data, taking action steps to resolve the problem, and assessing/evaluating for intervention outcomes. Typically the participants in the research (e.g. community members, educators or learners) "own the problem" and they become partners in carrying out the research ((Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

According to Levine et al., (1992) change can take place if the equilibrium in a community is disrupted through the awareness of a gap between the actual functioning of a system and the ideal situation. The awareness, the internal processes in the community and the impact of an external change agent can contribute to the community's decision to pursue the ideal situation (initiation stage). Action to change is seen to involve the mobilisation of resources, reorganising and in giving new meaning to interaction in order to restore the equilibrium through a process of self-regulation. This involved continuous interaction and feedback about the progress to obtain the ideal situation, which is often another level of equilibrium (implementation phase). In this study, action research was utilised at the School Community level

through promoting the schools participation and engagement the development of the school liaison group intervention.

Koshy, Koshy and Waterman (2010) indicate that in action, research and interpretation is guided by the researchers paradigm. Guba and Lincoln, (1990) also note that when conducting research of any kind, a consideration of the philosophical stance or worldview of the researcher is important. A discussions of the researchers 'world view' or paradigm thus follows.

4.3 Research paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1990) indicate that when conducting research of any kind, a consideration of the philosophical stance or worldview is important. Creswell (2009) describes a worldview as a general orientation about the world and the nature of the research that the researcher holds. In an attempt to position action research within a research paradigm, the researcher deemed it necessary to explore the positivist and interpretivist worldviews also.

The positivist paradigm is based on a belief in an objective reality which can be gained from observable data. This world view is often referred to as scientific method and the knowledge gained is based on careful observation and measuring the objective reality that exists 'out there' (Creswell, 2009). This method relies on quantitative measures and the relationships between variables are highlighted. According to Guba & Lincoln (1994), in the positivist paradigm, the investigator and investigated 'object' are assumed to be independent entities, and the investigator is capable of studying the object without influencing it or being influenced by it. Inquiry is seen as taking place

through a one-way mirror. Values and biases are prevented from influencing outcomes. Methodology is seen as experimental and manipulative (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Questions and or hypotheses are stated in propositional form and subject to empirical test to verify them. The focus is on technical knowledge about measurement, design and quantitative methods, with less emphasis on formal theory (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Interpretivism, which emerged as a worldview developed in the social science, allowed for a departure from positivist constraints. Qualitative methods such as phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative research are used within this paradigm which is based on the belief that knowledge is socially constructed, subjective, and influenced by culture and social interactions. Within this worldview, the researcher gathers data while still retaining their objectivity.

Waterman et al., (2001) indicate that Critical Theory, the research paradigm of this study draws on the writings of Habermas (1971, 1984) and is regarded as the most influential perspective in action research. They maintain that in this approach value is attached to both qualitative and quantitative research methods and that these are seen as complementary. Critical theory emphasizes open collaboration by giving primacy to the actor's participation in the creation of a social world with meaning appropriate to him/her. Physical and organizational structures, social relations, symbolic interactions as well as each actor's interpretation of these are the universe of inquiry for critical theory (Habermas, 1971, 1984).

In order to make sense of this 'messy" world he indicates, the inquirer must focus on both process and context from an individual as well as an institutional perspective. To deal with this task, critical social science theory adopts pluralistic inquiry methods that are heavily oriented towards interpreting and mapping the meaning and social construction of the universe of inquiry. This allows the researcher to be sensitive to the life worlds of participants which are central to understanding the way social actions are constructed and executed. The approach is thus one of active participation, observation and analysis of contextual data (Habermas, 1971, 1984). This strategy thus enables the analysis of social contexts in which social actions are embedded.

4.4 Mixed methods approach to programme evaluation

Farquhar et al., (2011) indicates that mixed method research brings together quantitative and qualitative research methods from the different research paradigms of positivism and interpretivism. The positivist approach maintains that a true explanation or cause of an event or social pattern can be found and tested by scientific standards or verification. Conducting social science research from a pure positivist approach is thus impossible as explanations and causes of events are seen as subjective. Roth and Metha, (2002) find that the interpretivist approach does not seek an objective truth so much as unravel patterns of subjective understanding. The latter assumes that all versions of the truth are shaped by the viewers' perceptions and understanding of the world (Roth & Metha, 2002). Farquhar et al., (2011) further indicates that mixed methods are valuable in the development and evaluation of complex interventions. Complex interventions are defined as those' built up from a number of components, which may act both independently and interdependently. O'Cathian et al., (2007) note that the combination of quantitative and qualitative data

in the evaluation of a complex intervention may have two potential benefits. Firstly, the two methods may complement each another, so that qualitative methods elucidate certain aspects of the interaction, while qualitative methods provide the researcher with insight into others. Secondly, the use of mixed methods may be multiplicative, in that a combination will afford the researcher greater insight than either method alone (O'Cathian et al.,2007). A diagrammatic representation of designs for mixing methods is provided below.

Table 1: Potential designs for mixing methods format

Designs	Within study	Within a programme of studies
Sequential	Methods occur one after the other within a study e.g. quantitative then qualitative, or qualitative then quantitative. With the same sample, sub samples or separate samples.	Sequential set of linked studies e.g. a quantitative then qualitative study, or qualitative then quantitative study. Component studies may appear to standalone but their findings inform one another.
Concurrent (or parallel)	Qualitative and quantitative methods run along-side one another, in tandem, but may not be truly integrated until analysis.	Qualitative and quantitative studies run alongside one another; in tandem, in a programme but may not be truly integrated until analysis.
Integrated	Quantitative and qualitative methods occur together e.g. qualitative and quantitative data collection may occur concurrently with the same	Quantitative and qualitative studies occur together.

This study thus employed a sequential design. A quasi-experimental type of evaluation was also employed as an auxiliary to the sequential design so that the researcher could evaluate the effects of the intervention based on the number of interactions with the intervention and the differences amongst groups.

4.5 Qualitative Research Methods

Nieuwenhuis (2007) refers to qualitative research as research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in relation to understanding particular phenomenon or context from which the phenomenon arises. The focus is thus on individuals and groups and understanding the world and construct meaning out of these experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the processes and the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioural. It is said to be mostly concerned with exploring the 'why' questions of research (Niewenhuis, 2007). Qualitative research typically studies people or systems by interacting with and observing the participants in their natural environment and focusing on their meanings and interpretations (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). The emphasis in qualitative research is on the quality and depth of information rather than the scope or breadth of information provided as in quantitative research (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

4.5.1 Principles of Qualitative data gathering

Nieuwenhuis, (2007) indicates that in qualitative studies the researcher accepts subjectivity as something that cannot be eliminated and sees the researcher as the

'research instrument" in the data gathering process. Moreover, the researcher's involvement and immersion in the changing, real world situation is essential since the qualitative researcher needs to record those changes in the real-life context (sometimes before, during and after the change has occurred).

4.5.2 Sampling in qualitative research

Sampling, according to Niewenhuis (2007) refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for study. She further indicates that qualitative research is generally based on non-probability and purposive sampling rather than probability or random sampling approaches. In purposive sampling, participants are selected because of some defining characteristic that makes them the holders of the data needed for the study (Niewenhuis, 2007). Sampling decisions are therefore made for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions. Qualitative research usually involves smaller sizes than quantitative research studies ((Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Sampling in qualitative research is flexible and often continues till new themes become saturated in the data collection process (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). For this study purposive sampling was used.

4.5.3 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling refers to selecting participants according to selected criteria relevant to a particular research question (e.g. educators who teach mathematics in a specific region for a predicted grade level). The sample size may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, and very often depends on the resources and time available to the researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the

informant possesses (Tongco, 2007). In purposive sampling, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge and experience (Bernard, 2002) wherein one or a few individuals are solicited to act as guides to a culture. Key informants are identified as observant, reflective members of the community of interest who know much about the culture and are both able and willing to share their knowledge (Bernard, 2002).

4.5.4 Data Collection Techniques

For this thesis, the following data gathering techniques were used: document analysis, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews.

4.5.4.1 Document analysis

In document analysis, the focus is on written communications that may shed light on the phenomenon that is being investigated. Data sources according to Niewenhuis, (2007) may include published and unpublished documents, memoranda, company reports, agendas, email messages, administrative documents, reports, letters, or any documents that are connected to the investigation. Primary and secondary sources of data can be distinguished. Niewenhuis, (2007) indicates that primary sources of data maybe unpublished (but may also be in a published form, like a letter in the newspaper or a company report) and from situations from which the researcher has gathered participants or organisations directly (e.g. minutes of a meeting, reports, correspondence etc.). In other words, it is the original source document. Secondary sources refer to any materials (book, articles, etc.) that are based on previously published works. In this thesis, the researcher analysed lesson plans.

4.5.4.2 Focus Groups

The focus group interview is based on the assumption that group interaction will be productive in broadening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience and realising inhibitions that may serve to otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Researchers argue that focus group interviews produce data rich in detail that is difficult to achieve with other research methods, but it may happen that some participants experience focus groups as threatening. Nieuwenhuis (2007), indicates that the distinguishing features of the focus group are that the discussion is focused on a particular topic, that debate and even conflict are encouraged and that group dynamics assist in data generation. Group forces or dynamics become an integral part of the procedure with participants engaging in discussion with one another rather than directing their comments solely to the moderator. As part of the data generated, the group dynamics become an important dimension of information that what will be analysed. In focus group interviews, participants are able to build on other's ideas and comments to provide an in-depth view not attainable from individual interviews (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

4.5.4.3 Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview is commonly used in research projects to corroborate data emerging from other data sources. It seldom spans a long time period and usually requires the participant to answer a set of predetermined questions (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Semi-structured interview schedules define the line of inquiry. Yin (2003) states that 'one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview' (p.89). The semi-structured interview using open ended questions provides rich, spontaneous information. It permits the researcher to explore issues and probe

into various aspects that are too complex to investigate through quantitative methods (King, 1994). Semi-structured interview are not constrained by standardisation and replicability concerns (Ribbens, 1989). The focus in the interview is on participants subjective perceptions and experiences and the questioning provides the researcher with an opportunity to respond to and follow-up on issues that develop with the interview situation.

4.5.5 Analysis Used

A descriptive approach to data analysis using Thematic Framework Analysis was used. Framework Analysis, according to Ritchie and Spencer (1994) is an analytical process that involves a number of distinct through highly interconnected stages. The authors describe 'framework' as not a process that is purely mechanical, or a foolproof recipe with a guaranteed outcome. On the contrary, although it is a systematic and disciplined process, it is also seen as relying on the creative and conceptual ability of the researcher to determine its meaning salience and connections. The strength of the approach is that by following a well-defined procedure, it is possible to consider and rework ideas because the analytical processes has been documented. The approach involves a systematic process of sifting, charting and sorting material according to key issues and themes (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994).

Five stages, to qualitative data analysis that were implored in this study involved:
1. Familiarisation – Before beginning the shifting and sorting of data, the researcher becomes familiar with their range and diversity, and gain an overview of the body or the material gathered.

2. Identifying a thematic framework – During the familiarisation stage, the researcher is not only gaining an overview of the richness depth and diversity of the data, but also beginning the process of abstraction and conceptualisation. Once the selected material is reviewed, the research returns to research notes, key issues, themes and concepts and sets up a theoretic framework within which the material can be shifted and sorted. Devising and refining a thematic framework is not an automatic or mechanical process, but involves both logical and intuitive thinking.

3. Indexing – Refers to the process whereby the thematic framework or index is symmetrically applied to the data in their textual form. All the data are read and annotated according to the thematic framework. Indexing references are recorded on the margins of each transcript by a numeric system which links to the index.

4. Charting- After applying the thematic framework to individual transcripts, the researcher builds a picture of the data as a whole, by considering the range of attitudes and experiences for each issue or theme. Data are 'lifted' from their original context and rearranged according to the appropriate thematic reference. Charts are then devised with headings drawn from the thematic framework.

5. Mapping and interpretation – When the data have been sifted and charted according to the core themes, the researcher engages in pulling together key characteristics of the data and to map and interpret the data set as a whole.

4.5.6 Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, the researcher is seen as the 'data gathering instrument' (Maree, 2007). Validity and reliability refers to research that is credible and trustworthy. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe credibility, applicability, dependability and conformability as key criteria of trustworthiness constructed to parallel the conventional criteria of inquiry of internal and external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Reliability

In enhancing reliability in qualitative research the researcher takes steps to allow for the research process to be reproducible (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). Documenting the process of generating themes, concepts and theories in relation to external evidence, including previous qualitative and quantitative studies will also ensure the reliability of the qualitative data.

Validity

Validity is judged by the extent to which an account of a phenomenona seems to fairly and accurately represent the data collected (Lacey and Luff, 2001). Feedback to participants to verify emergent themes from the data analysis is one method to promote validity. In this study, the findings were verified through consultation with participants of the study, in particular managers and teachers. Triangulation is another method used to promote validity where different methods or different sources of information are used to tap into the same issue (Maree, 2007). In this study, the researcher attempted to represent all relevant views on the issue of school connectedness through engaging, teachers, managers and learners.

4.6 Quantitative Methods: Quasi-experimental Approach

Quantitative research is a process that is systematic and objective in its use of numerical data from only a selected subgroup of a universe (or population) to generalise the findings to the universe that is being studied (Maree, 2007).

In a quasi-experimental approach, the aim is to determine whether a program of intervention has the intended effect on the study's participants. The most common form of a quasi-experimental study is said to include a pre-post test design with both a treatment group and a control group. Quasi-experimental approaches are often an impact evaluation that assigns members to the treatment group and control group by a method other than random assignment. While the pre-post test design allows one to measure the potential effects of an intervention by examining the difference in the pre-test and post test results, it does not enable one to test whether this difference would have been experienced in the absence of the intervention.

To get the true effects of the intervention, it is thus necessary to have both a *treatment* and a *control group*. By having both a group that received the intervention and another group that did not, the researcher is able to control for the possibility that other factors not related to the intervention (e.g. simple maturation over the intervening time) are responsible for the difference between the pre-test and post test results. It is also important that both the treatment group and the control group are of adequate size to be able to determine whether an effect took place or not. While the size of the sample is often determined by specific scientific methods, it is often advised that each group have at least 30 participants (NCTI, 2011). An illustration of quasi-experimental research design is indicated below.
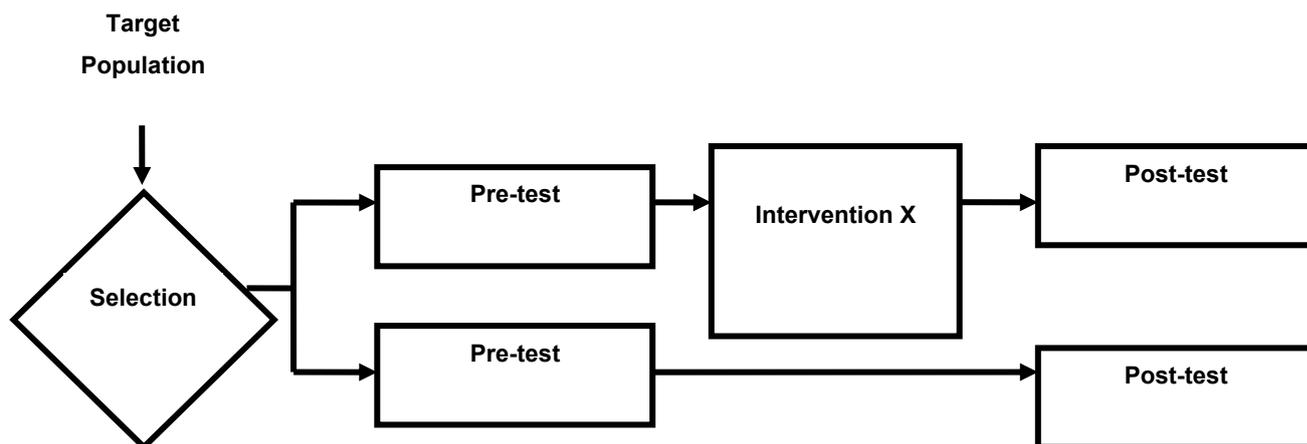
Figure 5 : Quasi-experimental research design

4.6.1 Scales

A very common and useful way in which research measuring how respondents feel or think about something is the use of scales. According to Bell (2005), scales are intended to help researchers discover strength of feeling or attitude. The most widely used scales are the Likert Scale and the Semantic Differential Scale (Maree, 2007).

The Likert Scale provides an ordinal measure of a respondent's attitude. The scale is very convenient when the researcher wants to measure a construct (Maree, 2007). This is accomplished by asking a series of Likert scale questions and then calculating a total score for each respondent, that it assigning the values 1 to 5 (if five categories are used) to the categories and then adding each respondent's five values based on his or her responses (1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral or undecided 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree).

The semantic differential scale makes use of adjectives to express the way people feel (Maree, 2010). This principle is used in this scale where use is made of adjectives to measure how a respondent feels about a certain concept. Since most adjectives have

polar opposites-good/bad, strong/weak-the scale uses these opposites to create a numerical measure of a particular concept.

4.6.2 Internal validity of scales

When a number of items are formulated to measure a certain construct, there should be a high degree of similarity among them since they are supposed to measure once common construct (Maree, 2007). In this study, psychological sense of school membership and future orientation were the constructs to be measured Cronbach's alpha coefficient which is based on inter-item correlations was used to measure the internal reliability of the measures.

4.6.3 Sample considerations

When it comes to sampling, a very important consideration is the size of the sample. Using a well-designed probability sampling method, larger samples will represent the population better than smaller samples and their findings will be more accurate (Maree, 2007). Maree (2007) indicates further that three factors largely determine the sample size

- type of statistical analyses planned

- accuracy of results required

- characteristics of the population

The size of the sample necessary for it to be representative of the population depends on the degree of homogeneity of the population (Maree, 2007). Maree (2007) points out that in homogenous populations, where the members are similar with respect to variables that are important to the study, smaller samples may adequately represent

the population. In heterogeneous populations bigger samples are needed to represent the diversity of the population (Maree, 2007).

4.6.4 Statistical Analysis

Following data collection and capturing the analysis process usually starts with descriptive statistics. The term descriptive statistics refers to methods that are used to organise and summarise data in a meaningful way. Statistical tests to test hypotheses may then be carried out on the data. In this thesis, the ANOVA was used to assess whether the intervention had the desired impact in the intervention school compared to the control school. Descriptive statistics to show the general characteristics of measures i.e. the mean, SD, skewness, kurtosis were used. In measuring internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also used.

4.6.5 Analysis of variance

This technique (also referred to as "ANOVA") is used when there are two independent groups that need to be compared on a single quantitative measure or score. More specifically, the test explores whether the groups have different average scores. The technique is appropriate when, for example, a study aims to investigate whether or not four different cultural groups differ in terms of their attitude towards a certain political issue, measured as a total score of a number of 5-point Likert scale items. ANOVA is thus appropriate if

- the quantitative variable is normally distributed in each population
- the spread (variance) of the variable is the same in all populations

4.7 Outcome evaluation and the complexities of community research

Goodman (2000) indicates that programmes or interventions via the ecological approach are likely to be complex. He indicates that they require multiple interventions that are implemented simultaneously and sequentially. The interventions, he highlights, require a fit that links them synergistically across social strata (Goodnman, 2000).

Chiman, Imm & Morrisey (1996) suggest that programs informed by ecological models develop in stages and applying evaluation measures that specific and appropriate to each stage of development can improve programme evaluation. Goodman et al., (1998) thus indicate that because community research, based on the ecological approach is a complex, multidimensional and dynamic concept that requires precision for assessing community assets and for developing appropriate interventions it is necessary to have adequate measures and dimensions to assess impact. Goodman et al., (1998) thus identified dimensions off *participation and leadership; skills; resources; social and inter-organisational networks; sense of community; understanding of community history.*

Participation and Leadership

Goodman et al., (1998) note that participation and leadership are two important and related dimensions of community capacity. Further, the researchers indicate that these two factors are connected in that a community lacks capacity when its leadership does not have a strong base of actively involved residents (Goodman, et al., 1993; Minkler, 1989). Goodman et al., (1993) indicates that participation is basic to capacity because involvement of individual community members in local events must occur if capacity

is to develop. In relation to leadership, Kumpfer et al.,(1993) found that when leaders encourage and support members' ideas and planning efforts, used democratic decision-making processes, and encouraged networking and information sharing among members, work plans were of higher quality, member satisfaction was greater, and members perceived the team as more successful.

Skills

Goodman et al., (1998) find that both participants and leaders must have considerable skills to ensure community capacity to address local concerns. Participants are expected to coordinate meetings, plan community activities, and be proactive in community initiatives; leaders must ensure that community efforts neither drift nor stall (Goodman et al., 1998). Leaders must be skilled in collecting, analysing, and reporting data on needs opportunities, barriers, and resources, facilitating group processes, solving problems and resolving conflicts among participants.

Resources

Goodman et al., (1998) highlights that one way that communities demonstrate a high degree of skill is in the acquisition of needed resources, and capacity is reflected in a community's ability to access resources. He indicates that resources can either be traditional capital (e.g., property and money) or social capital (e.g., the knowledge and skills of people, particularly their ability to cooperate with one another and form new associations (Fukuyama, 1995). Goodman et al., (1998) indicates that communities need both kinds of resources.

Social and Inter-organisational Networks

Strong social and inter-organisational networks have also been identified to enhance community capacity (Goodman et al.,1998). In evaluating a community's social

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networks, one can consider (1) structural characteristics, such as size or number of linkages; (2) the relationships among network members, such as the frequency and intensity of their contact; and (3) the benefits that members receive from network ties, such as emotional or tangible support and access to social contacts (Israel, 1982). Both structural and interactional characteristics of networks have been linked to the functions of social networks (Goodman et al., 1998).

Sense of Community

Goodman et al., (1998) identifies that one consequence of strong network ties is that they often produce a "sense of community". Sense of community is characterised by 'caring and sharing' among the people in a community, mutual respect, generosity, and service to others that enables collective action to address local concerns and produce desired changes (Iscoe, 1974; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Bachrach & Zautra, 1985; Newbrough & Chavis, 1986).

Understanding of community history

This dimension recognises that a community's history is made up of people and events. Events include important social, political, and economic changes that have occurred both recently or more distally (Goodman, et al., 1998). A sense of community may be reinforced through the understanding of the community's history by forging a connection to the past. An awareness of community history is also seen to provide an important backdrop for members in planning solutions to social problems and, as such, is a key component to building community capacity (Bracht & Kingsbury, 1990; Mulvey & Silka, 1987).

4.8 A Phased Approach to the study

In this study, the researcher attempted to use a phased approach. In Phase One, the aim was to conduct a situational analysis of factors that impede school connectedness in the intervention school as perceived by school managers, teachers and learners. A total of 56 grade 10 learners were identified by teachers and referred to be participants in the study. The participants were thus grouped into four groups and four focus group sessions were conducted. Seven semi-structured interviews were also conducted with key informants in the school. Participants included managers (2) and teachers with a Life Orientation background (5).

In Phase Two, the researcher located the findings of the situational analysis within the ecological theoretical framework or approach and explained how it informed the different levels of intervention at the Community school level, the Interpersonal level and Intrapersonal levels of influence. The basic methodology to identify outcome indicators at the different levels of intervention was also outlined.

In Phase Three, an evaluation of the study was conducted. The evaluation was separated into an Outcome Evaluation and Process Evaluation. The outcome evaluation involved a quasi-experimental approach using a before and after matched control design was utilised to determine whether the intervention had the intended outcome on the study participants. The outcome evaluation involved pre-post measures. The sample in both the intervention and control school was all Grade 10 learners and included 137 learners in the intervention school and 123 grade 10 learners in the control school. For the process evaluation component of this study, qualitative methods were used to monitor the reliability of the programme implementation and to understand the factors mediating the findings of the outcome evaluation. These methods included:

- Regular meetings with key role players (Principal, school managers, Life orientation teachers)

- Workshop on developing the Schools Liaison Group

- Workshop on implementing the lesson plans and monitoring

- Review of lesson activity sheets of learners

- Development and Implementation of the Peer Mentoring Programme

- Individual interviews with key role players (managers, teachers)

- Reflections of the researcher as participant in the action research process

- Focus groups with learners and semi-structured interviews with teachers and managers - Four focus groups with 15 grade 10 learners were selected by the school for the post-evaluation focus groups. In addition, five, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three Life Orientation teachers and two school managers. The overall aim was to evaluate the efficacy of the intervention in promoting school connectedness.

4.8.1 Research Setting : Formative / Situational Analysis School and Intervention School

The case study school from which the participants were drawn is based in a suburb in KwaZulu-Natal. It is an English medium co-educational and multi-racial public high school, drawing learners from neighbouring African, Coloured, Indian and White communities. The communities referred to included Umlazi (dominantly African), Chatsworth (dominantly Indian), Montclair (White and Coloured) communities. This information was verified through school reports as well as through the Guidance Counsellor and Principal. Reports from the school principal also indicated that the racial breakdown of the sample participants were the same of the learner population. There was thus majority African, followed by Indian and White, with Coloured

students in the minority. A breakdown of the racial demographics of the school as indicated by the principal is attached in Appendix 9, pg.254. Managers and teachers report that the learner population comprises adolescents from different socio-economic groups (middle class, working class etc.). Dolby (2001) indicates that the socio-economic status of the learners has an impact on their socialisation in the school and therefore their sense of belonging. It was thus important that this study incorporated learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. The school comprises White, Black, Indian and Coloured teachers and learners. Managers in the school report that socioeconomic factors in the community include single parent families, where parents are often working in other provinces and adolescents are forced to assume the role of care-giver to younger siblings. Over the last several years there has also been an increase in learners' exposure to substance abuse. Learners have reportedly been witness to scenes of crime and violence. Reports of family disruption and relationship conflicts have also been prevalent. This information was provided by the school Guidance Counsellor and Principal.

4.8.1 Research Setting: Control School

A matched control school in the school district was identified. The researcher was also informed by the Life Orientation HOD that the learners were not exposed to any intervention programmes at the school. Matched features included that it is an English medium co-educational and multi-racial public high school, drawing learners from neighbouring African, Coloured, Indian and White communities. Reports by the school principal also indicated that the population breakdown included African in the majority, followed by Indian and White and Coloured students in the minority.

(Please see a description of the racial breakdown of the school as indicated by the principal attached in Appendix 9, pg. 254).

Resnick, (2008) indicates that it is ethical to use a control group when the interventions to be implemented are being explored or piloted. As interventions in the current study were piloted and their efficacy explored, the researcher could not assume that they were going to be effective. The control school was thus not a disadvantage. Ethical exploitation was also reduced by the researcher providing both the control and experimental (intervention) school the same explanation regarding objectives, aims, informed consent and confidentiality measures of the study. Resnick (2008) indicates withholding interventions from research subjects is ethical, provided that it does not lead to exploitation of individuals or groups.

4.8.2 Ethical Considerations

Permission to carry out this research (administration of the PSSM and FOS, interviews, lesson plans, workshops) was obtained from the Research Ethics and Higher Degrees Committees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Department of Education. The research protocol received approval with reference number HSS/0316/09 (see Appendix 10, pg. 255). Written informed consent was obtained from participants (see Appendices, 1, pg.222, Appendices, 2, pg. 224 and Appendices 3, pg.225) and code names were given to each of them to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The consent form had information about the topic, aim and objective of the research, method and procedure of data collection and storage. Participants were informed of their freedom to withdraw from the research at anytime of if they wished. They were equally assured of the confidentiality of information and

anonymity of their identity. Anonymity of participants was achieved through assigning code names to learners. As the control school was not receiving the intervention the researcher had to be mindful of ethical implications Resnick (2008) indicates withholding interventions from research subjects is ethical, provided that it does not lead to exploitation of individuals or groups. The researcher thus indicated to the control school the broader implications of their involvement in the study and their contributing role to expanding knowledge of school connectedness. With their informed consent the researcher proceeded. As both the intervention and control schools were interested in the outcomes of the study, the researcher indicated that she would be responsible for reporting the findings to the respective schools once completed.

4.8.3 Storage of data

All interviews were tape recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed verbatim with the permission of participants. This will be kept safe for at least five years in a locked cupboard in the University of KwaZulu-Natal and destroyed afterwards. All completed questionnaires and lesson plan activity will be kept safely with the researcher.

4.9 Phase 1 : Situational Analysis / Social Assessment

4.9.1 Aim and Objectives

In phase 1, the overall aim was to conduct a formative evaluation or situational analysis in the intervention school to understand factors that impede school connectedness. Clarke (2005) indicates that situational analysis inquiry involves a wide variety of human and non-human elements and is based on the principle that

situations become the fundamental unit of analysis. He indicates that in a situational analysis or situational inquiry the researcher strives to be more relative through recognising the socially constructive nature of reality (Clarke, 2005). Clarke (2005) indicates that a situational analysis is multi-perspectival through allowance and presentation of ambiguity and difference, complexity and contradiction, without necessarily aiming to 'explain' these differences through a substantive theory (closer to the 'real world' than formal theory).

The aim of conducting the situational analysis in the current study was thus to gauge a variety of role players perspectives on factors that impede school connectedness with a view to piloting school connectedness intervention. Factors that enhance school connectedness were also to be identified in the situational analysis. The aims of the situational analysis conducted in the first phase of the study were thus:

1.1.1   To develop an understanding of these factors as perceived by school managers

1.1.2   To develop an understanding of these factors as perceived by teachers

1.1.3   To develop an understanding of these factors as perceived by learners

4.9.1.1 Participants and Purposive Sampling

A total of 56 Grade 10 learners and 7 teachers (5) and managers (2) participated in the formative evaluation. In terms of gender, the learners included 27 males and 29 females, between the ages of 15-16. Ten to fifteen learners were selected randomly from all Grade 10 classes. Grade 10 most typically includes learners within the age group 15-16. This age range of the sample was thought appropriate as according to Erickson, (1968, 1994) in this time period, students make plans for the future and they must go through a process of self-awareness, self-consciousness. The adolescent also

focuses on self-image both physically and in relation to others in this time period. Purposive sampling was also utilised to recruit 5 teachers and 2 managers. All had a background in Life Orientation. The manager also had a background in teaching the subject area Life Orientation.

4.9.1.2 Research Design

Qualitative methods were used for the formative evaluation. To gain an understanding of factors as perceived by managers and teachers, 4 qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted as part of the formative evaluation. To gain an understanding of factors as perceived by learners, four focus group sessions, with grade 10 learners were conducted.

In this phase, four focus group sessions between 50 to 60 minutes in duration were conducted. The focus group interview schedule was developed to understand belongingness, membership and acceptance as perceived by learners at the school community level. It also sought to understand interpersonal influences that impede school connectedness such as social support in the school and help seeking behaviour. Lastly, the influence of intrapersonal skills such as self-regulation, goal setting and future orientation were also explored in the interview schedule. (See Appendix 4, pg. 226 for the interview schedule).

4.9.1.3 Research Instruments

The semi-structured interview, using open ended questions was utilised in this study as the researcher sought to provide rich, spontaneous information. Seven individual interview sessions were conducted with teachers and managers. Each individual

interview was 50-60 minutes in duration. The interview schedule explored teachers and managers perceptions of factors that impede school connectedness at the different levels, namely community school influences, and interpersonal and intrapersonal influences. (See Appendix 4, pg. 226 for the interview schedule).

4.9.1.4 Data Analysis

In the current study all focus group sessions and individual interview sessions were recorded and then transcribed. Framework Analysis, described in Chapter 4 was used. The first stage involved defining the coding framework. The coding framework was developed from the research questions asked and the aims of the study. Data were coded and relationships between categories sought to form thematic patterns. Group data and individual data were analysed separately under the broad ecosystemic levels of influence. Thematic categories, subcategories and their orientation were thus identified interpreted, refined and discussed in relation to the published literature.

4.9.1.5 Reliability and Validity

Validity of the data (discussed in Chapter 4, Methodology) was promoted through the use of triangulation. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions to ensure reliability. Data was also drawn from three different sources (namely, managers, teachers and learners), verifying raw data during the interview process, and feedback to the participants for them to verify the themes.

The findings of the situational analysis are discussed in Chapter 5.

4.10 Phase 2 : Development and Implementation of the intervention

In this section, the researcher outlines the theoretical framework or approach that informed the different levels of intervention at the Community school level, the Interpersonal level and Intrapersonal levels of influence. The basic methodology to identify outcome indicators at the different levels of intervention is also outlined. An in depth discussion of interventions developed and implemented follows the findings of the formative evaluation phase and is discussed in greater detail in the the next chapter.

4.10.1 Community School Level (*Social Capital Theory)*

Putnam (1993) indicates 'high social capital levels among citizens translate into higher levels of trust, solidarity and equality and in other words, lead to higher social cohesion' Putnam, 1993, p.17). There is increasing evidence to suggest that positive social capital has a positive impact on mental health. While there are a number of varying conceptualisations of social capital (Poortinga, 2006), Carpiano's (2006) model which is based on the work of Bourdieu and Putnam, is one of the clearest. Using Carpiano's (2006) conceptualisation, social capital is understood to emerge out of social networks which provide the basis for the development of socially cohesive communities characterized by strong social organisations, common norms and social trust which facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social Capital is seen to emerge from interactions and shared norms that are social, external to the individual, not lodged within individuals. It inheres in the structure of social relationships, and therefore has an ecological characteristic (Cullen and Whiteford 2001). Social capital is seen as important for the diffusion of information, establishing health norms, controlling deviancy, generating mutual aid, and protecting the

vulnerable. Social Cohesion can be indicated by strong levels of trust and norms of reciprocity that bond groups.

Carpiano (2006) understands social capital as occurring at two levels: individual social capital and community social capital. *Individual social capital* occurs within groups in the form of social support and social leverage which the individual acquires through direct contact with other people in multiple micro-systems. Social leverage, helps individuals access information of which an individual can draw upon when facing challenges (Carpiano, 2006). Social support is broadly understood as an exchange of resources between individuals which is perceived to be helpful to the recipient. While individual social capital emerges out of social networks in which a person participates directly, *community social capital* is an outcome of social networks which benefit the entire community and in which a person may or may not participate. Using Carpiano's (2006) conceptualisation, community social capital is evident when there is formal community organisation participation as well as informal social control. Informal social controls refer to collective efforts to maintain social order. Formal group systems provide opportunities for the collective renegotiation for social representations and identities and support community members to act at a community level to address the social determinants of mental and behavioural health (Petersen & Govender, 2010). What is evident from this conceptualisation of community social capital is that it emerges out of social networks be they informal groups or more formal organisations, and in which a person may or may not participate.

Methodology

As per the objectives outlined in the introduction of this study, intervention at this level sought to influence

- Adolescent's mental health well-being and connectivity to the school

- Adolescent's help seeking behaviour from adults and access to psychological support services

Evaluation and outcome indicators at this level involved

Outcome Evaluation

- PSSM Scale administered to Grade 10 learners in the intervention and control school

- Semi- structured interviews (Teachers, Managers)

- Focus groups (feedback of the efficacy of the schools liaison group, top-down approaches-check the questionnaire)

Process Evaluation

- Action research

- Schools Liaison group workshop (how the system was engaged)

- Meetings with key role players (role of the researcher, frequency of meetings)

4.10.2 Interpersonal level (Social Support Theory)

Social support theory acknowledges that the adolescent lives in a number of social worlds, many of which overlap and interact with each other (Breinbauer & Maddeleno, 2005). Understanding the role of social networks and social support in adolescent life and their impact on adopting healthy or unhealthy behaviours is crucial to the design of effective health promotion and prevention interventions. Cassel (1976) indicates that social support constitutes a key protective factor that reduces

individual vulnerability to the harmful effects of stress on health. Heaney & Israel (2002) indicate that emotional support is known to be the most strongly and consistently associated with good health and well-being. Hence social support theory was selected to guide the study at the interpersonal level.

The theory also acknowledges that adolescents grow up establishing new social relationships with peers and adults within their schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces. The peer group can be crucial to adolescent's need to be accepted, belong to a group, and develop identity (Breinbauer & Maddeleno, 2005). Social network and social support theories are also used to understand and inform interventions at the interpersonal level (Batholomew et al., 2001; Breinbauer & Maddeleno, 2005). Social support is also derived from significant 'others' in the context of an interpersonal relationship, as well as within the context of group systems that may not necessarily include significant others. Social support was indicated to take on different forms : informational support in the form of giving advice or suggestions; emotional support such as empathy and caring; instrumental support, which could be material support (e.g. lending money), or service assistance (such as babysitting); and appraisal support such as constructive feedback, which assists in self-evaluation and identity enhancement (Heaney and Israel, 1997). Emotional support is, however, the form of social support most strongly associated with good health and well-being (Heaney & Israel, 1997); having at least one strong intimate relationship has been found to be important for health and well-being (Michael et., 1999). More recent studies differentiating perceived social support, which refers to the perception of how available and how adequate social support is, from actual social support suggest that

perceived social support may be a more important factor in promoting mental health (e.g. McDowell and Serovich, 2007).

Methodology

As per the objectives outlined in the introduction of this study, intervention at this level sought to influence

- **Enhancing adolescent's mental health and emotional well-being** through providing positive personal experiences and enabling initiatives that enhance the quality of life for adolescents
- **Promote adolescent's help seeking behaviour from positive influences** such as trained peers, teachers/adults and thereby increase adolescents access to psychological support services

Evaluation at this level involved

Outcome Evaluation

Focus groups (Questions related to academic mentoring, tutoring, peer support)

Process Evaluation

Recruiting, frequency of meetings, action research, interviews with key informants

4.10.3 Intrapersonal Level

Goal Setting Theory

Skorikov and Vondracek (2006) found that future orientation and autonomy, situated at the individual level is a potential predictor of successful adjustment and disengagement from deviant behaviour. The setting of goals leads to better performance because individuals with goals exert themselves more, persevere in their tasks, concentrate more, and, as the situation requires, develop strategies for carrying

out their behaviour (Bartholomew et al., 2001). The Goal-Setting Theory is a theory of action and describes a particular method for achieving behaviour change (Beinbauer and Maddeleno, 2005). The theory asserts that behaviour is regulated to achieve one's set goals, whatever the nature of these might be. These goals are the result of personal processes that are related to one's self concept and/or an analysis of the personal desirability and feasibility of a potential goal. From this goal oriented approach, behaviour is believed to be initiated only when it is expected to serve a highly valued goal (Beinbauer & Maddeleno (2005). Goal setting is particularly helpful during the adolescent stage of development as it helps to develop an "ego ideal." This permits young people to model, evaluate, and picture themselves in the future. This "ego ideal' enables early adolescents to envision and project a sense of self over time instead of merely reacting to daily events in which they respond to the needs of the moment (pleasure, need for affiliation and acceptance) and exhibit high vulnerability to peer pressure (Greenspan, 1993).

Self- Regulation Theory

Self-Regulation theory underlines the dynamic process involved in setting, striving toward, and achieving health goals (Beinbauer & Maddeleno (2005). Self-regulatory conceptualisations deal with how individuals can correct personal behaviours on their own. Self-regulation was indicated to be achieved when individuals are able to monitor their own behaviour through cues and feedback from the outside world as well as through internal cognitive assessment and affective processes (Beinbauer & Maddeleno, 2005). The teaching of self-regulatory skills has been demonstrated in the school setting (Schunk, 1998). Most young people develop their behavioural inhibition capacity to not disrupt a classroom through constant reinforcement from

their teachers (Beinbauer & Maddeleno, 2005). Self-regulation is important for adolescent development as it empowers adolescents to interrupt/modify behaviour patterns that have proven to be ineffective or problematic in the past thus enabling adolescents to act on past learning and change maladaptive behaviour patterns (Beinbauer & Maddeleno, 2005).

The Challenge model

Health promotion research refers to the importance of promoting *self-efficacy* (the perception of ability to successfully perform an action) as playing an important role in health-related behaviour (Bartholomew et al., 2001; Rimer & Glanz, 2005). The challenge model recognises that the development of adolescent's individual competencies is enhanced through engagement with different levels of intervention that inform a broader, ecological systemic approach. In this model, interventions are based on building adolescent's coping capacities (Beinbauer & Maddeleno (2005). It has been further indicated that while individually focused models are helpful, they have not been found to be sufficiently efficacious or lasting to be used alone to promote mental health and reduce risk behaviour in these contexts (Coates et al., 2008).

Acknowledging the complexities of this level, interventions for adolescents at this level are designed to enhance individual level characteristics such as the following: social competence (qualities of responsiveness, flexibility, empathy and communication skills); problem solving skills (ability to think abstractly, reflectively), autonomy and future orientation (a sense of one's own identity, future motivation, planfullness, goal setting). Health promotion research refers to the importance of

promoting *self-efficacy* as the perception of ability to successfully perform an action- to play an important role in health related behaviour (Bartholomew et al., 2001; Rimer & Glanz, 2005). Individual level interventions thus also promote adolescents sense of self efficacy.

Methodology

As per the objectives outlined in the introduction of this study, intervention at this level sought to influence

- **Adolescent's mental health well-being and connectivity to the school** through enhancing protective factors and skills that contribute to the socio-emotional growth of adolescents

- **Promoting adolescent learners intrinsic motivation in school, academic self-efficacy and academic achievement** through relevance of school work to current interest and future goals

- **Promoting positive mental health** through enhancing skills to resist high risk behaviours

Evaluation and outcome indicators at this level involved

Outcome Evaluation

- Focus groups with learners, teachers, managers

- Lesson plan activities

Process Evaluation

- Review of LO Syllabus, Action research with key informants

- Development of lesson plans

4.11 PHASE 3 : EVALUATION OF INTERVENTION (Outcome and Process

Evaluation Methodology)

4.11.1 Outcome Evaluation

As discussed in the methodology section, an outcome evaluation the researcher

investigates programme effects (both intended and unintended). It ideally involves

experimental or quasi-experimental designs, which identify differences in programme

outcomes, both with and without the intervention. This ideally involves an

experimental and a control group.

In investigating the programme effects it was important to first consider the study

aims

The overall aims of the study was thus to

- To explore the psychological processes, systems and mechanisms that enhance and impede school connectedness in a South African high school
- To promote the mental health well-being and academic motivation of adolescent learners through a school connectedness approach
- To pilot and evaluate the efficacy of mental health well-being and academic motivation interventions in promoting school connectedness through outcome and process evaluation.

The overall objectives of the study to enhance adolescents' school connectedness

were too

- Enhance adolescent learners mental health well-being and connectivity to the school
- To strengthen adolescent learners academic motivation
- To promote adolescent's help seeking behaviour from influences such as trained peers, teachers/adults and thereby increase adolescents access to psychological support services
- To reduce the risk of adolescent learners engaging in high risk behaviours

To inform the evaluation phase of this study, it was deemed necessary to locate outcome indicators at the different levels of influence i.e. the community school level, the interpersonal level and the intrapersonal level to understand their role in promoting a multi-systemic, whole school approach to school connectedness.

Outcome evaluation

In relation to evaluating outcomes of objective 1 and 2 i.e. to

- Enhance adolescent learners mental health well-being and connectivity to the school
- To strengthen adolescent learners academic motivation

A quasi-experimental approach using a before and after matched control design was utilised to determine whether the intervention had the intended outcome on the study participants.

Study site

The intervention and control school site are already discussed in the Methodology Chapter, section 4.8.1

4.11.1.1 Data collection objectives and measures

- The outcome measures used to assess the first objective i.e. enhance adolescent learners mental health well-being and connectivity to the school at the community school level was the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) Scale.
- The outcome measures used to assess the second objective i.e. to strengthen adolescent learners academic motivation at the intrapersonal level was the

Future Orientation Scale which comprised two subscales i.e. the Reason for Achievement Scale and Value of Academic Success Scale.

4.11.1.2 Administration procedures

After ethical clearance was approved at both the intervention and control school, the school principal and Life Orientation teachers assisted the researcher in identifying time in the school time table to administer the surveys to Grade 10 learners. The school management team thus arranged for all grade 10 learners to be administered the survey at a designated time and venue. The surveys were administered and collected from the entire grade at both the intervention and control school during a lunch break period

4.11.1.3 Pre-post administration and Sampling

The sample thus compromised all grade 10 learners from both the intervention and control school. The sample thus included 137, pre-intervention surveys using the PSSM and FOS scales were administered and collected, to learners at the intervention school in March 2011. 123 pre-intervention surveys using the PSSM and FOS scales were administered and collected at the control school in March 2011. 137 post intervention surveys using the PSSM and FOS scales were administered and collected at the intervention school in November 2011 and 123 post-intervention surveys using the PSSM and FOS scales were administered and collected at the control school in November 2011.

4.11.1.4 Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM)

The Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) developed by Goodenow (1993) is an instrument used by school mental health researchers and practitioners. This 18-item instrument was developed to investigate school membership of learners

in secondary schools in the US. This scale was utilized as a measure of school connectedness and belonging in this study given the central role played by learners' sense of belonging to school connectedness as discussed in the introductory chapter. The items were phrased in terms of individual frame of reference and probed for a global factor, namely, the subjective sense of belonging in school. The items on the questionnaire are scored on in a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1=not at all true through to 5 = completely true. A study by Hagborg (1994) focusing on US middle and upper secondary school students, indicated that the items of the PSSM scale can be classified into three different factors-belonging, rejection, and acceptance. The first factor (belonging), included 13 of the 18 items, presented a general aspect of school membership. The second factor (rejection), included 3 items, and dealt with students' feelings of personal acceptance among their classmates. The third factor (acceptance), which included only 2 items, measured student acceptance of and pride in their school.

4.11.1.5 Reliability

The Psychological Sense of School membership (PSSM) is a well used measure by various researchers globally. Research has indicated at least 41 studies have used the PSSM scale. Fifteen of these investigations used an abbreviated version specific to each study and the other 27 studies employed the full 18-item scale (You, et al., 2011). The Cronbach's alphas were reported in previous studies had ranged from 0.78 and 0.95 across samples of elementary and secondary school students from diverse backgrounds including African Americans, Chinese, Hispanic Americans, Israeli's, Native Americans, Somali's, refugees in the USA, and USA European Americans (Goodenow, 1993) Hagborg (1994) reports high test-retest reliability (.78) across four

weeks. Other researchers such as Shochet et al., (2006) found that PSSM scores were relatively stable across time in a clinical intervention study, where a 12month test-retest correlations of 0.56 and 0.60 was found for boys and girls respectively. In recent South African studies, Govender et al., (2013) and Basterfield, Reardon, and Govender (2014) found Crobach alphas of 0.84 and 0.76 respectively among school going adolescents in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

4.11.1.6 Academic Motivation

In evaluating learners sense of Academic Motivation, the Future Orientation Scale (FOS) combined two sub-scales assessing students educational and academic values. *The first sub-scale* called Reason for Achievement Scale measures academic motivation (Kuperminc, Darnell, Jurkovic, 2004). It includes 14 items assessing the degree to which youth value school and their level of academic commitment. *The second sub-scale*, which includes three items, was adapted from the Value of Academic success scale developed by Fuligni (1997). These three items measured the perceived importance of getting good grades, finishing high school and going to university. When testing for the impact of the intervention on future orientation, these two sub-scales were combined into a seventeen item Future Orientation Scale (FOS). See Appendix 6b. for the FOS Scale.

4.11.1.7 Reliability

Both sub-scales have been identified as possessing good internal consistency and being equally reliable across the different ethnic backgrounds (Fuligni, 1997); (Kuperminc, Darnell, Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha

coefficient of the combined FOS scale was .68 indicating acceptable internal reliability.

4.11.1.8 Data Analysis

Statistical data analysis was performed with the aid of the software; Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Initial data entry was done with the help of a research assistant. Data was entered in this software using numerical codes for all variables except the age of respondents which were entered in their original form. For the demographic variables, gender was coded as 1=male and 2=female; age was entered in its original form. Population group was coded as 1=African; 2=White; 3=Indian; and 4=Coloured. All 18 items from Goodenow's (1993) PSSM scale were administered. The scale range was from 1 to 5 (1 referring to not at all true and 5 means completely true). Items 3, 6, 9, 12, and 16 were negative items and were reverse coded. The second scale, the Future Orientation Scale which comprised items assessing the degree to which youth value school and their level of academic commitment.

Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were performed following which repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the main outcome measures (PSSM and the FOS), to examine the within group and between group differences between the pre-test and post-test outcome measures.

4.12 Process Evaluation

For the process evaluation component of this study, qualitative methods were used to monitor the reliability of the programme implementation and to understand the factors mediating the findings of the outcome evaluation. These methods included:

- Regular meetings with key role players (Principal, school managers, Life orientation teachers)

- Workshop on developing the Schools Liaison Group

- Workshop on implementing the lesson plans and monitoring

- Review of lesson activity sheets of learners

- Development and Implementation of the Peer Mentoring Programme

- ? individual interviews with key role players (managers, teachers)

- Four focus-group discussions with adolescent learners

The process evaluation section included the

Data collected via these qualitative methods was analysed thematically, following the method proposed in the Methodology section.

4.12.1 Regular meetings with role players

Working within the action research approach and with a critical paradigm, the aim at this area in the process evaluation was for the researcher to engage with school staff in a collaborative   manner. The action research method thus facilitated an understanding for the researcher and school staff of structural aspects of the school that facilitated and impeded school connectedness.

The researcher met with the school principal of the intervention school at the initiation of Phase 2. (Nov- 2010- Jan 2011) At this meeting, the researcher shared the

results of the Situational Analysis and shared a discussion with the principal on informing intervention in the school. The school principal also elicited the input of the school guidance counsellor to inform intervention. The initial stage of the intervention development was thus developed through the involvement of the researcher, the school principal and the school guidance counsellor. The school principal also appointed the school guidance counsellor to assist the researcher with the programme implementation (piloting of the intervention) at the school. Subsequent meetings with the school principal and guidance counsellor ensured throughout the academic year with the researcher providing feedback as to the monitoring and progress of the piloting of the intervention.

At the control school, the researcher met with the school principal. The school principal subsequently informed the Life Orientation, Head of Department (HOD) to assist with the administration of the PSSM.

Outcome Indicators

The aim of this collaboration was thus:

- For the distance between the researcher and the school community to be reduced through actively involving key school personnel in collaboration and informing the study and providing contextual intervention

- For the researcher to gain the schools co-operation and trust

- To raise awareness of the concept of school connectedness in promoting adolescent learners mental health well-being and academic motivation

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4.12.2 Workshop on developing the Schools Liaison Group

A workshop on introducing the 'schools liaison group' to teachers, managers and learners was conducted after the initial planning meetings with the school principal and guidance counsellor (May, 2011). As part of the 50 minute session with 2 learners, 2 teachers and 2 managers), the researcher initially began with sharing feedback of the situational analysis and discussing the proposed intervention. The schools liaison group was also proposed. The researcher, thus attempted to facilitate a discussion and obtain feedback from the participants to further inform intervention implementation through collaboration from key role players in the school.

Outcome Indicators

The aim of this collaboration was thus:

- To provide an interactive, practical and informal 'working meeting' to inform intervention development and implementation

- For the action research process to be enhanced through collaboration from teachers, managers, learners

- Through the action research process, a mobilisation of resources and a discussion of context specific issues that will facilitate the sustainability of the 'schools liaison group' at the school

4.12.3 Training workshop for teachers on implementing the Life Orientation Lesson Plans

In this part of the programme evaluation the researcher conducted a training workshop for the Life Orientation teachers who would deliver the lesson plan interventions. The initial development of the lesson plans began in January 2011

with the researcher approaching various teachers involved in the teaching of Grade 10 Life Orientation and the feedback of learners gained from the situational analysis.

The workshop to implement the lesson plans was thus conducted in July 2011, during the school vacation period. Four Life Orientation teachers attended the workshop and the researcher also engaged feedback as to how the lesson plans could be successfully implemented in the school environment, considering the resources and the school time table schedule.

Outcome Indicators

The aim of this form of collaboration was thus to

- Engage teachers as facilitators of the Life Orientation lesson plan interventions so they are also empowered to provide intervention to increase school connectedness as part of the curriculum

Outcomes to be achieved in the delivery of the lesson plans

Promote adolescent learners

- Intrinsic motivation through enhancing the relevance of school work to current interest and future goals

- Enhance protective factors and skills that contribute to the socio-emotional growth of adolescent learners

- Promoting positive mental health through enhancing skills to reduce high risk behaviours

4.12.4 Review of lesson plans

The lesson plan intervention was delivered over a period of three consecutive weeks in the intervention school. The different lesson plans were presented once

a week as part of the subject area Life orientation across 4 different Grade 10 classes. Class size range was between 20-25 adolescent learners. The lesson plans were approximately between 35-40minutes in duration.

As part of document analysis, the researcher, with the assistance of the teachers' who facilitated the lesson plans collected samples of adolescent learners completed activity sheets.

Outcome Indicators

The researcher reviewed the completed lesson plan sheets

- To assess successful outcomes in objectives of the lesson plans through perusing completed responses to the activity sheet
- Responses to the completed lesson plan sheets that indicated adolescents learners self-reflection
- Individual responses to relevance of the lesson plans to adolescent learners lives

4.12.5 Development and Implementation of the Peer Mentor Programme

The peer mentor programme located at the interpersonal level of influence sought to:

- Enhance adolescents mental health well-being and academic motivation through providing positive personal experiences and enabling initiatives that enhance the quality of life of adolescents

- Promote adolescent learners help seeking behaviour from positive influences such as trained peers and teachers and thereby increase adolescents access to further support in the school and psychological services

- To enhance adolescent learners sense of school connectedness

The initiation and development of a Peer Mentoring Programme was facilitated by the researcher in collaboration with the School Guidance Counsellor. 18 Peer Mentors were recruited by the School Guidance Counsellor and various teachers at the intervention school. The selection was conducted in Feb-March 2011. Criteria used in the selection included:

- Adolescent learners had to be in Grade 10 (Age 15-16) so they could assume responsibilities as peer mentors for more than one year before leaving school

- Learners who displayed characteristics such as enthusiasm, openness, approachability and good interpersonal skills

In establishing the Peer Mentor group in February 2011, in collaboration with the School Guidance Counsellor and the Principal, a period a week, for five consecutive weeks was allocated in Grade 10 timetable for the training of the Peer Mentors. The training content developed was based on the situational analysis findings and the need to support adolescent learners to experience connectedness to the school by enhancing positive influences in the school.

The training thus focused on the areas listed below

- What is peer mentoring

- Qualities of peer mentors and self-awareness

- Signs and symptoms of distress : how to help

- Career support and information

- How to set up a Peer Mentoring Programme in your school

Follow-up session meetings to monitor the progress and sustainability of the group in promoting school connectedness were conducted on a monthly basis. This also included the researcher and the School Guidance (who over saw the programme).

Outcome Indicators

- Focus groups allowed an understanding of the impact of the Peer mentor programme in enhancing school connectedness

4.12.6 Reflections of the researcher as participant in the action research process

The researcher provides a narrative of her reflections as a researcher as participant in the action research process as part of the process evaluation

4.12.7 Focus groups with learners and semi-structured interviews with teachers and managers

Four focus groups with 15 grade 10 learners were selected by the school for the post-evaluation focus groups. In addition, five, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three Life Orientation teachers and two school managers. The overall aim was to evaluate the efficacy of the intervention in promoting school connectedness. A break-down of the sample characteristics are provided in the methodology section.

The focus groups and the semi-structured interviews were planned after the implementation of the intervention (Oct-Nov 2011). The School Guidance Counsellor

assisted the researcher in co-ordination of the focus groups and scheduling of the semi-structured interviews.

Outcome indicators

Outcome indicators in the form of a semi-structured interview schedule was developed to tap into areas identified as goals in evaluation in this study and in-line with the features of the Health Promoting Schools framework.

The interview schedule thus aimed to explore the efficacy of the interventions piloted in enhancing school connectedness through improving:

- Structural aspects of the school system (systems, structures to resolve grievances, challenges) that exist to support students at the School Community Level

- The quality of the school social environment through improving help seeking behaviour of adolescents and referral to trained peers and staff at the school

- The teaching and learning curriculum in promoting adolescent learners mental health well-being and academic motivation through increasing relevance of work to current interest and goals

The overall description of the research methodology and the different phases involved are indicated on the following page.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    1.  Situational Analysis                       │
│                                                                   │
│           Semi-structured interviews and focus groups             │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 2. Development of Interventions                   │
│                                                                   │
│        (Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and School Community         │
│                             Levels)                               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               3. Implementation of Interventions                  │
│                                                                   │
│        (Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and School Community         │
│                             Levels)                               │
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                  │      4. Evaluation       │
                  │                          │
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        ┌───────────────────────┼───────────────────────┐
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│ Pre-Test          │ │ Post-Test         │ │ Process Evaluation    │
│                   │ │                   │ │                       │
│ • PSSM & FOS survey│ │ • PSSM & FOS survey│ │ • Document Analysis   │
│   at   intervention│ │   at  intervention│ │ • Semi-structured     │
│   school          │ │   school          │ │   interviews          │
│ • PSSM & FOS survey│ │ • PSSM & FOS survey│ │ • Focus groups        │
│   at control school│ │   at control school│ │ • Action Research     │
│                   │ │                   │ │ • Researcher's reflection│
└───────────────────┘ └───────────────────┘ └───────────────────────┘
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Figure 6: Phases of study methodology

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND IMLICATIONS OF THE SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

This chapter is separated into two sections. In section 5.1 the researcher discusses the findings of the Situational Analysis. In section 5.2 the researcher discusses the Development and Implementation of Interventions.

5.1 Results of the Situational Analysis

In Phase One, the aim was to conduct a situational analysis of factors that impede school connectedness in the intervention school as perceived by school managers, teachers and learners. A total of 56 grade 10 learners were identified by teachers and referred to be participants in the study. The participants were thus grouped into four groups and four focus group sessions were conducted. Seven semi-structured interviews were also conducted with key informants in the school. Participants included managers (2) and teachers with a Life Orientation background (5). Thematic framework analysis, which is discussed in Chapter 4, Methodology Chapter was used to identify key themes and the interconnectedness between them. Findings to emerge are discussed below.

Results

Managers, teachers and learners indicated that there were a number of factors impeding school social cohesion as opposed to factors that promoted.

5.1.1 School Community Level

At the school policy level, the negative influence of education policies, management practices, and discipline strategies were highlighted.

Education Policies

Managers indicated they had difficulty in understanding and hence implementing policies and regulations developed by the Department Of Education. They suggested that these policies were designed for homogenous schools and did not necessarily reflect the diverse nature of South African schools.

> *TEACHER : By the nature of policies being "hi-foluted"… people can't access them. This makes them virtually impossible to interpret.*

> *Teacher : School management policies just serve to distance learners and teachers. In most cases the policy is just applied..but each problem or issue is different.*

> *MANAGER: You find these policies don't reflect the diversity of students who are at our schools, we have a range of different races, socioeconomic groups, conditions. I find that if you are ever lucky to interpret these policies on school management or even connect with them, by the time you see the linkeages with the policy the issue has already escalated..things are out of hand. You might find that the policies they have in place like Life Orientation and life skills education might suite an homogenous school and my school is not.. Ummm..these policies take a liitle more time to access and then you have to interpret them to the needs of your school.*

Top- Down Hierarchies

Teachers reported limited communication and interaction between management and teachers and learners. They regarded management as being authoritarian punitive and "out of touch" with the learners' reality. Communication was viewed as top-down, progressing from policy, to management, to teacher, to learner.

> *TEACHER : Yah! unfortunately our role can't be that forceful, we are just the spokes in the wheel. We are right at the end, does not matter whether we are there or not. The middle is being held intact by the upper management, because they make the final decision no matter what you say, doesn't really matter.*

> *TEACHER : Sometimes I don't know if our top management is very much in touch with what goes on with these kids in the classroom. They are seen positioned at the top and they make decision that influence the 'bottom' levels. They just enforce the school policy…I mean we don't have to be a school like Glenwood. Some of these kids may not have eaten for days or they may have been beaten by their parents….how can we just implement school policy then.*

Managers however supported the top-down approaches to management of the school.

> *MANAGER: I prefer working with a leader, a principal who is very cerebral. There is better order in the school when the principal gives me the directions and I as the deputy serve to 'trickle' down the decisions. The leader has given me the freedom to do what I should do. For me, when the two people at the top link up and there is no professional jealousy, it starts 'trickling'. When the staff knows it came from the top they will not disagree".*

MANAGER : I am the grade controller...I have been placed in this role and I have to make the decisions...it isn't always easy but somebody has to make the decisions

Discipline Strategies

Teachers indicated that there was a lack of consistency in the administration of discipline procedures for learners. They indicated that rules were applied inconsistently and resulted in the alienation of some learners. They indicated that students who were doing well academically got off lightly while students who were not doing well were more severely disciplined,

TEACHER : For the underperformers in the school, it keeps getting worse, while those that are performing well, sometimes get away lightly." The learners feel like they are being targeted/ marginalized.

TEACHER : Some view the rules as testing or pushing the boundaries. I think that there is a lack of consistency in dealing with these issues. Some learners feel they are being marginalised or targeted. I think that there is a lack of consistency in applying these rules. If a student has not done well academically, the same rules should apply to a student who has done well academically.

The majority of the learners shared the perception that discipline strategies serve as control mechanisms or a "way in which the school gets back at the learners." This was seen as contrary to the aims and objectives of disciplinary strategies.

LEARNER : Disciplines strategies at the school make you feel like you are being controlled and builds hatred towards the school. It works in such a way that the schools can get back at us.

Managers were however of the view that discipline strategies serve to connect students to school but that they are incorrectly perceived by students.

INTERVIEWER : Do you feel that school rules increase students sense of connectivity?

MANAGER : It does…I mean it is there for that reason so students feel that decisions are fairly made. The learners however don't see it this way. They see rules as a way to 'push' them out of the school.

Learners also indicated that discipline strategies such as suspension and detention do not serve as major deterrents for engaging in deviant/risk behaviour,

LEARNER : When they suspend learners at this school, it's like they just go away on holiday, It's something they look forward to. (All learners laugh).

Students indicated that this may not necessarily address the underlying problem of why the learner initiated the behaviour.

LEARNER : They don't try and understand why you are doing the wrong things or take the time. Something like detention is what we are used to. Teachers should think of other things that will help make us change our behaviour".

Teachers also shared this view

TEACHER : The managers should try to understand where the behaviour is coming from…fair enough the student has done something wrong and is being suspended but management should understand why the student has done the incorrect thing. Unfortunately, management makes the decisions.

Management view was that the same discipline procedures had to be applied consistently across, irrespective of learner's situation to ensure consistency or practice especially when the school is diverse. This was seen as contradicting earlier feedback from learner participants who indicated that rules are harshly administered to those performing not performing well academically and leniently to those performing well academically.

MANAGER : My school is an ex..of most things..ex-model c, ex-boys only and now we have different races and languages. We need these policies, practices and rules so that everyone is fairly treated. We cannot make exceptions for each individual case.

5.1.2 Interpersonal Level

Peer influences

With reference to belonging, learners suggested that there were two groups. The "conformers" who are viewed as 'uncool" and therefore isolated and rejected by their peers, and the 'non-conformers", who find solidarity behind rebelling against the school system. Learners indicated that most typically, non-conforming behaviour manifested in resisting adults' instruction engaging in risky/deviant behaviour.

LEARNER : With the belonging, you find there ends up being 2 groups, people who belong because they do conform and the people who do the right thing.

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These students are seen as the uncool students/the rejects. Then you have the other group, they break the rules and are seen as cool. In school, being BAD is actually being GOOD.

Learners also indicated that they received more support from their peers than from adults in their lives (parents and teachers). Most typically, they would approach peers with their problems; however, they indicated this as not the ideal. They desired support and input from adults but there were limited opportunities for this connectivity at home and at school.

LEARNER : Just being there with them. Like at home, everyone is on your case. The group accepts you no matter how stupid you are or how stupid you act. You go home and you find that the parents are too strict or serious.

LEARNER : But living a double life is also not good. Cos at school I am one kind of a person, at home, I am another. At school they may know me better. If you have a problem you go to your friends because you can talk to them.

Teachers and managers indicated that absentee parents were also a contributing factor to making learners feel unaccepted or disconnected from adults. These feelings of a lack of belonging or acceptance most typically resulted in learners also being defiant with teachers at the school.

TEACHER : Many of these kids don't have adult supervision. Parents are overseas. Many of the mums in the community are also nurses, many are also from different provinces...Eastern Cape, Transvaal. Many kids are also the parents in the houses.

5.1.3 Intrapersonal Level

Self-discipline

Teachers indicated that most often learners experienced a lack of discipline and warmth at home and rebelled against being disciplined at school.

> *TEACHER : Students don't react well to being disciplined and instructed at school, because at home they have a lot of freedom, because of absentee parents. This makes it difficult for us to help them see reason. They often also over-react to petty issues, like asking them to move a chair.*

Teachers indicated that this most typically resulted in "acting out behaviour" on the part of learners, whereby students engage in deviant behaviour to take revenge on teachers.

Managers also indicated a lack of self-discipline attributed to parents not holding adolescents accountable and a lack of morals and values in society.

> *MANAGER : Like I mentioned earlier, our school is an ex of everything…*
>
> *there is so much of diversity..we therefore have a 'black and white' philosophy on self -discipline. Learners know what will happen if they*
>
> *don't comply. For me however, self-discipline takes maturity, it takes having a certain value system…that you either have or don't have…if you don't have..self- discipline goes out the window.*
>
> *MANAGER : Self-discipline is a problem of society. Values and morality*
>
> *are not harped on at home. Learners are also not accountable at home. I mean you call in a parent and they go into absolute shock as to what the child has done. The parenting system has become corroded. Then you find someone like us…from the outside trying to enforce self-disciple.*

Managers indicated a need for the learners to acquire 'skills' to facilitate inculcation of morality and values.

> *MANAGER : It would be great if this study culminates in practical issues and teaches children about self-discipline and engages learners in classrooms to resurrect connectivity to society because it is bad.*

Emotional Competence versus Assessment/Outcome Oriented Approach

In response to the researcher investigating what schools can do to promote connectedness, participants indicated the following.

Teachers indicated that because schools were very syllabus driven and assessment oriented, there were limited opportunities for learners to develop emotional competence and problem solving skills. They indicated the significance in establishing connectivity and experiencing belonging in school.

> *TEACHER : I think that sometimes we are so syllabus driven, we are also rushed. It is very mark orientated. It's like sorry if you have this problem but we need to have this test, because I need the mark. We don't teach them how to actually solve problems.*

Learners also indicated that schools should be places that enhance their ability to deal with problems. They indicated that personal development took second place to academic development and that this has negative implications for the way they relate to teachers, their attitude to belonging and their acceptance of the school.

> *LEARNER : Young people also need to learn to be compassionate, learn things that will help them function in the future. Even if I have a great career, I am not a good person, it's not going to make a difference.*

Also in relation to the question on what schools can do to enhance students connectivity, learners indicated the importance of emotional competence training in the curriculum and the need for life orientation teachers to have the skills to teach the area.

> *LEARNER : Most of the time Life Orientation teachers are not teachers who should be teaching Life Orientation. They just take teachers who do not have much to do. They think Life Orientation is just something that can be taught from a textbook. I think that Life Orientation should be taught by professionals….especially when it comes to the emotional part. I mean Life Orientation in not only about the physical things like nutrition. It's not enough to just 'fix' the physical, but also the emotional.. what's on the inside. Like if I am putting on weight, it could also be emotional. We should have more time in Life Orientation to talk about these issues.*

Teachers also indicated the importance of strengthening learner's emotional competence development to deal with psycho-social stressors they are increasingly experiencing in their communities.

> *TEACHER : We have kids who are exposed to drugs and violence in their communities. We have kids who are involved in fights out of the school and they can become very violent in the school..they can fight over petty issues such a text book or a pen that was taken. In most cases they*

don't have the emotional maturity or emotional intelligence to deal with these

issues. We also know that drugs are available out of the school. They need the

emotional skills to say no!. With a lack of emotional maturity and the psycho-

social problems in their community they most likely succumb.

Future Orientation

Teachers were also of the opinion that learners have a poor future orientation and are

not able to see beyond the day or the weekend:

TEACHER : Learners are goalless, they don't think of the future, for the

learners, the weekend is the future, they are aimless, goalless.

Teachers and learners further indicated that there was a reciprocal relationship with

students who performed well academically as being more motivated and goal directed

and those who were not excelling as less motivated with a poor future orientation.

TEACHER You find that there are those who are excelling academically and

are goal directed, they 'get on' better with teachers and the school and they

experience acceptance because they know what they want to do in the future.

Learners however referred to students who were not excelling and learners who were

not quite sure of what their strengths and weaknesses were what they wanted to do in

the future.

LEARNER : Sometimes you have an idea of what you want to explore, but it's

like you must be like the clever kids and go class knowing exactly where you

want to be. Teachers also need to be compassionate and understand that you

still don't know…they must also help you, guide you.

Teachers also indicated that the subject matter of a 'sense of future orientation' is dealt with in a limited way and the timing of the area in one's school journey is problematic.

> *TEACHER : I think that future orientation is coming in too late. It should start as early as Grade 9. Learners are only becoming really serious about it (referring to future orientation) by Grade 12. By grade 12, they just want to fill out whatever it is. They are not realistic of what they can do.*

Learners also agreed that future orientation and careers should also be focused on earlier in the curriculum.

> *LEARNER : I think that they (referring to teachers) should reduce the*
>
> *focus on the 'sex thing'. They should focus on career options we have. Career*
>
> *evenings should not only be for matric students, because people*
>
> *don't only think about careers only in matric…they start at an early age.*

Teachers however also indicated that because adolescents are faced with many psycho-social stressors in their families and communities it is difficult for them to develop a sense of future orientation.

> *TEACHER : Some think about it…some don't. The worrying thing is some*
>
> *of them have so many problems to deal with these days…family neglect,*
>
> *violence at home…loss of siblings. It's hard to sometimes talk to them*
>
> *about career pathing also.*

Teachers also indicated a lack of motivation from home and that students may experience a lack of motivation and confidence in approaching future orientation tasks at school.

TEACHER: Future orientation is also linked to motivation and self-confidence…some students get nothing from home. They get a lot of putting down at home.

Role of the Representative Council for Learners (RCL)

In further exploring factors that promote school connectedness, the role of the RCL was identified by participants. Managers identified the RCL as a body that could make students more accountable for their actions and decisions.

MANAGER : We are moving the school to becoming more democratic. The RCL has the potential to facilitate this. The RCL meets with the School Governing Body (SGB). Learners meet and their voices are heard. We can propose things in the school and then 'throw' it to the RCL. They can accept it and if they (referring to the learners) don't practice it, we can 'throw' it back to them and say 'well your'll wanted it.

Managers also alluded to expectations placed on the RCL.

MANAGER : My RCL, and I'm saying mine, because I am in charge of it. It is the type of children that I have chosen. I utilise the individual potential of the individual child in the RCL. My RCL is the voice of learners in a 'civilised' form. Where my school has been misguided is that these children in the RCL are going to revolutionise the world…they can't. Children can't do so in the span of a year…it's too much of an expectation…everybody should. When they pull aside and say that the RCL must do it, it facilitates disconnectivity.

Learners however had limited to say about the role of the RCL in promoting connectivity. Only, one learner indicated the importance of referring issues to bodies and issues being processed.

> *INTERVIEWER: What do you think of the effectiveness of school rules...discipline strategies. Do you think they prevent learners from doing wrong?*
>
> *LEARNER: I don't think that they should come down so hard on us. Like if I did one thing wrong, they shouldn't phone the HOD.*
>
> *LEARNER: There should be bodies to represent our concerns. There should be warnings first. I think it is also important for the school and teachers to talk to us on a continual basis, not only when we have a problem. Teachers must be open with students…we don't have that many opportunities to explain our side of things.*

Other learners indicated the importance of representation on issues such as detention.

> *INTERVIEWER: What do you feel about discipline strategies at your school?*
>
> *LEARNER : They (referring to the school) don't try and understand why you are doing the wrong things or take the time. Something like detention is what we are use to. They should think of other things to make us change our behaviour.*
>
> *INTERVIEWER: Do students feel comfortable with approaching adults in the school?*
>
> *ALL : No*
>
> *LEARNER : I think it is hard. It takes understanding and they don't give us an opportunity to talk. Most of the time they just listen to one side of the*

story...there are always two sides to any story.

LEARNER : I think that adults should be informed about teenagers…like

in this session. If our teachers and parents were sitting in this session

they would understand what's going on with teenagers. They should be

informed.

5.2 Discussion and Implications for Intervention

5.2.1 School Community Level

At a school policy level, managers and teachers were of the opinion that the current policies and practices did not reflect the social, historical, cultural and political milieu of the school and the psychological and ideological make-up of South African adolescents.

Most of these problems surround poor and undemocratic school management, poor methods of planning, poor staff development programmes, lack of facilities, contradictions and conflicts between policy development and policy implementation strategies, as well as poverty.

Participants in this study highlighted the challenges of implementing "rigid prescribed strategies" without engaging in feedback about their effectiveness. The findings of this study thus indicated poor and undemocratic school management practices that create a "top-down" hierarchy from DOE policy to management to grade coordinators to teachers to learners. This hierarchy was seen as promoting disempowerment of teachers and distancing learners and is antethical to building school connectedness. Both these stakeholder groups are argued to be key mechanisms in building school

connectedness, and highlight the importance of acknowledging and involving all stakeholders in building democratic management practices to achieve connectivity.

The role of the RCL, as advocated by the DOE was also brought up by managers and teachers at the school while the role of bodies to represent learners concerns on issues such as discipline procedures was also highlighted in the situational analysis. The participation of learners in South Africa was legislated in 1996 through the South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996). This legislation required schools with Grade 8 or higher to elect a representative council of learners (RCL). The impetus for including learners to represent their input in school decision making emanated from the worldwide movement for increased youth participation in settings in which young people find themselves on a daily basis. Learner participation in the context of the RCL refers to 'adults working with learners to develop ways of ensuring their views are heard and valued (DfES, 2004:87). This according to Phaswana, (2010) may include learners' involvement in school decision making bodies. Studies on learners participation in school bodies such as the RCL highlight both personal and institutional benefits (Mncube, 2008; Wilson, 2009; Carr, 2005; Mabovula, 2009). Learners who have identified to participate have been identified to benefit from a sense of personal control, increased confidence and improved relationships with teachers and peers (Wilson, 2009).

Given that the role of the RCL was indicated as limited in promoting school connectedness and that learners indicated a need for opportunities to represent and communicate issues that they were faced with, with significant adults in their school community, the expansion of the role of the RCL into a school's liaison group which

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integrated the involvement of significant adults (teachers and managers) was seen as necessary. The formation of a school liaison group which comprised teachers, managers and learners also aimed to provide an opportunity to intervene on hierarchical structures that promote disempowerment of teachers and disconnectivity of learners. This mechanism of intervention would allow feedback from role players as to how consistent policies and practices are with the values, habits, experiences and needs of those at whom they are targeted. Increasing student and parental involvement in schools' decision-making processes could also enhance student-teacher relationships through promoting greater insights and understanding of each others' values and personalities (Markham & Aveyard, 2003).

Learners in the formative evaluation indicated that engaging in deviant behavior was a way to take revenge on the school. Some learners misbehave as a means of issuing a deliberate challenge to the teacher's authority. Ironically, teachers report that these are often children who either come from families where the children are powerless, or from families where the children are in control in which case they may also feel powerless, for example, because they feel abandoned and overwhelmed (Gootman, 1997). This suggests the importance of addressing parental involvement in adolescent development and receiving support on the home front to achieve connectivity in the school environment.

The lack of discipline in secondary schools throughout the country has long been a matter of great concern for educators in South Africa. Disruptive behaviour continues to be the most consistently discussed problem in South African schools. Naong (2007) maintains that the abolition of corporal punishment in schools has left a gap which

cannot be filled and has led to all kinds of disciplinary problems in schools. South African teachers have had to develop alternative proactive measures to pre-empt disruptive behavior. Adolescents in this study, however, revealed that disciplinary measures of suspension and detention do not serve as deterrents but rather further disconnectivity in the school.

5.2.2 Interpersonal Learner Level

At the interpersonal level, the influences of anti-social capital groups (groups that resist school regulations and norms) that promote disconnectivity were highlighted. The findings revealed that learners who followed the school rules and regulations and who collaborated with teachers and managers, were viewed as the conformers and thus represented the "out-group." Adolescents experience peer pressure to be part of anti-social capital groups or the "in-groups". The findings also indicated that young people are more likely to seek help from informal rather than formal sources, with peers as the main sources of help. Peers were the preferred source of help for personal and emotional problems over parents and teachers. While it is positive that most young people are willing to talk to their peers about their distress, young people may not always be equipped to provide helpful responses to difficult issues. For example, disturbed young people show a strong leaning toward other disturbed peers (Sarbonie & Kauffman, 1985), and form friendships that often involve conflict, cognitive distortion, and poor social-cognitive problem solving (Marcus, 1996). There are thus doubts about the benefits of seeking help from untrained peers and research highlights the importance of peer counsellor/mentoring training as a form of intervention (Offer, Howard, Schonert, & Ostrov, 1991; Rickwood, 1995).

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Creating protective peer mentoring groups that provide a referral pathway to trained school staff is thus important. The importance of mentoring relationships in strengthening connectivity of adolescents to the school through providing social support, role modelling, and opportunities to develop future orientation skills and advocacy is also indicated within Social Support theory. Further, teachers and managers may also function as mentors. It is essential that they become aware of their potential to provide positive role models that promote health enhancing social norms.

5.2.3 Intrapersonal Level

The intrapersonal level acknowledges the role schools play in developing behavioural and emotional competence and equipping young people for adult life. While strengthening peer support is emphasised in the findings, this study also revealed that adolescents seek opportunities to develop their individuality at school. The findings revealed that learners engage in deviant behaviour because they are angry and resentful and are not mentally and emotionally equipped to handle their strong feelings or express their anger constructively. Payton et al., (2000) argue that being able to identify and regulate one's feelings in adaptive ways also contributes to the promotion of a constructive sense of self. Recognition of personal feelings, strengths, and areas in which one might want or need to improve, along with self-regulation of impulses and actions, are critical to the development of a sense of confidence and optimism that one will be able to meet the challenges of everyday life now and in the future.

Furthermore, self-regulation also requires that young people extend their awareness and understanding of feelings and other personal attributes to others (Payton, et al.,

2000). This awareness influences interactions with teachers and other learners. Teachers and managers expressed concern that students sometimes responded to being disciplined and instructed in a destructive way. They indicated that deviant behaviour was often in relation to petty matters such as instruction by the teacher or co-operation with other learners.

Lastly, the positive influence of developing a sense of future orientation in adolescence was indicated. Teachers and managers indicated that students who were motivated, goal directed and future orientated, were less likely to engage in deviant behaviour experiencing greater acceptance and connectivity to the school. Teachers indicated that the majority of learners, however, lacked a sense of future orientation and goal-directedness. Marko and Savickas (1998) assert that a hallmark characteristic of human thought and action is future orientation. Modern motivation psychology highlights the importance of future orientation for psychological well-being (Nurmi & Salmelo-Aro, 2002), with studies showing that personal goals are connected to one's psychological well-being (Emmons & King, 1998; Nurmi & Salmelo-Aro, 2002).

The development of a school environment which promotes self-regulation, goal setting, emotional competence and a sense of future orientation was thus highlighted. In developing a sense of future orientation, learners create expectations for the future and set goals and aspirations based on their values, experiences and environmental influences, thus assisting in the process of identity development, a key developmental task of adolescence (Nurmi, 1991; Trommsdorff, Lamm, & Schmidt, 1979). In addition to formal programmes that can assist with this, teacher involvement can play an important role. Broomfield (2007), in a study of resilient youth, attributed positive

outcomes in youth to having teachers who they experienced as accepting and providing guidance in creating and attaining future goals.

5.2.4 Conclusion

Overall, the findings identified the influence of numerous factors which impede school connectedness within the current South African education context. Participants referred minimally to factors that promote connectedness in the school context. The ecological framework allowed for the identification of "whole school influences", which indicates the need for interventions at multiple levels within the school system in order to achieve the current policy imperatives in South African Education. Greater involvement of learners and teachers in the development and implementation of school policies is critical, as are the development of peer mentoring networks supported by trained teachers; the development of emotional competence and self-regulation, and a future orientation in learners as part of life orientation programmes. Likewise, the greater involvement of teachers as health enhancing role models and mentors to learners is crucial, given the weak parental shield many children experience on the home front.

CHAPTER SIX

6. Phase 2 : The development and implementation of the intervention

6.1 School Community Level

Background

At the community school level, the influence of education policies, management practices, discipline strategies were highlighted. Managers and teachers were of the opinion that the current policies and practices did not reflect the social, historical, cultural and political milieu of school and the psychological and ideological make-up of South African adolescents. As such, these policies and practices were viewed as suiting a homogenous school culture, lacking in application to a diverse social setting and thereby facilitating disconnectivity. They indicated that adolescents in their community were grappling with the challenges of growing up in a society where there is little or no social, emotional and financial support from parents and adults. These challenges often manifested in learner's resistance to school rules and regulations.

With regard to management practices, teachers alluded to how the schools' ''top down'' approach serves to distance teachers in the decision making process of the school. In this structure, communication was seen as limited to a linear progression from policy, to management, teacher and learners. Within this structure, teachers viewed themselves as the ''foot soldiers'' responsible for executing instructions, devoid of a voice and powerless to effect change.

With regards to discipline, teachers and learners indicated that there was a lack of consistency in the administration of discipline procedures. The majority of learners

shared the perception that discipline strategies served as control mechanisms and resulted in the alienation of learners.

Intervention at the School community level

The intervention at this level was thus aimed at enhancing representation on issues of diversity and opening the channels of communication in the school through involving all role-players. It aimed at promoting dialogue amongst the different systems in the school. It also aimed to promote the school ethos through the curriculum and providing mutually supportive activities.

Social capital theory suggests that the formation of formal community organisational structures can assist to promote community social capital. The development of a liaison group should include representatives of the resource system and user system (e.g. school managers, teachers, learners) should also assist to shift the organisation and management of the school from top-down approaches to a more horizontal one and promote community social capital. An important intervention to promote connectivity amongst managers, teachers and learners is thus to form a school liaison group. The overall aim of establishing this group is to illicit feedback from various role players as to how consistent policies and practices are with the values, habits, experiences and needs of those whom it is targeted.

6.1.1Collaborative Workshop on the School Liaison Group

In intervening at this level and in initiating the intervention, a workshop, during the first part of the academic year was conducted with members of staff and 8 learners at

the school. Participants included 2 managers, 3 Life Orientation teachers and 8 learners. The workshop comprised the following.

- Feedback on the findings of the Situational Analysis of the focus was shared

- Interventions (the Schools Liaison group) were proposed.

- Teachers managers and learners provided input to inform further intervention

- It was envisaged that feedback to the school of the formative evaluation (Phase 1) and work-shopping the idea of a school liaison group with staff members would open the channels of communication and help promote s a sense of community social capital that would enhance connectivity in the school. In implementing this, the researcher engaged in a participatory action research process whereby managers, teachers and learners were engaged as co-researchers, actively contributing to the intervention in this study.

Participants were presented with a sketch of the cyclical interaction proposed and feedback elicited. An illustration of the cyclical interaction is provided below.

Figure 7: Feedback cycle incorporating the school liaison group

6.2 Interpersonal level interventions:

Background

At the interpersonal level, the influences of anti-social capital groups (groups that resist school regulations and norms) that promote disconnectivity were highlighted in the situational analysis of this study. Adolescents experience peer pressure to be part of anti-social capital groups or the "in-groups". The findings also indicated that young people are more likely to seek help from informal rather than formal sources, with peers as the main sources of help (Rawatlal &Petersen, 2012). Creating protective peer mentoring groups that provide a referral pathway to trained school staff is this study was thus important. Mentoring relationships strengthen connectivity of adolescents to the school through providing social support, role modelling, and opportunities to develop future orientation skills and advocacy (Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012).

6.2.1 Peer support as a Psychological Intervention

Adolescence has been identified as a stage when peers play an increasingly important role in the lives of youth. Adolescents develop friendships that are more intimate, exclusive and more constant than in earlier years. These friendships are indicated to provide safe contexts where adolescents can explore their identities, where they can feel accepted and where they can develop a sense of belongingness (Erikson, 1985). Guzman, (2008) also indicates that friendships allow adolescents to practise and foster the social skills necessary for future success.

Visser (2005) indicates that peer support can serve as a tool for addressing emotional and behavioural problems before they become too severe. Tanaka & Reid (1997)

further indicate that in this way a culture can be created in which young people feel free to ask for help if they need it and a more caring climate can be established in the schools.

A variety of studies conducted by Carr (1987), Sawyer, Arney, Baghurst et al., (2000) and Rickwood, Deane, Wilson and Ciarrochi (2005) indicated that young people rely on their friends for help and few go to counsellors or other sources. Carr (1987) indicates that prevention programmes targeting young people need to be directed at peers to help build resilience harmful influences. Coggan, Patterson and Fill (1997) indicate that young people rarely access services and turn to their peers when in crises situations. Dilon and Swinborne (2007) indicate that personal support is crucial to friendships but connectedness is considered an equally important protective factor in maintaining adolescent's mental health.

Research indicates that peer groups in structured mental health programmes may have positive effects (Morrison-Valfre, 2003;). According to Guzman (2008), peer groups help adolescents establish values and behavioural standards; they provide protection and safety, and allow adolescents to test and try out new behaviours. Peer groups have also been identified to promote behavioural change in many ways, including social support, detailed information and the development of new norms and values.

DuBois et al., (2002) conducted a meta-analytic synthesis of findings from 55 evaluations of youth mentoring programs that has been published through 1998. Findings indicated that, on average, youth participating in mentoring programmes had benefited significantly in each of five outcome domains: emotional/psychological,

problem/high risk behaviour, social competence, academic/educational, and career/employment (DuBois et al., 2002). DuBois et al., (2002) posited developmental processes in mentoring relationships to include three areas: social-emotional, cognitive, and identity (Rhodes, 2002, 2005).

Social-emotional

DuBois et al., (2002) indicated that mentoring relationships may facilitate the socio-emotional development of children and adolescents in a variety of ways (DuBois et al., 2002). By modelling caring and providing support, mentors can challenge the negative views that youth may hold of themselves and demonstrate that positive relationships with adults are possible. In this way, a mentoring relationship may serve as a 'corrective experience' for youth who have experienced unsatisfactory relationships with parents or other caregivers (Hayes, Costonguay, & Goldfried, 1996). In serving as a sounding board and providing a model of effective adult communication, peers mentors may help youth to better understand, express, and regulate their emotions (McDowell, Kim, O'Neil, & Parke, 2002). In doing so, mentors may facilitate adolescent coping, helping youth to change their perceptions and approach even negative experiences as opportunities for growth and learning. In support of this prediction, mentoring relationships have been linked to significant improvement in youth's perceptions of their relationships with parents, and also with peers and other significant adults (DuBois, Neville, Parra, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002; Karcher, 2005; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000; Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005).

Cognitive

The cognitive dimension recognises that mentoring relationships similarly may affect a range of cognitive development processes (DuBois et al., 2002). Research on collaborative learning indicates interactions with mentors as vehciles through which adolescents can acquire and refine new thinking skills, becoming more receptive to adult values, advice, and perspectives (Radziszewska & Rogoff, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Research on the role of social support in fostering cognitive development similarly underscores the social nature of learning. Feelings closeness with teachers, have also been associated with positive academic adjustment for adolescents (Cadima, Leal, & Burchinal, 2010; Pianta, 1999; Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2003). Similarly, close, enduring ties with naturally occurring mentors in the lives of adolescents have also been identified to predict improvements in academic and vocational outcomes (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005a, 2005b; Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009; Klaw, Rhodes, & Fitzgerald, 2003). It appears, too that meaningful guidance and academic instruction can occur in mentoring ties that adolescents have with older peers (Karcher, 2005) and within mentoring interactions that take place in a group format rather than in one-on-one contexts (Hirsch, 2005). Peer mentoring and tutoring has also been found to increase students' sense of internal responsibility for their achievement (King, 1997). Student's ability to accept constructive feedback from adults has also been indicated to have improved from peer tutoring programmes (Mitchem, 2012). Mitchem (2012) also found that training students in peer tutoring strategies can help students take responsibility for their learning, and their ability to recognise and accept responsibility for academic failure.

Identity

DuBois et al.,(2002) indicated that mentoring relationships may also facilitate identity development. Mentors have also been identified to play a role in shifting adolescents' conceptions of both their current and future identities. Markus and Nurius (1986) have referred in this regard to 'possible selves' or individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they fear becoming. Such possibilities, emerge as adolescents begin to observe and compare the adults they know. These observations can serve to inform current decisions and behaviours (Markus & Nurius (1986). Relationships with mentors have also been identified to open doors to activities, resources and educational or occupational opportunities on which youth can draw to construct their sense of identity (Darling, Hamilton, Toyokawa, & Matsuda, 2002). Research also indicates the protective influence of mentoring relationships on risk behaviour (Beier, Rosnfeld, Spitalny, Zansky, Bontempo, 2000; Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010) and academic outcomes (Sánchez, Esparza, & Colón, 2008) are suggestive of these processes. Karcher (2008) also linked mentoring to a more positive orientation to the future and Herrera et al., (2007) also linked mentoring to adolescents' higher educational aspirations.

In research on peer support implementation in South African schools Visser (2004) implemented peer support projects in 13 Tshwane schools in the province of Gauteng using social ecological, systems and social constructivism. The goal of the project was to establish a peer support system that could contribute to the formation of a caring community in schools that could provide guidance, support and behavioural models for learners. Visser (2004) indicated that this could contribute to the prevention and reduction of high risk behaviour and the promotion of healthy lifestyles and

psychological well-being among adolescent learners. Action research was used in the implementation of the peer support system in schools and systems theory (Visser, 2004). The study utilised Bronfenbrenners (1979) systems theory which recognises the micro, exo and macro-levels to conceptualise peer support systems. The project initiation and implementation took place over two years and was evaluated in the third year for sustainability. Visser (2004) emphasised the importance of evaluation of peer support systems and identified outcome and process evaluation as critical. Process evaluation was indicated to contribute to the understanding of the complex environments intervention take place in as well as understanding of the internal dynamics and actual operations of a programme in an attempt to understand its strengths and weaknesses. Visser (2004) identified key processes that could contribute to the sustainability of the Peer mentor programme in schools. These included: the interpersonal relationships and management of the project by the peer mentors; the acceptance of the peer support system in schools and to what extent they address the needs of learners; the continuous support of the school management and the teachers; continuous feedback about success and the impact they have on the school climate. Visser's (2004) research on peer support provided valuable knowledge as to the implementation and evaluation processes involved in programme implementation in the current South African context.

At the interpersonal level a peer mentoring programme was implemented over a year and half (March 2011 – March 2012). The peer mentoring programme was implemented through a process of action research (McNiff, 1998; Walker, 1997) that allowed for continuous evaluation and adjustment in the implementation of the

programme. The programme encapsulated advising and referring students on personal issues as well as promoting career development of learners in the school.

6.2.2 Implementing the Peer Mentor Support Programme at the intervention school

Selection of Peer Mentors

Fifteen peer mentors were selected by the school counsellor in consultation with various other teachers. The following criteria were used in the selection of peer mentors:

- Learners had to be in Grade 10 (15-16), to ensure that they could act as peer supporters for more than one year before leaving school.

- Learners had to display characteristics such as openness, approachability and good interpersonal relationships.

Training of Peer Mentors

Training is the process of developing skills to implement an intervention and to form shared meanings between consultants and participants (Fullan, 1992; Louis and Miles, 1990). Five training sessions, (50 min each) were conducted with the mentors during March 2011 and follow-up sessions, to support the mentors, were conducted over the July 2011 – March 2012. The training focused on the following content.

- What is Peer mentoring

- Qualities of Peer Mentors and Self Awareness

- Signs and Symptoms of Distress : How to help

- Career Advising

- How to set up a Peer mentoring programme in your school

(See Appendix 7, pg. 232 for the completed training manual)

Involvement of other role-players in the school

Visser (2005) indicates that whole-hearted participation and commitment of various role-players in the school is important for the effective implementation and sustainability of peer mentoring programmes. Fullan, (1992) also indicates that although commitment is an evolving concept that grows with the successful implementation of a peer programme, the focus in the initiation of the programme should be on encouraging role players in the school community to take ownership of the programme:

- The school principals were informed about the rationale of the programme and what was expected in the school
- The school counsellor was involved in all the planning sessions to discuss the role of peer mentors in the school and how they could be best supported.

6.3 Intrapersonal level interventions

Background

At the intrapersonal level, the development of individual characteristics in preventing adolescents engaging in high risk behaviour and the role schools can play in mental health promotion, through developing behavioural and emotional competence in adolescence is acknowledged. Intervention at this level thus focussed on creating and strengthening 'inner resources' in adolescence. At this level, developing a sense of future orientation, goal setting and self-regulation emerged as themes. Developing a sense of future orientation was also seen as an important aspect of promoting self-regulation and engaging adolescents in the process of identity development.

6.3.1 Teacher training workshop to deliver lesson plans

Lesson plan formats on the areas listed below were developed and implemented during the beginning of the academic year. A workshop for Life Orientation teachers on implementing the lesson plans was also conducted. LO Teachers were able to implement the lesson plans over a 3 month period. The lesson plan formats were the duration of 45 minutes and all learners were given copies of the lesson plan worksheets.

6.3.2 Sense of Future Orientation

Studies indicate that optimism about the achievability of future goals relates to better coping skills, and adaption to developmental and traumatic tasks (Marko & Savickas, 1998). Unfortunately, they indicate that many individuals living in a diverse society do not orient themselves to the future and seldom, if ever, think about how their careers might unfold (e.g., de Volder & Lens, 1982; Feather and Bond, 1983; Fitzgerald and Betz, 1994; Nssan, 1972). Learning to adopt a future-oriented time perspective was thus indicated to accelerate during adolescence and peak at about 15 or 16 (Nurmi, 1991; Wallace & Rabin, 1960), yet continues until the early twenties (Dreher & Gerter, 1987).

Individuals who do not experience significant encouragement and reinforcement for goal setting and planning appear to be less inclined to learn a future orientation (Nurmi, 1991). Intervention at this level thus aimed to make the future personally meaningful and 'real' by teaching and encouraging individuals to construct a representation of their future lives, recognise the importance of planning for the future, anticipate events they can expect to experience, engage in the process of goal

setting, and evaluate the possibilities of achieving their goals (Nurmi, 1991). The future orientation lesson plan is provided in Appendix 8, pg. 247.

6.3.3 Goal Setting

Gordon (1996) indicated that one of the distinguishing characteristics of resilient youth is that they showed persistence when working towards goals that they themselves had identified. Oettingen et al., (1996, 1999) theory of fantasy realization addresses goal setting as a self-regulatory phenomenon. Oettingen et al., (1996, 1999) conceptualised the expectancy based route to goal setting rests on mentally contrasting fantasies about a desired future with aspects of present reality that stand in the way of reacting to the desired future. Mental contrasting was indicated as transforming the desired future into something that is to be achieved, and reality into something that has to be changed. Fantasy realisation theory asserts that for a change to occur, the discrepant cognitive elements of the desired future and the respective negative reality do not have to be only noticed, but need to be explicitly elaborated. Oettinge (1996, 1999) indicates that it is not the fact of thinking about the future that is the issue, but how people go about it. Consequently, rather than predicting goal commitment on the basis of changes in level of expectations, the theory is said to focus on the link between expectations and goal commitment. Fantasy realization theory indicates the role of different modes of self-regulatory thought for effective goal setting. It holds that contrasting positive fantasies with aspects of negative reality leads to setting goals in line with expectations. Goals were indicated to be specific objectives that help us to plan our activities and strategies. (Oettinge, 1996, 1999).

6.3.4 Emotional Competence

Emotional competence is defined as the ability to perceive emotions, and the ability to manage self-relevant emotions (Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi, 2000). Saarni (1999) indicated that emotional competence is a personal resource whose efficacy is significantly affected by the demands of the immediate context, the support of significant relational partners, and the values of the culture. Adolescents thus acquire emotional competency not as a universally applicable, trans contextual capability, but in relation to the relationships and contexts in which they live and develop.

Emotional competence, according to Saarni (1999) is built on self- understanding. An emerging sense of self defines many of the goals underlying emotional experience. Self-understanding also underlies an awareness of emotional states, the perception of self in a social context that guides emotional communication and self-presentation, and the strategies for emotional management , that have personal and social consequences. As emotional competence develops, self-understanding alters (Saarni, 1999).

Skills of emotional competence enhance self-esteem, and a sense of self efficacy derives from accomplishing ones goals in emotional transactions. Emotional competence is thus seen as an important contributor to psychological well-being (Saarni, 1999).

Emotional competence is related to the willingness to seek help from both non-professional (e.g. family and friends) and professional services (e.g. counsellors, mental health professional. Implicit, is that those high in emotional competence are more likely to have the ability to recognise when they are distressed which should cue

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help-seeking (Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi, 2000). An illustration of the goal setting activities is indicated in the appendix.

6.3.5 Self- Regulation

Bandy and Moore (2010) indicate that as adolescents develop, the capacity to regulate their emotions and behaviour represent a shift from vulnerability to competence. Research indicates that adolescents who exhibit poor self-regulation skills are at greater risk for peer rejection, social problems and deviance. It is thus important to build and improve the self-regulation capacity of adolescents (Bandy & Moore, 2010).

Self-regulation refers to both unconscious and conscious processes that affect the ability to control responses. It is a skill that has overarching effects on an individuals' ability to tolerate unmet wants or needs, handle disappointments and failures and work towards success (Bandy & Moore, 2010). Self is often thought of as a dual process – cognitive and socio-emotional.

Cognitive Self- Regulation is the degree to which adolescents can be self-reflective, and can plan and think ahead. Adolescents with this strength are often in control of their thoughts. They monitor their behaviour, evaluate their abilities, and are able to adjust their behaviour.

Social-emotional self-regulation is seen as the ability to inhibit negative responses and delay gratification. As adolescents mature, goal-setting and self-monitoring become critical (Campbell, 2006). Bandy & Moore (2010) further indicate that adolescents are

more likely to carry out self-regulation behaviours if they set manageable goals for which they have direct control and continuously evaluate their behaviour and responses.

Self-regulation is more important in adolescence. The period of adolescence is often marked by an increased vulnerability to risk such as truancy, peer victimisation and deviance. Being able to suppress impulsive behaviour and to adjust behaviours as appropriate has been linked to positive outcomes for adolescents e.g. higher academic achievement, school engagement, peer social acceptance, avoidance of negative behaviours. Interventions thus include self-monitoring strategies and problem solving skills.

A schematic representation of the three phases conducted, at the different levels of intervention and evaluation in this study is thus illustrated on the following page.

Phase 1 : Formative evaluation to inform development of intervention

Timeline : 2009 (June/July)Format:4 Focus Group sessions **Participants:** (10-15 Grade 10 learners in each group) **Duration:**30-40min

Timeline :2009 (June/July)Format: 5 Individual Interview sessions **Instrument :** Semi-structured Interview schedule on factors that impede school connectedness

Participants: 3 Grade 10 Life Orientation Teachers and 2 Managers (Guidance Counsellor and Life Orientation Manager)

Phase 2 : Development and Implementation of the Intervention

(*Delay of implementing intervention in 2010 as a result of strike actions in schools in the country. Implementation thus commenced in 2011)***

Community School Level

- Participatory Action Research involving managers, teachers and learners.
- Workshop on the formation of a schools liaison group with school managers, teachers and learners.
- Engaging in consultation with managers, teachers and learners.
- Time frame : July 2011

Interpersonal Level

18, Grade 10 learners trained as Peer Mentors.

Time frame: March 2011-March 2012

Intrapersonal Level

- Teacher training workshop with Grade 10 Life Orientation teachers to implement lesson plans (July 2011)
- 3 Life Orientation lesson plans implemented amongst Grade 10 learners.

Time Frame: Aug-Sep 2011

Phase 3 : Evaluation of the Intervention

Community School Level

- Pre-intervention survey (n=137) using Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) at Intervention School (March 2011)
- Pre-intervention survey (n=123) PSSM at Control Scale (March 2011)
- Post-intervention survey (n=137) PSSM at Intervention School (Nov 2011)
- Post-intervention survey (n) PSSM at Control School (Nov2011)

Interpersonal Level

Feedback, focus group session with Peer Mentor Group.

Time frame:

Nov/Dec 2011

Intrapersonal Level

- Process evaluation notes
- Lesson plan documents from Grade 10 learners
- 4 Focus Groups (10-12) learners in each group) conducted to evaluate the intervention outcomes (Nov 2011)
- 5 Semi-structured interviews conducted with LO teachers and managers to evaluate the intervention outcomes (Dec-2011)
- Pre-intervention survey (n=137) Future Orientation Scale (FOS) at Intervention School (March 2011)
- Pre-intervention survey (n=123) FOS at Control School (March 2011)
- Post-intervention survey (n=137) FOS at Intervention School (Nov 2011)
- Post-intervention survey (n=123) FOS at Control School (Nov 2011)

Figure 8: Schematic of multiple levels of intervention and reciprocal interaction to enhance school connectedness

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CHAPTER SEVEN
EVALUATION

7.1 Outcome evaluation

Outcome evaluation investigates programme effects (both intended and unintended). It should ideally involve experimental or quasi-experimental designs, which identify differences in programme outcomes, both with and without the intervention

7.1.1 Aims

The overall aim of this study was

- To promote the mental health wellbeing and academic motivation of adolescent learners through a school connectedness approach.

Following the findings of the situational analysis (Phase 1) and the development and implementation of school connectedness interventions (Phase 2) **the aim of Phase 3** was to investigate the outcome of interventions piloted to promote the mental health well-being and academic motivation of adolescent learners through a school connectedness approach. **School Connectedness** was identified as the **measure** to be achieved and **mental health well-being** and **academic motivation** were identified as the **outcome indicators.**

7.1.2 Hypothesis

The outcome evaluation component of this pilot study thus sought to investigate the following hypothesis

- **Null Hypothesis:** There will be no significant increase in learners sense of school connectedness (mental health well-being and academic motivation) in the intervention school following the intervention relative to the control school.

- **Alternate Hypothesis:** There will be a significant increase in learners' sense of school connectedness (mental health and academic motivation) in the intervention school following the intervention relative to the control school.

7.1.3 Methodology

A quasi-experimental approach using a before and after matched control design was utilised to determine whether the intervention had the intended outcome on the study participants.

Sample

The demographic characteristics of the sample from the intervention and control school are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of participants

Variable	Category	n	Percent (%)
Age			
Intervention School	15 years	42	30.7
	16 years	95	69.3
	Total	137	100.0
Control School			
	15 years	50	40.7
	16 years	73	59.3
	Total	123	100.0
Gender			
Intervention School	Male	79	58.0
	Female	58	42.0
	Total	137	100.0
Control School	Male	65	52.8
	Female	58	57.2
	Total	123	100.0
Research Group			
Intervention Group	African	87	63.5
	White	20	14.6
	Indian	25	18.2
	Coloured	5	3.7

	Total	137	100.0
Control Group			
	African	92	74.8
	White	11	8.9
	Indian	15	12.2
	Coloured	5	4.1
	Total	123	100.0

The demographic characteristics thus indicated that the distribution of respondents at the both the intervention school and control school were closely matched for base-line and post-test analysis.

7.1.4 Results

The data analysis performed, as well as measures i.e. the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) and the Reason for Achievement and Value of Academic Success measuring academic motivation, sample site, ethical considerations are discussed in Chapter Four, Methodology. The results of the Outcome Evaluation will now be discussed.

The descriptive statistic, including the Cronbach alpha coefficients are provided in table 3. The normality of the scores distribution of the items was obtained by conducting the descriptive analysis and examining the skewness and kurtosis scores.

In this study, Cronbach's alphas of 0.81 and 0.86 were indicated at both baseline and post-test respectively for the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) (Table 3). As the Cronbach's alpha were above 0.70, it was considered to be acceptable and indicative of internal consistency (Maree, 2007). The Future Orientation Scale (FOS) yielded an acceptable Cronbach's alphas of 0.68 and 0.87 for

both at both baseline and post-test respectively (Table 3).The full FOS is presented in Appendix 6b

Tabachninck and Fidell (2007) argued that an acceptable normal distribution score for skewness should be less -than 1, as a value less than 1, shows that the data is normally distributed. However, a close inspection showed that one of the kurtosis value was above 1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics, to assess result tests of normality and the results showed significant values above 0.05. Since the data as presented falls within the acceptable range, and meets the criteria, it can be concluded that the data was fairly normal, hence the use of the said parametric test.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

PSSM	Baseline		Post-test		*Skewness*	*Kurtosis*	*Cronbach's Alpha*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Intervention (n=137)	61.41	11.90	67.20	3.35	− 0.14	− 0.40	0.808
Control (n=123)	55.50	11.46	43.40	3.46	− 0.11	−1.79	0.855
FOS							
Intervention (n=137)	54.21	5.31	58.28	3.10	− 0.44	0.05	0.683
Control (n=123)	56.91	5.25	48.24	5.61	− 0.51	− 0.30	0.874

Note: PSSM = *Psychological Sense of School Membership,* **FOS** = *Sense of Future Orientation*

Psychological Sense of School Membership

The PSSM scale sought to assess learner's sense of acceptance and belonging. A comparison between baseline and post-test scores for the intervention and control schools shows that PSSM increased from the baseline to post-test for the intervention

group as illustrated in Table 3. Baseline to post-test increased from (M = 61.41, SD =11.90) to (M = 67.20, SD = 3.35). This indicated that learners' sense of psychological school membership was strengthened following the intervention. There was, however a decrease from pre-test to post-test from (M = 55.50, SD =11.46) to (M = 43.40, SD = 3.46) for the control group. While the intervention may have been responsible for the improved sense of PSSM in the intervention group, the decrease in PSSM in the control group was unexpected and could be explained by a history effect at the time of the intervention in the control school. History effects are indicated as any external or historical event that occurred during the course of the study that maybe responsible for a change in effects (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). In the context of this study, the researcher became aware of the possibility of the control school's closure in the following year (2012). This was revealed after the post-intervention surveys were administered in November 2012. The role of *history effects* in influencing the decrease from pre-test to post-test and the subsequent impact of experiencing a weakened sense of psychological membership amongst learners in the control must thus be considered and poses as a threat to internal validity of the study in the control school.

Repeated ANOVA was conducted to compare the variance between the different groups. Repeated ANOVA from baseline to posttest showed a significant change in learners' psychological sense of school membership (PSSM) as shown in Table 6. This indicates a differential change across time between the intervention and control groups [$F_{(1, 258)} = 387.36$; $p < .001$].

Table 4: Repeated ANOVA for the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM)

Source of Variance	Mean Squares	Df	F Values	p
PSSM				
Intercept	28605.40	1	387.36[*]	<.001
Error	73.85			

*p <.001

These outcome findings for Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) thus indicated a positive change for the intervention group and negative for the control group. While the validity of the findings are threatened by the possibility of history effect in the comparison school as discussed above, the significant within group effect in the intervention school suggests that the intervention holds promise for improving learners' experiences of a greater sense of acceptance and belongingness to their school.

Academic Motivation

In evaluating the impact on learners' sense of academic motivation the Future Orientation scale (FOS) with subscales i.e. the Reason for Academic Success and the Reason for Achievement scale sought to assess whether there was an improvement in learner's sense of future orientation and valuing academic achievement goals as a result of experiencing a sense of connectedness in the intervention school compared to the comparison school. A comparison between baseline and post-test shows an increase of FOS scores at the baseline from (M = 54.21, SD = 5.31) to post-test (M = 58.28, SD = 3.10) for the intervention school as illustrated in Table 2. There was, however also a decrease on this measure from pre-test (M = 56.91, SD = 5.25) to post test (M = 48.24, SD = 5.61) for the control group (See Table 5). This decrease was

also attributed to the role of *history effects* discussed earlier. Discussions and speculations of the possible closure of the control school in November 2011 and the role this played in influencing learners experiencing a decrease in motivation and sense of future orientation were thus considered to be responsible for the decrease in FOS scores in the control school.

A repeated ANOVA from baseline to post-test showed a significant change in learners' sense of Future Orientation (FOS), in the intervention school compared to the comparison school, indicating a differential change across time between the intervention and control group [F $(1, 258)$ = 72.57; p < .001] as seen in Table 6**.**

Table 5: Repeated ANOVA for Sense of Future Orientation Scale

FOS	Mean Squares	Df	F Values	p
Intercept	1747.17	1	72.57[*]	<.001
Error	24.08			

*p <.001

7.1.5 Summary of outcome findings

The aim of this chapter was thus to assess the impact of the intervention on outcomes for learners in relation to school connectedness and academic motivation. The hypothesis related to the objective was that there will be a greater increase in learners' experiencing a sense of connectedness and academic motivation in the intervention school following the intervention relative to the control school. The analysis shows a significant difference one the outcome measures, Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) and Academic Motivation (Future Orientation i.e. Reason for Achievement and Academic Success) in the intervention group compared to the

control group post the intervention. The outcome measures, in the intervention school indicated a strengthening of learners' sense of future orientation through responses related to their achievement motivation and future orientation. A strengthening of learner's psychological sense of school membership was indicated by responses related to feelings of being accepted, respected and encouraged by members of the school. While the intervention may have been responsible for the improved sense of psychological membership and future orientation in the intervention group, a decrease in PSSM and FOS in the control school was unexpected. Rumours that the control school was facing closure may have contributed to the decrease in psychological sense of school membership as well as academic motivation of the learners in this school. As a consequence, the researcher cannot say for certain that the significant differences in the outcome measures observed were only due to the intervention. Nevertheless in relation the hypotheses, the findings support a rejection of the null hypothesis that there would be no significant difference in the outcome measures between the two schools post the intervention in favour of an acceptance of the alternate hypothesis that there would be a significant difference, although these findings should be interpreted with caution since the control school showed a decline in scores on the outcome measures which is unexpected.

7.2 Process Evaluation

Introduction

The second part of the Evaluation Phase was to understand the processes that facilitated these results of the outcome evaluation in the intervention school. This section focuses on the second part of the Evaluation Phase which was to conduct a process evaluation of the pilot intervention in the intervention school.

Process evaluation looks at the processes the researcher engaged in and experiences with the different intervention components. In this study, the aim was

- To promote the mental health well-being and academic motivation of adolescent learners through a school connectedness approach

The process evaluation was thus undertaken to systematically monitor the process of implementing and piloting school connectedness interventions given that

- Interventions were conducted at strategic intervals

- The researcher through an action research process had to engage with complex school processes, systems and structures

- The researcher through an action research process had to engage in collaboration with key school role players

The process evaluation thus engaged the researcher in a critical reflection of school connectedness piloted in relation to informing the health promoting schools framework (HPS).

For the process evaluation component of this study, qualitative methods were used to monitor the reliability of the programme implementation and to understand the factors mediating the findings of the outcome evaluation. This section reports on the results

of the activities the researcher engaged in conducting the process evaluation. The activities included

- regular meetings with key role players (Principal, school managers, Life orientation teachers);

- workshop on developing the Schools liaison Group;

- workshop on implementing the lesson plans and monitoring;

- review of lesson activity sheets of learners;

- Development and Implementation of the Peer Mentoring Programme

- Individual interviews with key role players (managers, teachers)

- Four focus-group discussions with adolescent learners

The researcher concludes this section by providing a reflection of the role of the researcher as participant in the action research process.

7.2.1 Regular meetings with role players

Outcome Indicators

The aim of this collaboration was thus:

- For the distance between the researcher and the school community to be reduced through actively involving key school personnel in collaboration and informing the study and providing contextual intervention

- For the researcher to gain the schools co-operation and trust

- To raise awareness of the concept of school connectedness in promoting adolescent learners mental health well-being and academic motivation

Outcomes Achieved

The researcher conducted several meeting with key role players in the school (School Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance counsellor, Life Orientation teacher and managers) during the initiation, implementation and evaluation stages. Critical theory research paradigm allowed the researcher to become critical of how school processes and structures were implemented and practised by school personnel. Collaboration via these meetings allowed the researcher a critical awareness of how individual attitudes and beliefs contributed to the collective identity of the school. These role players identified various systemic factors and challenges the school and personnel were faced with. These included staffing shortages, low teacher morale, stress and burnout amongst teachers, 'evolution' in South African high schools (i.e. ex HOD, ex Model – C) and an increasing prevalence of students with mental health problems. The tone of the meetings at the intervention school was generally positive and optimistic and characterised by participant's consensus of the potential benefits of enhancing school connectedness in the South African education landscape. At these meetings, scheduling time in the school's academic programme to pilot and evaluate the interventions emerged as a key factor. The researcher was also mindful of not imposing study implementation on the school but arranged for the meetings so she could collaborate with role players and consolidate the academic programme with her study time-line.

At the control school, key role players included the School Principal and Life Orientation HOD. Meetings were conducted for approval of the study, sample selection and administration of the PSSM and Academic Achievement scales. Both school personnel initially expressed their concern that the school would not receive

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the intervention and the researcher had to reinforce the aims and objectives of the study and how the participation in the control school would inform school connectedness in South African Education landscape. The identified role player thus became more optimistic about their participation. In meetings at the school, the researcher became aware through interactions with administrative support and learners of speculations of the closure of the school. She became aware of these speculations when the post evaluation questionnaires were being administered. The researcher thus became mindful of how this would have to be acknowledged if this impact her findings in the outcome evaluation in the control school.

7.2.2. Workshop on developing the Schools Liaison Group

Outcome Indicators

The aim of this collaboration was thus:

- To provide an interactive, practical and informal 'working meeting' to inform intervention development and implementation
- For the action research process to be enhanced through collaboration from teachers, managers, learners
- Through the action research process, a mobilisation of resources and a discussion of context specific issues that will facilitate the sustainability of the 'schools liaison group' at the school

Outcomes achieved

The workshop was facilitated by the researcher and involved, two school managers, two teachers, two learners and lasted the duration of an hour and thirty minutes. These role players were identified by the school principal and guidance counsellor. The workshop engaged participants (including the researcher) in a critical reflection of how school structures such as the RCL serve to either promote and disempower and how these structures can be improved to support students better and contribute to

connectivity to the school. Results of Phase 1, the Situational Analysis were also shared with a view to informing the schools liaison group intervention. On the agenda, was a critical reflection of school structures and support structures such as the Representation Council for Learners (RCL), the School Governing Body (SGB). Participants at this forum indicated how certain bodies such as the RL were owned by certain individuals. In this instant, participants were referring to the Deputy Principal of the School. This was reported as contrary to the way in which the deputy represented the RCL to the researcher as the 'voice of the learners'.

The workshop provided an interactive, informal and unintimidating space for participants to engage in dialogue and critical reflection on the idea of a 'schools liaison group'. The notion of an extended role for the RCL with members also representing in this group was also discussed. Although participants at this workshop unanimously agreed with the potential of the Schools Liaison group in increasing learners and teacher's representation, the researcher recognised that the impact of this intervention, through gaining stability and momentum could only reveal its benefits with time. It was also recognised that teachers with a background in the subject Life Orientation were dominantly represented at the workshop and that there was also a need for engagement and representation from different subject area teachers to engage a 'whole school approach' to connectedness.

7.2.3 Training workshop for teachers on implementing the Life Orientation lesson plans

Outcome Indicators

The aim of this form of collaboration was thus to

- Engage teachers as facilitators of the Life Orientation lesson plan interventions so they are also empowered to provide intervention to increase school connectedness as part of the curriculum

Outcomes to be achieved in the delivery of the lesson plans

Promote adolescent learners

- Intrinsic motivation through enhancing the relevance of school work to current interest and future goals

- Enhance protective factors and skills that contribute to the socio-emotional growth of adolescent learners

- Promoting positive mental health through enhancing skills to reduce high risk behaviours

Outcomes Achieved

The training workshop conducted was the duration of an hour and forty-five minutes and involved two, grade 10, Life Orientation teachers and one, Life Orientation (HOD-manager). The researcher facilitated the workshop and the following outcomes were noted. The Life Orientation teachers indicated the relevance of the proposed lesson plan topics in light of the situational analysis findings presented and the literature identified and presented by the researcher presented at the workshop. The literature was a synthesis of interventions to promote mental health well-being. Discussions at the workshop were focused on an increase in deviance behaviour amongst adolescents in South African schools and an increase in psycho-social

problems learners were exposed to in their communities. Teachers alluded to how students were 'ill equipped' to deal with strong feelings of anger and resentment and constructive ways to deal with such emotions. Consensus was reached on a lesson plan for adolescent learners to identify and regulate their feelings in adaptive ways. The idea that self-regulation requires self- understanding (personal attributes, emotional competence) was also workshopped and discussed. Consensus was reached by the participants that the second lesson plan should focus on developing emotional competence. Teachers shared the view that this was important as it could contribute to adolescent learners developing healthier interpersonal relationships in the class that could lead to supporting their academic related goals. Discussions also emanated as to how this could promote better instruction, discipline and management in the classroom.

The self-regulation exercise, proposed by the researcher, utilising the robot was viewed by teachers as an appropriate mechanism to capture learners attention and engage them in self-reflection. The workshop proved beneficial as the participants were able to explore the thinking processes behind the ordering and formatting of the lesson plans and teachers were allowed to provide their input to implementing the lesson plans in a way they felt most appropriate. The thinking behind the formatting was for learners to initially develop their motivation (i.e. lesson plan 1 on Goal Setting and Future Orientation) and for this to be supported by learners enhancing emotional competence skills (lesson plan 2) and self-regulation skills.

Consensus was reached at the workshop that the lesson plans be integrated into the Life Orientation syllabus at the school and the identified time period for the

implementation of the lesson plans was August-September 2011, with the focus group evaluation of the intervention occurring in November 2011.

7.2.4   Review of lesson plans

Outcome Indicators

The researcher reviewed the completed lesson plan sheets

- To assess successful outcomes in objectives of the lesson plans through perusing completed responses to the activity sheets

- Responses to the completed lesson plan sheets that indicated adolescents learners self-reflection and individual responses

Outcomes Achieved

The researcher with the Life Orientation teachers collected samples from each class (10 activity worksheets) after each lesson. A positive indicator of motivation to learning in the lesson was a high percentage of completed activity worksheets. This can however also be attributed to the teachers facilitation skills. Analysis of the activity sheets indicated that learners were able to personalise their lesson plans on goal setting and future orientation as they indicated their individual aspirations. There was a noticeable variety and depth in responses that evidence student's engagement with the content. Learners were also able to plot their performance on a trajectory (i.e. goal setting) ladder and identify steps to make progress. Teachers who perused the lesson plans also indicated how the activity sheets could be used to support learners monitor their academic progress currently and also in future years. The lesson plans also indicated that learners were engaging in a process of comparing current academic performance to ideal academic performance and this made learners more realistic

about what career paths they could aspire to. In relation to the emotional competence lesson plans, responses indicated that Grade 10 learners were able to reflect on how their identity was shaped by their life at school, family and peers. A realisation of appreciation of uniqueness was also characteristic of the responses in the activity sheets. An awareness of 'self' in relation to others e.g. 'I am more outspoken with my peers' was also evident. Positives were that the learner responses indicated a desire to experience other self-growth opportunities and a realisation that change emanated from the individual 'self'. In relation to the self-regulation lesson plan learners were able to identify personal situations or experiences they could apply the 'robot' technique too. Examples they made reference to were disobedience issues at home, dealing with peer pressure. Learners also identified the academic domain and using the robot technique to deal with academic failure and negative feedback. The strategic implementation of the lesson plans, although only three lessons moved learners from a superficial level to one in which they were able to exercise self-reflection. The outcome of the lesson plans in influencing adolescent learner's attitudes and behaviour discussed in the focus group findings.

7.2.5 Development and Implementation of the Peer Mentor Support Programme

The peer mentor programme located at the interpersonal level of influence sought to:

- Enhance adolescents mental health well-being and academic motivation through providing positive personal experiences and enabling initiatives that enhance the quality of life of adolescents

- Promote adolescent learners help seeking behaviour from positive influences such as trained peers and teachers and thereby increase adolescents access to further support in the school and psychological services
- To enhance adolescent learners sense of school connectedness through promoting support structures such as the Peer Support Programme

To ensure that the selection of peer mentors were conducted in a fair and unbiased manner, all Grade 10 learners were informed about the initiation of the programme through the school counsellor in learners' registration classes. Interested learners were asked to approach the school guidance counsellor. Students who approached the counsellor were selected by the school based on attribute such as interpersonal skills, good standing at the school and their overall enthusiasm and commitment to the programme. Following the training sessions and a consensus that the Peer Mentors role at the school was to promote learners well-being, the Peer Support Group were able to identify certain roles within the group. Roles and sub-groups included the marketing team, referrals team, and peer mentor events manager. Following the training sessions, the peer mentors embarked on marketing the support programme by introducing the programme to learners at the school during the registration periods. The role of the Guidance Counsellor was to assist the learners to follow a structured programme in the school system and also promote awareness amongst staff. The role of the researcher was to support the Peer Mentors in providing mentoring support.

Informal verbal feedback of learners training experience was that it had expanded their self-awareness, raised expectations of self, motivated them to perform academically. Feedback also indicated that they had developed an awareness of group

dynamics and a greater awareness of psycho-social challenges and mental health problems adolescents experience. Peer mentors also developed skills to make appropriate referrals to the guidance counsellers and teachers at the school. Belonging to a group and being identified in the school structure also contributed to enhancing learners self-esteem.

Challenges indicated by the peer mentors was that although the peer mentors were quite active in their marketing of the programme in the school, few students actually approached the mentors for support regarding personal problems. The majority of learners approached the mentors for academic tutoring. Teachers also referred learners to the mentors for academic tutoring. The mentors however attempted to shift the focus from an emphasis on academic mentoring through conducting events such as Career Display afternoons and Substance Abuse prevention displays at the school library. The rationale for these events was that these were topical areas of concern for young people and that learners at the school would benefit from consultation and enagaing in dialogue to prevent substance abuse and learners making incorrect or misguided career decisions. Mentors were also of the opinion that this would open up the channels of communication for students seeking support with personal problems.

In the face of a lack of psychological services at the school, the mentors were enthusiastic to assume a counselling role to learners. The researcher and guidance counsellor had to however caution learners against assuming this role and re-iterate the boundaries and responsibilities of mentors and reinforce the role of the peer mentor in making appropriate referrals for counselling support to the School Guidance Counsellor. It also emerged that some learners served as stronger mentors

in the group through practising their roles amicably within the limits of the peer mentor role. It was noted that these mentors served as role models in the group and enhanced the efficacy of the Peer Mentor Group at the school.

The researcher was initially involved with providing monitoring and support to the group however she did recognise the importance of the school in assuming responsibility for the group. The role of the teachers and guidance counsellor in supporting the group through providing a form of communication channel between the peer supported and school management was also critical. The researcher thus conducted monthly follow-up meetings with the group and the guidance counsellor had weekly meetings. The purpose of these meetings were to provide support to learners who were experiencing personal challenges in their roles and also provide a space for debriefing support for the group to enhance their effectiveness. At the meeting with the school guidance counsellor, the peer mentors provided the guidance counsellor with verbal reports of activities that had transpired, meetings with the researcher and an account of challenges and positives experienced.

7.2.6 Reflections of the researcher as participant in the action research process

Critical theory (Habermas, 1976) informed the researcher's inquiry in this study. According to critical theory, the inquirers voice is that of 'transformative intellectual' (Giroux, 1988) who has expanded consciousness and is thus in a position to confront ignorance. Following critical theory paradigm, the researcher developed an understanding of school connectedness through the great depth of research conducted abroad in the area and attempted to expand 'consciousness' of promoting school connectedness in the South African school context. Critical theory engaged the

researcher in working collaboratively through engaging with dialogue with multiple role players (school managers, teachers, learners) at the school to bring about transformation in knowledge and practice.

The challenge (at initiation of the study) for the researcher was identifying that there already existed power imbalances in the school structure, between teachers, managers and learners at the intervention school. The researcher had to mindful of how her role could serve to unsettle, re-inforce or transform power imbalances while trying to gain the schools co-operation for the programme implementation. The transformational agenda of the study, based on critical theory, aligned to the action research process which locates the researcher as an active participant in this study and who seeks collaboration and empowerment of participants guided her interaction and the researcher and participants were able to engage with mutual respect for each other's roles. Gaining mutual respect and locating all participants on an equal platform was viewed as a process the researcher had to continuously work towards as it was crucial for her to gain the schools trust and co-operation and for the 'distance' between the researcher and participants to be reduced. From a critical theory perspective, this was also important so that the researcher could locate her study in the context she was working in and thereby provide relevant and meaningful intervention.

Challenges in relation to the complexities of conducting Community Research were also experienced. Community research seeks to intervene and evaluate on multiple levels of influence such as the intrapersonal, interpersonal and community school level. The researcher thus had to engage with multiple and dynamic dimensions of influence and intervention. Interventions had to also occur simultaneously and

sequentially to report the efficacy of the interventions. Given the complexity of school community research and that a successful evaluation should be conducted with rigour and sophistication, it must be acknowledged that the researcher conducted the study through 'trial and error' and that the piloting of school connectedness interventions is subject to refinement and improvement with the goal of optimising effectiveness. The researcher also acknowledges the limitations of one person implementing, evaluating and documenting interventions in the process evaluation. In doing justice to a study that seeks to address a 'whole school approach' evaluation as a shared effort by all school role players would have been the ideal.

It is also a acknowledged that as much as the researcher gained in her role as a participant in the study, her occupation as a Counselling Psychologist employed in higher education served to distance her from fully engaging with participants in the study. The researcher was viewed as having 'specialised skills' and in a somewhat 'expert role' as she was invited by both the intervention school and control school on several occasions to address learners and parents on psychological issues not directly pertaining to the study e.g. Career Evenings. The role that this could have played in distancing the researcher as participant is also acknowledged.

The researchers experience as an educator and training in the discipline of sociology and community psychology supported her in gaining co-operation from the school. It assisted in her gaining an understanding of systemic, structural factors impacting in the school, as well as an understanding of the 'everyday' operations at the school. This contributed to the development and implementation of meaningful and relevant intervention to a South African School.

The researcher had to adhere to implementing the study within the academic calendar. Although the researcher, in collaboration with the school was able to draw up a schedule for the successful implementation and evaluation of the study, the study was nonetheless subject to unavoidable and unforeseen events such as national strikes, bomb scares, rescheduled timetables etc. These events caused delays in the time-line of the study and the researcher had to engage in a process to reconsolidate the study.

The researcher was motivated by the feedback from the school role players who indicated their sustained belief in the potential of school connectedness to promote the mental health well-being and academic motivation of learners and the efficacy of interventions piloted to enhance the South African education landscape.

7.2.7 Focus groups with learners and semi-structured interviews with teachers and managers

Four focus groups with 15 grade 10 learners were selected by the school for the post-evaluation focus groups. In addition, five, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three Life Orientation teachers and two school managers. The overall aim was to evaluate the efficacy of the intervention in promoting school connectedness. A break-down of the sample characteristics are provided in the methodology section.

The focus groups and the semi-structured interviews were planned after the implementation of the intervention (Oct-Nov 2011). The School Guidance Counsellor assisted the researcher in co-ordination of the focus groups and scheduling of the semi-structured interviews.

Outcome indicators

Outcome indicators in the form of a semi-structured interview schedule was developed to tap into areas identified as goals in evaluation in this study and in-line with the features of the Health Promoting Schools framework.

The interview schedule thus aimed to explore the efficacy of the interventions piloted in enhancing school connectedness through improving:

- Structural aspects of the school system (systems, structures to resolve grievances, challenges) that exist to support students at the School Community Level

- The quality of the school social environment through improving help seeking behaviour of adolescents and referral to trained peers and staff at the school

- The teaching and learning curriculum in promoting adolescent learners mental health well-being and academic motivation through increasing relevance of work to current interest and goals

Results

At the intrapersonal level, the intervention focused on creating and strengthening 'inner resources' in adolescence. This was in response to data from the situational analysis which pointed to the need for the development of behavioural and emotional competence in adolescents that could assist in preventing adolescents from engaging in high risk behaviour. At this level, developing a sense of future orientation, goal setting and self regulation emerged as themes. Developing a sense of future orientation was also seen as an important aspect of promoting self regulation and engaging adolescents in the process of identity development.

At the interpersonal level, the intervention centred around strengthening adolescents/learners collaboration and engagement with teachers and managers through promoting effective help seeking behaviour in the school. This was in response to the need to promote healthy social networks and social support in adolescent life that emerged from the situational analysis as well as address the influence of anti-social capital groups and promote positive influences through a peer mentor programme.

At the community school level, the formative evaluation pointed to the importance of strengthening adolescence connectivity to their school. At this level the intervention focused on opening the channels of communication and promoting a shift from 'top-down' hierarchies to engage learners and teachers more in the management of the school through the establishment of the learner-staff liaison group.

Overall, the findings of the process evaluation highlighted the role that the intervention played at the various levels to enhance future orientation and school connectedness that was evidenced by the outcome evaluation.

Intrapersonal level

At this level, the intervention was reported to strengthening individual level competencies by both learners and teachers.

Sense of future orientation

Students indicated that they found the future orientation component important, particularly the "Goal Setting Ladder". This was indicated in their activity worksheets as well in the following responses.

LEARNER: *It helps me to see where I am today and what I need to do in the future to get where I want. It helps me to think about having a better life one day.*

Learners also indicated that this aspect helped them to identify challenges and obstacles they may face at arriving at their goals.

LEARNER: *It helps me to see what obstacles maybe in my way, like finances and living away from home, to prepare me. It helps me to see the bigger picture.*

An excerpt of one of the student's entries with regard to the goal setting exercise is provided on the following page.

GOAL SETTING

Goals are specific objectives that help us to plan our activities and strategies.

A **short term goal** is a goal that only takes a few days or weeks to achieve e.g. daily homework tasks.

A **long term goal** takes several weeks, months, or even a full school semester e.g. to improve a grade in a certain subject.

Goal Setting Questions

1. What is the one area of my school performance I want to improve ?
My academics → my Physics, Maths, EGD

2. What is the one thing I can do to accomplish my long term goal ?
Set small goals which lead to big things

3. How can this short term goal be broken down into a step-by step plan?
Do well in tests, assignments, focus on this 1st
I should focus and keep to my time-table

4. What are the things that might get in my way as I work toward my goal ?
Obstacles, Time Management, Insufficient Funds.

5. How will I remind myself of my goal?
Visualise it all the time. Think of the ladder ☺

Figure 9: Excerpt of learner's response to the goal setting exercise

Writing out their long term and short term goals on the Goal Setting Ladder also enabled self reflection and self assessment. It was also observed that reflection of goals encourages "challenge seeking" and learners exhibit a "master oriented" response to failure.

LEARNER: It helps to write it out, like in the Goal Setting Ladder. I can see that I am getting bad marks in Physics and I need to improve to become a doctor. I will therefore try harder and do better not only in Physics but in all my subject area.

An illustration of learner's response to the Goal setting ladder is indicated on the following page.

Figure 10: Excerpt of learner's response to the Goal setting ladder

Respondents also indicated that they were aware of future orientation through the Life Orientation curriculum but indicated that the LO curriculum was too diffuse and didn't really focus on career development.

LEARNER: *It is mixed up with many other different areas like HIV, Drugs etc..It is thus difficult to focus on in Life Orientation. We do look at Careers in Life Orientation...we don't 'learn' much though..I don't learn what I am good at.*

Learners were thus critical of the outcomes of the Life Orientation curriculum in promoting self analysis and introspection and referred to the subject area most often as "free" period.

Emotional Competence Development

Learners indicated that this component engaged them in self reflection and contributed to self knowledge. They were able to accept themselves as individuals and accept differences they may experience with others.

After engaging in the process of self knowledge in the activity sheet students were able to respond to the statements below

What do you think of when you see yourself in the mirror?

"I think of my flaws as a person and I need to change them".

"I think of how beautiful I am but I am never satisfied..I've learnt to be more accepting",

"I think of being a strong, confident person...more than I am now".

"I sometimes see a person who is an underachiever and lacks self confidence...I can try and be more confident".

The lesson plans also brought about a sense of diversity awareness and appreciation which helped improve self esteem. Learners were also able to identify the quality of adaptability in relation to being with others and introspection. This was indicated through the following responses

In relation to others

" I think about all I am not...I am not good at sports..I think of others who are good at sport and I'm ok with that..I can still be around them...still be their friend".

"I think I am not perfect..I don't get all A's".

Learners also indicated how this enhanced self awareness and self reflection. This self knowledge was seen as important in bringing about self acceptance and self confidence. This in reference to the quotes below.

What can you change

" I can change my way of thinking".

" I can be around different people and still talk to them".

" I don't have to be the cleverest girl in class for my teachers to like me".

An illustration of learner's response to the emotional competence, self reflection exercise is provided on the following page.

2. EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

Background Developing a students emotional competence teaches that not everyone is the same or feels the same. We each have different needs, fears, desires and preferences. This understanding helps students respect each other's feelings and individuality.

The Process
Self Knowledge
Circle the activities and the qualities that best describe you.

Artistic

Creative

Talking to friends

Playing a musical instrument

Solving Problems

Working with numbers

Healthy
Humorous
Satisfied
Friendly
Fit
Energetic
Nature Loving
Courageous
Punctual
Confident
Inquisitive
Moody
Stressed
Sensitive
Care for others

Patient
Happy
Caring
Loving
Adaptable
Unselfish
Honest
Loyal
Disobedient
Outgoing
Social
Hardworking
Selfish
Gossip
Judgmental

Games

Dancing

Science

Animals

Computers

Self-knowledge by looking in the mirror
What do you think of when you see yourself in the mirror ?
I always try to fix something about myself when I look in the mirror and I see someone that has the potential but doesn't use it.
What can you change ?
I usually change my hair, makeup and/or clothes.

What do you have to accept ?
Me!

Write a poem about yourself and your special qualities.
I am healthy and kind, strong but shy, I care, I share, I fix my hair.
I cry, but why? Noone knows. I am me and that's all I want to be.
I'm honest and stressed, but very at rest.

Figure 11: Illustration of learner's response to the emotional competence exercise

Self Regulation

In the self regulation component, students were encouraged to have an awareness of their emotional state. In response to the self regulation exercise, students indicated that they would use the 'stop, think right and act technique' that they had learned in the lesson when they were experiencing distress and there was a need for conflict

resolution. Self-regulation was identified as a way in which learners could identify their emotions, reactions and understand how emotions were displaced onto others. The self-regulation lesson plans promoted an awareness of how learners can control emotions such as anger, resentment deviance and an understanding of how not being able to control these emotions, resulted in displacement, through rebelling against adults which led to deviance. It is thus indicated that promoting the development self regulation skills of learners could contribute to the prevention of deviant behaviour amongst learners and strengthen connectivity in the school context.

LEARNER: When I'm involved in conflict, I have to stop myself from saying or doing things that i might end up regretting later".

LEARNER: When you have problems with your work".

LEARNER:"When someone irritates you and gets under your skin".

The lesson on self regulation also helped learners distinguish their inner emotional states and outward expression. The quotations below indicated that it helped monitor and control their emotional-psychological state of mind.

LEARNER: When I'm angry with friends, teachers..I shouldn't be shouting and screaming. You should stop, think and know what you are going to say first.

LEARNER: When you fight with people (e.g. boyfriends, friends, parents, teachers)".

Enhanced self regulation also enhanced learner's ability to identify and label their own emotions as well as identify and observe emotions in others.

RESEARCHER: What was your experience of going through this material?.

LEARNER : Basically its helpful because people have their own lifestyles and its good to see where you are really at. It is kind'a like a personal thing. It was good people like don't have others to talk to. This way you can put it out there on paper and get your feelings "out there". It helps because not all people are "talkers" some people are like "shy".

Teachers also concurred with these findings and is indicated by the response below.

TEACHER: Uh! I think the one with the self-regulation…where they have to stop, think and then act a lot of the learners don't practise this. So its important for the learners to practise this. I think they would then apply it more. We should emphasise this more. Getting them to think of the bigger picture. What happens if I do this? What will the consequences be ? A lot of them will then get on better. I feel a lot of the learners don't think before they act. A lot of them are acting just to give themselves a name amongst the bigger boys. There are learners in the higher grades who use the juniors to do things for them. Like we had a learner selling sweets the other day. It was not his so whose was it, somebodies giving them this. If we can get them to differentiate between right and wrong, they will experience a better sense of belonging in the school.

Students also indicated how the self regulation exercise helped improve interpersonal skills such as communication skills and problem solving skills which helped fostering improved relationships with teachers and staff.

LEARNER : "First you must be able to communicate it to your teacher. Then the teacher can validate how important it is''.

LEARNER: I think the lessons are important because it is true that not all

adolescents, being at this age can handle all things..they need people.

An illustration of learner's response to the self regulation exercise is indicated below.

Figure 12: Illustration of learner's response to the self-regulation exercise

In all three areas that the intervention focused on at the interpersonal level: future orientation, self regulation and goal setting, learners indicated the intervention was helpful. Indicators that students found the content meaningful and relevant was observed in relation to them applying the skills to their personal circumstances. Highly negative responses and incomplete responses to the skills development exercises were rare. Improved competence at the intrapersonal level was reported to impact positively on the other levels as well.

Learners and educators indicated the following challenges at the intrapersonal level in implementing various dimensions of the intervention. The role of emotional competence, self regulation skills and developing a sense of future orientation in enhancing school connectedness was noted. Teachers however alluded to the "undervaluing" of these competencies in the present school curriculum. They made reference to

Teacher : …"living in a society that values competencies in Maths and Sciences and devalues learning areas like emotional competence".

They thus indicated that for the learners to take the learning materials more seriously in the future, the education system needs to shift its focus on valuing students with an aptitude for the sciences to students who are emotionally competent as well.

They also acknowledged the role of a teaching curriculum that is based on outcomes and assessment and that provides little opportunity for self-reflection, self assessment and monitoring of behaviour.

They referred to the usefulness of the concept "future orientation" but also indicated that teachers would need further training on teaching and operationalising the concept as it implied "process work" and engaging students in constant self assessment. The potential for future orientation to engage students in self assessment, goal setting, reviewing goals, leading to choosing a career path was indicated.

TEACHER: Future orientation is a useful way of getting them to assess themselves, become realistic about their potential. I don't believe, however that all teachers will have this ability to get them thinking in this 'cyclical' or 'process' oriented way...they need specialised training for this. It is important because many learners think that careers is a 'once-off' even when they just merely fill out the CAO forms...many don't reflect on themselves first.

Interpersonal Level

At the *interpersonal level*, learners indicated an enhanced sense of collaboration with teachers, mentors and learners.

Teachers

LEARNER 1: I feel connected to school because of my teachers and the work that we do.

RESEARCHER: Do people feel they know who to approach if they have a problem at school?

LEARNER 2: Yes, there is a school counsellor, or if you have friend who you feel you can trust!

LEARNER 3:Teachers are also approachable.

LEARNER 4:Ya! We also learn from our friends about ourselves.

Learners also indicated that they were able to relate and communicate to certain teachers who were part of the teacher training workshop intervention.

LEARNER:I feel connected because of some teachers, not all teachers. I think there are those teachers like the LO teachers who are friendly and go "Hi there! How are you ?" I think you have that greater sense of connectivity them.

LEARNER: Ya it's those teachers who you can just chat to, like Mr A, who you don't have to only go to when you are have a problem.

Teachers too alluded to how the teacher training workshop facilitated as a reflection opportunity for practice of their profession. They were able to see themselves as 'reflective practitioners' and able to reflect on their practice as not only individuals, but individuals as part of a collective in the school.

TEACHER : The training helps. We always need to be reminded where we are at in terms of

being individual teachers in relation to the school. To see the broader picture because it is like a dream..sometimes we forget about it. We need to be reminded of where we are at. Understanding the unconscious processes in the school community.

This highlights the potential for consultation, collaboration and partnership with mental health practitioners in informing school based activities and is identified as a key feature of the health promoting schools framework. Although the teacher training cannot be assumed to be the sole cause for increasing connectivity with teachers, the role of the training in enhancing teacher-student relationship is indicated.

The role of peer mentors

Also in accessing support in the school, the role of the Peer Mentor support was highlighted.

LEARNER: I feel connected to my school because of the great support system, like the peer mentor programme we have".

LEARNER: We gained in self confidence because of the Peer mentoring programme. It's about helping people.

PEER MENTOR: In helping others, you learn how to solve your problems through the process.

Learners identified the peer mentoring programme as promoting support and strengthening connectivity to the school. interpersonal skills development of the mentors was seen as helpful for personal development as well.

It was also observed that the peer mentoring programme enhanced learners sense of diversity awareness amongst their peers.

PEER MENTOR: Through the peer mentoring programme we have learnt to listen to other people, learnt that we are all different, learnt that we all have different strengths and abilities".

The peer mentoring programme was also seen as contributing to learners accessing support and connectivity in the school. Learners indicated that their help seeking behaviour was enhanced and this played a role in accessing support from the school. This was indicated by the quotes below.

LEARNER: Peer mentors helped me to see that my problems are not that big or that great. I would never have gone to the Counsellor if I hadn't chatted to the peer mentors".

LEARNER: The peer mentor made me aware that there are people I can go to if I have a problem. I go to my peer mentor to help me with Physics – but sometimes we also chat about personal stuff. Makes me aware that I shouldn't 'bottle' things up. That if I don't approach people, that if I don't take the first step, I won't be helped".

Peer mentors were also noted to play a role in promoting the career development of learners.

LEARNER: The peer mentor is helping me learn more about my career. We are all finding out about different careers and sharing in our groups through the peer mentor programme.

Some of the other peer mentoring activities, initiated by the peer mentors included: academic support groups (high achiever students participate as tutors to students); career advising and assistance of Grade 9 learners with subject choice selection in Grade 10 ; Grade 9 learners make the transition to high school. Learners indicated that the career assisting activities also helped them identify with their career related goals and they felt more motivated as a result of this intervention.

Promoting and strengthening the influence of positive peer groups was seen as counter-acting the influence of anti-social peer groups in the school system. The impact contributed to both the academic and personal development of learners.

Challenges of implementing the peer mentoring group were indicated. The idea of promoting the influence of peer groups was something teachers and managers were initially hesitant with. Teachers commonly associated 'peer groups' as 'trouble'. Teachers and managers seemed oblivious to the potential of peer groups in enhancing school connectivity and belongingness. This was seen as attributed to group, incidents of physical violence and incidents of shared substance intoxication reported both at the school and within the community. The mind-set from management was also that

LEARNER: *Learners form their groups as a means to rebel against us (referring to the management and teachers.*

The involvement of teachers and managers and their input into the peer mentoring programme brought about an awareness of the dynamics of group processes and contributed to teacher and learner collaboration which strengthened connectivity.

Promoting the peer mentoring programme in the school promoted the formation of other peer support groups as is indicated below by one of the teachers

TEACHER: *I teach Physical Sciences also and I got some of the learners in my grade to form a group....kind of like a support group for learners who are battling with Physical Science. I am really interested in keeping this 'support group' going.*

At this dimension, it is thus indicated, that for the potential of peer mentor programmes to be realised, it is also dependent on the mind-set (perceptions and attitude) of teachers to influence peer activities in the school.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY LEVEL

School Liaison Group

At the school community level, the researcher engaged with management, teachers and learners to promote a cyclical, collaborative approach for representation of issues affecting all parties. This was a result of both managers and teachers identifying a "top-down" hierarchy in decision making with limited possibilities for representation on issues. The implications for a more, cyclical and collaborative approach were thus identified leading to the identification of the need for the establishment of the learner-staff liaison group. Reflection on the workshop process involving all stakeholders yielded the following responses below.

LEARNER: *I think this works, it can be used in the future of the school also because nobody really goes to the 'representative council of learners' (RCL) with their issues. In this way we know that our teachers take us seriously.*

Other learners made reference to the ethos of the school in promoting students "freedom" to represent issues.

LEARNER: *I mean compassion, integrity, respect, commitment is something our school preaches about so they should encourage it and practise it in this way also..with the schools liaison group. They (referring to teachers) should make the learners important by listening to us too".*

Teachers and learners were in unison that there needed to be representation from a diversity of learners also.

TEACHER: *We also need to involve learners who have discipline problems, who are not excelling so we can 'root out' the problematic areas. I know students sometime*

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complain to me that its only the excelling students that are chosen. We could prevent problems of deviant behaviour if we did.

LEARNER : *"Not all learners are treated equal, if you are excelling then your voice is heard!*

The work of the schools liaison group was deemed as challenging but necessary. The challenges were associated with changing the associated mind-set that accompanied hierarchies and systems of practices that have been historically entrenched.

MANAGER: *We are working with changing mindsets, ways of doing things that have always been done in a certain way. It's difficult to do but something that is necessary as we also live by our school ethos!*

Teachers were however in general agreement as to the potential of the schools liaison group in enhancing school connectivity.

TEACHER : *We have traditionally been hierarchical in practice. Greater emphasis should be placed on creating awareness and understanding. We should work towards more collaboration with all role players who have a voice.*

TEACHER: *This is better for the learners to feel a part. Very good idea as the learner's know each other better than teachers do".*

Workshopping the concept of a schools liaison group highlighted the potential of involving students in school organisational structures. The potential for engaging learner's feedback on school practices and ethos through the schools liaison group

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was seen as playing a role in the prevention of deviant and non-corporative behaviour. An illustration of teachers responses to the workshop is illustrated below.

LEVEL OF INFLUENCE	INTERVENTION	COMMENTS
COMMUNITY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND POLICY LEVEL	School Liaison Group (Teachers, Managers and Learners)	This would wok very well.
COMMUNITY LEARNER GROUP SYSTEM LEVEL	Peer Counselling Building Protective Peer Networks	This is better for the learners to feel a part of this and learners are good at this
INTERPERSONAL LEVEL	Peer Counsellor Training Programme	Very good idea as the learners always know each other better than teachers do.
INTRAPERSONAL LEVEL	Lesson Plans for Life Orientation teachers	Excellent idea.

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Figure 13: Illustration of teacher's response to the teacher workshop on the school liaison group

Challenges identified at this level included the following discussed below. At the school community level, the premise was that the schools liaison group, in idea and

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practice will enhance interpersonal communication amongst all role players i.e. learners, teachers and managers and will aid in the acceleration of the diffusion of innovations. This form of interaction was deemed as much needed in light of respondents indicating inconsistency in application of discipline procedures, rigid prescribed strategies, undemocratic school management practices and a need to shift away from "top down" hierarchies that disable connectivity. Teachers and managers were however mindful of South African schools having historically adopted a "top down" hierarchy in their management and strategic practices. This could pose an impediment in adopting new behaviour and practices within the current education landscape.

The intervention or innovation, at this level, was however well received within the school community as the intervention dimensions were informed by all role players and developed to match the characteristics of the school environment. The researcher was thus mindful of not imposing behaviour and best practice without consultation of the key role players. This was seen as important in engaging receptivity in piloting the intervention

7.2.8 Summary of process evaluation findings

Overall, the process evaluation findings, located within the ecological framework allowed the researcher to engage in a critical reflection of the efficacy of the intervention as well as the challenges of implementing the intervention within the South African education landscape. The various themes to emerge at the different levels of influence included :

- At level 1, the intrapersonal level, learners indicated improved emotional competence, self- regulation and future orientation dimensions. Long-term challenges of implementing the interventions were the fragile status accorded to such areas in the current curriculum. A focus on continuous assessment and throughput rates in the current education system was also identified as preventing learners from engaging in activities such as self regulation and self assessment. The relative importance of engaging learners in the intervention activities was thus indicated in the findings.

- At level 2, the interpersonal level, the findings indicated the usefulness of the teacher training workshop and the role of collaboration with the mental health practitioner in informing school based activities. The findings also indicated the usefulness of the peer mentoring programme in promoting help seeking behaviour amongst learners. Learners thus indicated accessing support in the school and positive interactions with teachers as a result. Challenges identified were the perception of teachers that anti-social peer groups were associated as a source of trouble. They were typically associated with promoting deviance and rebellion in the school environment. The formation of the peer support programme promoted the ideology and potential of positive peer support groups in the school

At level 3, at the School Community Level, learners, teachers and managers were receptive to the innovation of the schools liaison group in opening up the channels of communication and allowing all stakeholders to contribute to practices and strategies of the school. The challenge identified at this level, was the domination of "top-down" hierarchical practices that have historically been a characteristic of South African While the long-term effects of the interventions implemented at the various

levels will only be determined by time, the process evaluation findings suggest that the interventions did contribute to promoting future orientation and connectivity in the school environment as was found by the outcome evaluation. Challenges identified in the findings refer to contextual issues that schools face within the South African education landscape. An illustration of the intervention and process evaluation findings located at the various levels of influence is indicated on the following page.

Table 6: Summary of objectives, intervention and findings

Objective	Intervention	Findings
LEVEL 3 : COMMUNITY SCHOOL LEVEL		
Strengthen social networks built through group processes. Groups provide the dialogical space for raising the critical consciousness necessary for negotiating group norms and mobilising for socio-cultural and structural change.	*Social Capital theory* Training workshop on the school liaison group to involve all role players in practice and strategies in the school.	• Space for opening the channels of communication, through involving all role players. Shift in thinking from 'top-down' to cyclical and collaborative.
LEVEL 2 : INTERPERSONAL LEVEL		
Strengthen the protective influence of relationships with significant other/s.	*Social support theory* • Collaboration with mental health practitioner • Peer Mentor Programme	• Enhancing help seeking behaviour and accessing support from the school. • Enhancing influence of positive peer networks.
LEVEL 1 : INTRAPERSONAL LEVEL		
Strengthen personal resilience	*Goal setting, Self-Regulation Theory and the Challenge model* Teacher training workshop on lesson plans based on: • Emotional competence • Self Regulation • Future orientation	Enhanced behavioural and emotional competence to influence level 2 and level 3.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND

LIMITATIONS

8.1 Discussion of key findings

Given that adolescents who feel connected to school report higher levels of emotional and psychological well-being and are less likely to engage in high risk behaviour, this study, using the ecological perspective, adapted by Petersen & Govender, (2010) implemented interventions at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and school community level to promote school connectedness in one school in South African as a pilot study. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the results of the evaluation phase (phase 3), in relation to the situational analysis (phase 1), the interventions piloted (phase 2) and the available literature on the study area.

In the evaluation phase, the researcher conducted an outcome and process evaluation, using a mixed methods design. In this chapter, the researcher refers to both the outcome evaluation findings (PSSM Scale findings at the Community School Level and the FOS Scale at the Intrapersonal Level) and the process evaluation findings elicited through multiple data collection activities (e.g. key informant interviews, focus groups, analysis of documents such as reflection worksheets and observation). Findings are discussed in relation to the different levels i.e. community school level, interpersonal and intrapersonal levels of influence.

School Community Level

The PSSM sought to assess learner's sense of acceptance and belonging. These were found to be general indicators of school membership. Results of the outcome

evaluation revealed that at the Community School level, learner's sense of psychological school membership was strengthened compared to the control school where a reduction in PSSM was reported. This decrease was however attributed to speculations of the control school's closure in the following year (2012). This was revealed after the post-intervention surveys were administered in November 2011. The role of *history effects* in influencing the weakened sense of psychological membership (PSSM) amongst learners in the control school and reducing the validity of the findings thus need to be considered in interpreting the findings

The formative evaluation (Phase 1) indicated poor and undemocratic school management practices that create a 'top-down' hierarchy from DoE policy to management to grade co-ordinator to teachers and learners which is antipathetic to promoting school connectedness (Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012). The intervention to address this problem in Phase 2 entailed a workshop to promote the idea of a "School Liaison group" to facilitate collaboration of learners, teachers and manager. Participants regarded such a structure as being important in breaking down the hierarchies that exist in schools and promoting the vision that "everyone's opinion counts'. Such structures allowed feedback from role players as to how consistent policies and practices are with the values, habits, experiences and needs of those at whom they are targeted. The process evaluation indicated learners in this study, found that the 'feedback loop'' emanating from the liaison group made them feel more connected to the school.

The importance of involving young people in schools' decision making processes through strengthening school connectedness is thus highlighted and has also been

found by other studies to enhance student-teacher relationships through promoting greater insights and understanding of each other's' values and personalities (Markham & Aveyard, 2003).

Research also indicates that it empowers young people to make decisions about how school affects their lives and helps foster resilience. Involving young people in working with partnership with adults' means those strategies for mental health promotion are developed from a shared philosophy rather than an agenda set by adults (Health Promoting Schools, 2003). Adopting a systemic approach that seeks to understanding the student perspective and create a person-environment fit can also be protective of vulnerable students (Dynarski & Gleason, 2002). Research indicates that school policies that promote school engagement can help connect learners at risk with meaningful academic routines and activities in their home and school context as well as develop rapport and supportive relationships with key school personnel (Martinez, 2009).

In the formative phase, learners indicated that engaging in deviant behaviour was a way to take revenge on the school. Some learners misbehave as a means of issuing a deliberate challenge to the teacher's authority (Rawatlal & Petersen, 2012). Ironically, teachers report that these are often children who either come from families where the children are powerless, or from families where the children have been abandoned and overwhelmed. While the importance of addressing parental involvement in adolescent development and receiving support on the home front to achieve connectivity in the school environment is highlighted, the demographics of the sample also suggest a high prevalence of absentee parents and single parent families. This indicated that

many maybe assuming the role of care-givers to younger siblings on the home front. In this context adults within the school setting such as teachers and managers need to compensate for lack of parental involvement on the home front.

'Collaborative inquiry', attaches more conditions to the relationship between the researcher and the practitioner (the university researcher and the teacher) in order to involve more parity among the participants through collaboration (Oakes et al., 1986). The process of collaboration, consultation, negotiation and reflection used in the study resulted in building meaningful relationships through which the researcher could understand decision making processes in the school and implications for intervention.

Beck and Black (1991) indicate that collaboration between teachers and researchers promotes engagement in critical thinking and practice, thus promoting the construction of new knowledge for the participants, ultimately cultivating their capacity to restructure and appropriate their knowledge for the participants. In the present study, collaboration and participation was enhanced in the collaborative workshop through the researcher identifying links with existing practices, systems and priorities and organising processes to engage and consult with school personnel. This brought about greater teacher reflection on their practice as teachers. Teachers in this study, were critical of how their teaching was informed by authoritative, bureaucratic, management processes which encourages little reflection of self in practice. They indicated a preference for the latter, through the reflection enabled in collaboration in this research. This was reinforced by the researcher in this study locating the role of teachers as key to achieving connectedness in the school and establishing collaboration. Teacher's participation was thus viewed as emancipatory as it allowed

them to reconnect with self. Opening the channels of communication, in this study with key role players such as teachers enhanced a positive school climate. Members of staff were more receptive to the project as it was seen as rooted in the school and they had a say in its development and implementation.

Interpersonal Level

At the interpersonal level the formative evaluation highlighted the influence of anti-social groups (groups that resist school regulations and norms) that promote disconnectivity to the school. Adolescents perceived peer pressure in many areas of their lives, and such pressure can be both negative and positive (Brown, Clasen, & Ficher, 1986; Brown, Lohr & McClenahn, 1986; Clasen & Brown). Interactions with peers concern academic and non-academic matters and it is hard to imagine that they would not influence adolescent motivation and engagement in school (Ryan, 2000), building positive peer networks was an important recommendation of the intervention phase.

The findings of the formative evaluation also revealed that adolescents are more likely to seek help from informal rather than formal sources, with peers being the preferred source of help for personal and emotional problems over parents and teachers. Creating protective peer mentoring groups that provide a referral pathway to trained counsellors was an important recommendation for the intervention phase of this study.

In response, the intervention phases involved the establishment of a peer mentoring programme as a resource learners could turn to when needing support. The students interviewed through the process evaluation generally had positive perceptions of the

peer mentoring programme. They indicated that they knew about the peer mentoring programme and some also expressed a desire to become a peer mentor themselves. The peer support service was viewed as positive, useful and serving a need in the school.

The process evaluation, however, also revealed that they were approached more frequently for academic related support rather than personal. Accessing academic and career support was however reported in the process evaluation as helping to build engagement and connectivity to the school. Mentors interviewed indicated an increase in students' participation through events such as Career Open Day and consultation sessions with mentors for career advice, even though personal support was not as common.

Ryan (2000) highlights the importance of the socialisation role played by peers in academic outcomes. Efforts to understand the contextual elements of career development in late adolescence have identified the positive influence of close interpersonal relationships in relation to various aspects of the career decision making process (Blustein, Walbridge, Friedlander, and Palladino, 1991; O'Brien, 1996). Research and theory using the relational perspectives have focused on how adolescent-parent relationships influence specific developmental tasks. Yet as adolescents develop, their relationship focus shifts, with increased emphasis and emotional energy devoted to peers and close friends (Berndt, 1996; Josselson, 1992; Sullivan, 1953). Close relationships with peers function to help individuals learn more about themselves, thereby providing one of the major channels through which people define themselves (Flum & Porton, 1995; Josselson, 1992). They indicate that it is

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within this context of close, mutual relationships that individuals can explore their similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Secondly, the sense of connection provided by close peer relationships may provide security and psychological support to adolescent development that facilitates the commitment to a career plan (Ainsworth, 1989; Berndt, 1996). Thirdly, the comfort furnished by close friends may facilitate the wide-ranging exploration, risk taking, and social mastery that is inherent in career decision making (Blustein et al., 1991; Harren, 1979). Felsman & Blustein (1999) indicate that adolescents who experience close relationships with peers were more likely to have engaged in greater levels of environmental exploration and had made greater progress in committing to career choices.

Other variables in considering peers in relation to career development include Josselson's (1987) concept of 'anchoring'. Anchoring was conceptualised as the process whereby adolescents separate from their parents and establish adaptive bonds with more age-appropriate figures. Josselson (1987) indicated that the anchoring process may be particularly salient in the current climate of uncertainty that characterises contemporary career development. Research also suggests that late adolescent may use peer relationships to provide support and perhaps buffer some of the anxiety that is inherent in making decisions based upon a future that is increasingly difficult to predict (Josselson, 1987).

The current study also highlighted the positive impact of the peer mentoring programme on the personal growth of the mentors who were trained. Previous research also highlights that participating as a high school mentor can have positive

effects. Ikard (2001) found improvements in moral reasoning and empathy after youth served as peer mentors. Stoltz (2005) indicated a positive experience with the peer mentoring programme as predictive of a more favourable connection to school. Noll (1997) indicated that mentors reported improvements in their relationships with parents, an increase in self-esteem, better conflict resolution skills and enhanced organisation skills. Increased self-definition, self-awareness and self-knowledge as well as greater insight into individual functioning and issues related to mental health and mental health promotion were also reported in relation to becoming a peer mentor (Noll, 1997).

Intrapersonal Level

At the intrapersonal level, the formative evaluation indicated that because schools were strongly syllabus driven and assessment oriented there were limited opportunities for learners to develop self reflection, self assessment and self regulation skills. A focus on academic development over personal development had negative implications for learners to experience belonging, acceptance and connectedness. The formative evaluation also indicated that learners engage in deviant behaviour because they are angry and resentful and are not mentally and emotionally equipped to handle their strong feelings or express their anger constructively. Learners also indicated that discipline procedures such as detention and suspension were of little help to them and that this did not deter them from deviant behaviour. Also indicated in relation to deviant behaviour was a lack of warmth and supportive relationships learners experienced on the home front.

The formative evaluation also highlighted the importance of developing a sense of future orientation in adolescence. Teachers and managers indicated that students who were motivated, goal directed and future oriented were less likely to engage in deviant behaviour and experienced greater acceptance and connectivity to the school.

In response, the intervention phase sought to pilot self-instructional, self-assessment and self-regulation approaches that were incorporated into the Life Orientation lesson plans. Goal setting, emotional competence and self-regulation lesson plans were developed and implemented. The outcome measures sought to assess learner's sense of motivation and future orientation through the Future Orientation Scale (FOS). Results of the outcome evaluation revealed that at the intrapersonal level, learners' sense of future orientation was strengthened in the intervention school compared to the control school. The process evaluation revealed that the lesson plans were reported to have had a positive effect on the motivation of individual students as they provided learners with personal skills for handling interpersonal relationships and conflicts. Self-reflection and the goal setting lesson plans were reported to be helpful for developing a future orientation and motivation to achieve their goals. The self-regulation lesson plans were reported to be helpful for improving inter-personal relationships and resolving conflicts.

Christenson et al., (2008) indicate that students feel connected to teachers who make the curriculum and instruction relevant to the adolescents' challenges, experiences, cultures, and long-term goals. Ormond (1995) also indicates that students value learning that they consider meaningful and relevant. He asserted that instruction is relevant to learners when they can relate what is being learned to their future goals

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and aspirations. Teachers should underscore the relevance of assignments to students' personal lives and future aspirations rather than emphasizing that students learn material simply because they will be tested on it. A focus on the development of social emotional competence and self-regulation piloted in this study indicated the potential of developing such skills in adolescents.

The benefits of the lesson plans at the intrapersonal level for connectivity to teachers were also noted. Dewey (1991) emphasised the positive roles that reflection might play in fostering students' self-reflection, critical thinking, and in the demonstrable development of professional values or skills. Boud, Keough and Walker (1985) define reflection in the context of learning and focus more on one's personal experience as the object of reflection, as referring to 'those intellectual and effective activities that individuals engage in to explore their experience which leads to new understanding and appreciation" (p.19). The definition of reflection by Moon (1999), on the other hand, focuses more on the role of reflection and learning, and embeds reflection into the learning process. She describes reflection as "a form of mental processing with a purpose with a purpose and/or anticipated outcome that is applied to relatively complex or unstructured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution''(p.23).

Greenberg et al.,(2003) indicates that successful schools ensure that students excel academically, however most educators, parents, students and the public support a broader educational agenda that involves enhancing students' social-emotional competence, character, health and civic engagement (Metlife, 2002; Public Agenda, 1994, 1997, 2002; Rose & Gallup, 2002). In addition to producing students who are culturally literate, intellectually reflective, high quality education should also teach

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adolescents to interact in socially skilled and respectful ways, to contribute ethically and responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community; and to possess basic competencies, work habits and values (Elias et al., 1997); Jackson & Davis, 2000; Learning First Alliance, 2001; Osher, Dwyer, and Jackson, 2002). The importance of including the lesson plans to promote these personal attributes and skills is thus highlighted. The lesson plan on future orientation allowed learners to assess self, ability and performance. The lesson plan on this area was viewed as important in strengthening adolescents' sense of future aspirations. The lesson plan on emotional competence allowed students to reflect on self and relationships with others, it thus enhanced learners' sense of self awareness. The lesson plan on self-regulation allowed students to reflect on how they handle conflict laden situations. Learners were able through the cognitive behavioural (Stop, think, act right) exercise to develop skills of self-regulation. The positive role that the lesson plans played in learners developing self-reflection, critical thinking and future orientation skills was thus highlighted.

The process evaluation also indicated that in helping students identify their future aspirations through the goal setting tasks was seen as valuable and contributed to their sense of motivation. A strengthening of students' motivation and future orientation was also seen to have a role to play in the prevention of deviance amongst adolescents.

An important aspect of adolescent resilience and prevention of deviance appears to be successful preparation for adult careers and positive outlook on one's occupational future. Syymanski (1994) suggested that proactive career planning should begin as early as the junior high school years and should incorporate a longitudinal, career-

oriented focus, rather than a 'single time, occupational choice perspective'. Masten, Burt, Roisman, Obradovic, Long & Tellegen (2004) indicated that career development related variables such as planfulness, future motivation, and autonomy played key roles in predicting the emergence of resilience over the transition to adulthood among young people.

Promoting adolescents aspirations was seen as fundamental in their career development and intervention at this level was centred around this aspect. Aspirations according to Armstrong and Crombie (2000) are initially restricted based on social context, the gender of the adolescent, what opportunities are available. The narrowing process in early adolescence is seen to be drawn from inaccurate or subjective information from the social context with little reflection of the self (personal likes, dislikes, skills and abilities) and opportunities. This according to Armstrong and Crombie (2000) results in an elimination of viable future career options and increases the potential for unrealistic expectations later in adolescence. Promoting career aspirations through self-reflection in the Life orientation lesson plans were seen as promoting adolescents sense of self fulfilment and contributed to their identity development. Promoting this aspect can be viewed as a potential predictor of successful adjustment and disengagement from deviant behaviour.

The present study highlighted the importance of teachers' own social and emotional competence development in promoting learners social and emotional competence development. This was also seen as a result of engaging in the workshop for teachers and engaging in implementing the intervention holistically. It was highlighted in this study, that if teachers are given sufficient preparation and ongoing support to develop

self-regulation skills it will have long term implication for the development amongst adolescents. The teacher training workshop conducted as part of the intervention phase of this study was seen as creating the space for teachers to reflect on developing emotional competence skills to create connectedness with learners. The development of emotional competence skills in teachers was seen as having implications for learners acquiring such skills and was regarded as a competence much desired.

This new perspective stresses the importance of self-regulation among both teachers and learners for the creation of an environment where students behave out of a sense of shared responsibility for a healthy learning environment rather than to avoid punishment or earn rewards (Weinstein, 1999; Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). Jennings & Greenberg (2009) thus indicate that helping students self –regulate (rather than imposing rules) requires a high degree of awareness, sensitivity, and thoughtful decision making to observe, understand, and respond respectfully and effectively to individual student behaviours.

Marzano, Marzano and Pickering (2003) indicate that when teachers lack the resources to effectively manage the social and emotional challenges within the particular context of their school and classroom, learners show lower levels on-task behaviour and performance. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) indicate that socially and emotionally competence teachers have high self-awareness. They further indicate that these teachers have a realistic understanding of their capabilities and recognise their emotional strengths and weaknesses. They know how their emotional expressions affect their interactions with others. Such teachers also recognise and understand the emotions of others (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

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Hargreaves (1998) indicates that society's expectation that teachers manage the emotional lives of their students as well as teach subject matter may leave teachers exhausted and burned out. Burnout, according to Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter, (1997) results from a breakdown in coping ability over time and is viewed as having three dimensions : emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and feelings of a lack of personal accomplishment. Emotional stress and poor emotion management consistently rank as the primary reasons teachers become dissatisfied and leave teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Montgomery and Rupp, 2005). Kavanaugh and Bower (1985) indicate that experiencing frequent negative emotions such as frustration, anger, guilt, and sadness may reduce teachers' intrinsic motivation and feelings of self-efficacy and lead to burn out. In contrast, teachers who regularly experience more positive emotions may be more resilient (Fredrickson, 2001;Gu and Day, in press), intrinsically motivated, and better able to cope with the complex demands of teaching (Sutton and Wheatley, 2003).

Greenberg et al.,(2003) indicates that successful schools ensure that students excel academically, however most educators, parents, students and the public support a broader educational agenda that involves enhancing students' social-emotional competence, character, health and civic engagement (Metlife, 2002; Public Agenda, 1994, 1997, 2002; Rose & Gallup, 2002). In addition to producing students who are culturally literate, intellectually reflective, high quality education should also teach adolescents to interact in socially skilled and respectful ways, to contribute ethically and responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community; and to possess

basic competencies, work habits and values (Elias et al., 1997); Jackson and Davis, 2000; Learning First Alliance, 2001; Osher, Dwyer, and Jackson, 2002).

8.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the important role that engaging multiple, systemic levels of intervention can play in promoting school connectedness. The role of schools as social institutions and the role they play in influencing individual behaviour in adolescence needs to be given greater consideration in the South African education landscape, given research suggesting a "breakdown in the culture of learning and teaching in South African schools" (pg. Christie, 1998). Research indicates that the breakdown is characterised by disputed and disrupted relationships between principals, teachers and students; sporadic and broken attendance by students and often teachers; general demotivation and low morale of students and teachers; poor school results; conflict and often violence in and around schools, vandalism, criminality, gangsterism, sexual abuse and substance abuse (Christie, 1998). Christie (1998) further points out that any attempts to change this situation need to take account of the dynamics of schools as social institutions. She indicates that government education departments need to recognise the complex group and organisational dynamics crippling the work of such schools.

The work of this thesis highlights the challenges for promoting school connectedness, but also provides some hope through providing evidence that combining a number of different activities at the different levels of influence within the school system can have a positive impact at the different levels and with the system as a whole.

Further, the work of this thesis highlights that just as it is important to recognise the power of social context, it is also important to recognise the importance of human agency. Building agency and responsibility at the school level is thus an important dimension of changing schools and should be promoted. The importance of the following dimensions contained in Figure 14. are highlighted for promoting school connectedness in the South African education landscape.
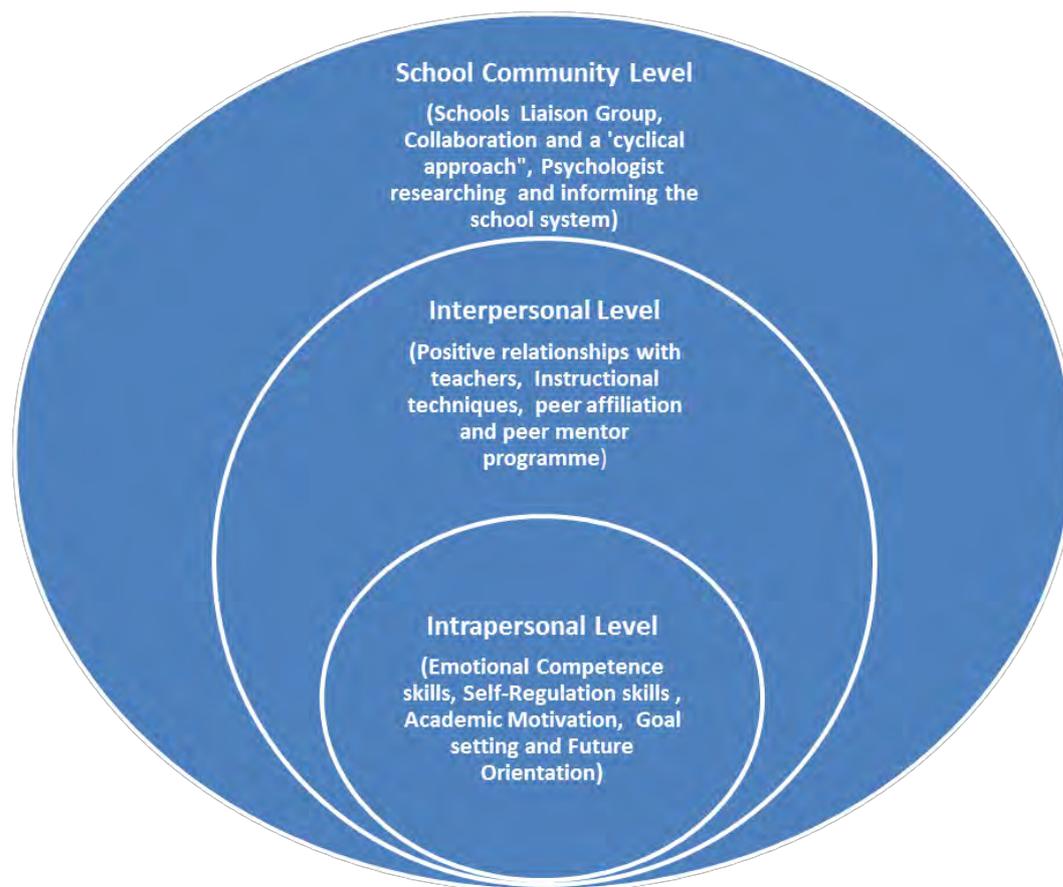
*Figure 14: Informing multi-systemic intervention in the South African school landscape*

8.3 Recommendations for intervention

Intrapersonal level: Enhancing school connectedness through addressing emotional competencies

It is recommended that the development of emotional competence and self-regulation skills in learners receive more attention in schools to support a broader educational

agenda. Research indicates that most educators, parents, students support a broader educational agenda that also involves enhancing students' social-emotional competence, character, health and community engagement (Metlife, 2002; Public Agenda, 1994, 1997, 2002; Rose & Gallup, 2000). Research also indicates that high quality education should teach young people to interact in socially skilled and respectful ways; to practice positive, safe and healthy behaviours; to contribute ethically and responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community (Dwyer, & Jackson, 2002). It is thus recommended that instructional techniques that utilise self-reflection, introspection, self -assessment, self-directed learning, appear to be more effective in promoting emotional competence and self-regulation skills than instructional techniques that were taught using more traditional methods reflecting upon experience, self-directed learning methods and learning from others.

Interpersonal Level: Enhancing learner-teacher and peer to peer relationships

It is recommended that greater attention be paid to professional development for teachers to enhance their skills and competence in teaching life orientation as well as developing positive relationships with students to enhance school connectedness.

Results from the process evaluation suggest that positive relationships between adolescents and their teachers had a positive influence on students' motivation and behaviour. The teacher training workshops conducted with LO teachers highlighted that teachers who feel good about each other and their work, and who are committed to students and the welfare of students, contribute greatly to the school climate. This study also highlighted the importance of teachers receiving training on interpersonal skills development.

Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller, (1992) indicate that supportive relationships with teachers, and feeling safe and connected to school also provide children with the environmental and social supports needed to flourish. Pianta (1999) indicates that in addition to the importance of school contexts in general, relationships within the school context can also serve important developmental functions. Murray and Greenberg (2000) indicate that attachment theory, warm and supportive relationships are characterised by open communication, trust, involvement, and responsiveness influence social and emotional development through internalised models of accessibility and support.

Research also indicates that students who experience positive, caring interactions and relationships with teachers, also reported feeling supported and respected and thus indicated a greater degree of school connectedness (Baker et al., 2003; Booker, 2004; Ma, 2003; McNeely et al., 2002; Ridge et al., 2003).

It is recommended that greater attention be given to enhancing the positive influence of peer support as a mechanism to enhance the development of positive identities and career development.

The role of peer influences during the formative phase was viewed as mostly negative. The process evaluation found, however, that the development of the peer mentoring programme was reported to be helpful for learners to connect and explore career developmental issues. Much research has focused on teachers and parents rather than peers as socialising agents of motivation and engagement (Ryan, 2000).

However, schools and classrooms have been indicated as inherently social places, and it seems likely that the peer group is an important influence on adolescent achievement, beliefs, and behaviours (Ryan, 2000). This study also indicated that high school learners look for places to belong and as a result rely heavily on their peer groups. Examining the extent, nature, and scope of peer group influence on academic outcomes was seen as important direction for future research to enrich understanding of adolescent motivation, engagement, and achievement.

In the South African context, career choices for many high school students are accidental, rushed decisions and are imposed by external forces of by circumstances (Dabula & Makura, 2013). The researchers indicate that career choices should be a result of a continuous process of conscious decision, self-discovery. High school learners are often looking for a place to belong. As a result they rely heavily on their peer groups to learn what types of behaviours are rewarded with reaction (Dabula & Makura, 2013).

School community level:

 Prioritize the establishment of school liaison committees to promote more democratic decision making

This study highlighted that current South African Education policies and practices do not reflect the social, historical, cultural, political milieu and psychological and ideological make-up of South African adolescents. Difficulties in interpretation and application of policies as well as poor and undemocratic school management strategies that create 'top down" hierarchies from the Department of Education policy to management, to grade co-ordinators to teachers and learners was also indicated.

The implications for disconnectivity were thus highlighted. It is thus recommended that intervention such as the school liaison group has the potential to shift the ideology away from 'top-down, hierarchies to 'cyclical collaborative approaches that allow for representation and communication. It is thus recommended that the school liaison committees be advocated in schools to promote more democratic decision making.

Expand the role of psychologists working in educational settings

This study also highlighted that in addressing mental health in South African schools there is a need for psychologists to not only intervene in single individualised programmes in school, but to also intervene at the 'social or systems' level. The researcher piloted interventions beyond the individual level and addressed multiple levels that promote connectedness. In South Africa and abroad the traditional deficit model of psychologist has been challenged (Burden, 1993; Christenson et al., 1986; De Jong, 1996; De Jong and van der Hoorn, 1993; Druker & De Jong, 1996). De Jong (2000) accordingly indicates that a major paradigm shift from the traditional individualistic 'fix it' role of psychologist to a preventative and promotive, ecosystemic perspective in the practice of psychology is needed. She further indicates that a transformation involving a move away from logical positivism to an ecosystemic approach that challenges the psychologist to understand behaviour in relation to the complexities of the context and offer intervention strategies based on a systems analysis and aimed at systems change is needed (De Jong 2000).

8.4 Recommendations for future research

1. Given that this study was a pilot study in one school, it is recommended that further research engage in providing more robust evidence of the effectiveness of such multi-systemic interventions in schools in South Africa. Such research needs to engage in understanding of not only "Which program works?" but 'Which combinations or sequences of strategies work best?" and "How can schools effectively design comprehensive packages of prevention strategies and implement them in a high quality fashion?". Little is known about the potential additive and multiplicative effect of combinations of distinct programs. Research is needed on the relative effectiveness of sets of interventions in order to develop a knowledge base to guide decisions about which combinations are most effective (Wilson et al., 2001).

2. Given the protective influence of peer groups identified in this study and the role it plays in the development of adolescent identity, it is also recommended that research be conducted into understanding the protective influence of peer mentoring relationships in contributing to either adolescents engaging or disengaging in high risk behaviour and deviance. Further research could also explore the role of peer influences in informing the 'process' of identity formation in relation to future orientation and higher educational aspirations.

8.5 Limitations

1. A major overall limitation of this study was the fact that it was a pilot study with the intervention only being in one school. While the results are promising, generalisations to other schools cannot be made. A further limitation was that only the short-term outcomes of interventions were

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evaluated. The sustainability of the intervention over the long term is thus unknown.

2. Specific limitations of the study design include that there were no specific outcome measures utilised for assessing for an improvement in social support at the interpersonal level.

3. The decline in the PSSSM and FOS scores in the control school may have been as a result of rumours that the school was closing. The findings of the outcome study thus need to be interpreted with caution.

4. Although parental influence in adolescence is important, this study, due to difficulties in accessing parents, they were not involved as participants.

5. The outcome study used a quasi-experimental design. The participants in the control group were from a nearby school, which had similar demographic characteristics and were not randomly assigned. This increases the risk of bias in the study.

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APPENDIX 1: CONSENT LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, MANAGERS AND TEACHERS

University of KwaZulu–Natal

Howard College Campus

School of Applied Human Sciences

Discipline of Psychology

Durban

4001

RE: PhD RESEARCH PROPOSAL – THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF INTERVENTION TO BUILD SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS: A PILOT STUDY

The aim of this proposed research is to develop and pilot test a school social cohesion intervention that will reduce the risk of adolescents engaging in high risk behaviour. Given the limited provision of mental health services for adolescents in South Africa and the need to move away from previous individual level, fragmented interventions, school social cohesion is viewed as important in addressing the need for broader, systemic approaches to prevention of high risk behaviour.

The research will be conducted by Kamilla Rawatlal (Counselling Psychologist) and supervised by Professor Inge Petersen (Lecturer and Counselling Psychologist. You may ask questions about the study, Kamilla Rawatlal is available on 031 2607581. This study was granted ethical clearance by the UKZN-Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Protocol reference number: HSS/0316/09.

The research will involve firstly conducting a Situational Analysis as a Case Study to understand factors which facilitate and impede school social cohesion. Secondly, the study will involve developing and piloting a manualised intervention for creating school social cohesion. Lastly, an evaluation of the intervention in the target school site will be conducted to assess its efficacy as well as explore factors impeding and facilitating its efficacy. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be

advancing knowledge as to the need for broader, contextual approaches to prevention of high risk behaviour in adolescents.

Interviewee's identity will remain anonymous and only summarised group information will be published. Participants will receive an introduction to the purpose of the study and a full, non-technical and clear explanation of the tasks expected of them so they can make an informed choice to participate voluntarily in the study.

Enclosed is a copy of the interview schedule to be used.

Yours Sincerely

_____

Kamilla. V. Rawatlal (Ms.)

APPENDIX 2: PARENT CONSENT FORM

Parent Consent to administer PSSM and FOS scales by Kamilla Rawatlal, Doctoral Student, UKZN (To be completed by the parent of child participating in the student sense of belonging survey)

Dear Parent

I am Doctoral student at the University of KwaZulu Natal and am conducting a study on developing and test piloting a school social cohesion intervention that will reduce the risk of adolescents engaging in high risk behaviour.

I would like to have your permission to conduct a survey with your child related to his / her sense of belonging in school. The enclosed survey was developed by a professor of education at Tufts University and has been used by other researchers for approximately ten years. All participants were chosen randomly. This will be a confidential study. Your child's name will not appear on the survey; all data will be kept under strict confidence and all participants will remain anonymous in the reporting and analysis of the research data.

The research will be conducted by Kamilla Rawatlal (Counselling Psychologist) and supervised by Professor Inge Petersen (Lecturer and Counselling Psychologist. You may ask questions about the study, Kamilla Rawatlal is available on 031 2607581. This study was granted ethical clearance by the UKZN-Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Protocol reference number: HSS/0316/09.

If you agree to allow your child's survey to be used, please fill out the information below and sign your name. Please return the signed copy to your child's principal.

Child's Name		Grade	
Parent's Name			
Parent's Signature		Date	

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APPENDIX 3: CHILD ASSENT FORM

Assent to use the Students' Sense of Belonging Survey
(To be completed by the child participating in the study)

Kamilla Rawatlal will be studying a Students Sense of Belonging and Future Orientation as part of her doctoral degree at UKZN. I understand that I will be completing a survey designed to measure the average sense of belonging in my school.

I understand that my name will not be used in the study or its publication. All information regarding this study will be completely confidential. I know that I can change my mind at any time and can request that my survey not be used as part of the study and that participating or not participating will not affect my grades or standing in school. The research will be conducted by Kamilla Rawatlal (Counselling Psychologist) and supervised by Professor Inge Petersen (Lecturer and Counselling Psychologist. You may ask questions about the study, Kamilla Rawatlal is available on 031 2607581. This study was granted ethical clearance by the UKZN-Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Protocol reference number: HSS/0316/09.

I have read and understand the explanation given to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Child's Name		Grade	
Child's Signature		Date	

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FORMATIVE EVALUATION TEACHERS, MANAGERS AND LEARNERS

1. What are some of the high risk behaviours learners at this school engage in?

2. Why do adolescents engage in these risk behaviours?

3. How can High Schools help to prevent learners from engaging in these risk behaviours?

4. What measures/precautions does your school have in place to reduce learners from engaging in high risk behaviour?

5. Who do learners feel comfortable approaching when they have a problem?

6. What is the educational philosophy of the school?

7. Do you identify / do students identify / relate to the philosophy of the school?

8. What are the discipline strategies / policies at the school?

9. What do you think of their effectiveness?

10. What do you think an adolescent's outlook for the future is?

11. How does the school promote or how can the school promote adolescents positive future aspirations?

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PROCESS EVALUATION TEACHERS, MANAGERS AND LEARNERS

1. What are your thoughts on the lesson plans being part of life orientation?

2. What opportunities are there at your school for students to resolve their grievances?

3. Do learners know what they can do when they have a problem? What can they do as individuals

4. In completing the lesson plans on future orientation are students motivated to do well in school?

5. When seeking help, do learners know who they can approach for help?

6. What can schools do to help students when they experience problems?

7. Who and what is important in helping you achieve your career goals?

   (Sentence completion)
   I feel connected to my school because of...
   I don't feel connected to my school because of...

APPENDIX 6a: PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP (PSSM)

Directions: We are interested in learning more about how students feel about their teachers and their school. Please answer the following questions by circling one number for each question. (18 items)

		Not at all true				Completely True
1.	I feel like a real part of school	1	2	3	4	5
2.	People here notice when I am good at something	1	2	3	4	5
3.	It is hard for people like me to be accepted here	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Other students in this school take my opinions seriously	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Most teachers at school are interested in me	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Sometimes I feel as if I don't belong here	1	2	3	4	5
7.	There's at least one adult/ teacher in the school I can talk to if I have a problem					
8.	People at this school are friendly to me	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Teachers here are not interested in people like me	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I am included in lots of activities at school	1	2	3	4	5

		Not at all true				Completely True
11.	I am treated with as much respect as other students	1	2	3	4	5

12.	I feel very different from most other students here	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I can really be myself at this school	1	2	3	4	5
14.	The teachers here respect me	1	2	3	4	5
15.	People here know I can do good work	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I wish I were in a different school	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I feel proud of belonging to (school)	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Other students here like me the way I am	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX 6b: FUTURE ORIENTATION SCALE

Motivation

I want to be a good student…..

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strong Agree
1.	because it is fun	1	2	3	4
2.	because it is important to me	1	2	3	4
3.	so that I can set a good example for younger people	1	2	3	4
4.	To make my parents happy	1	2	3	4
5.	because school is interesting	1	2	3	4
6.	Because I want to get ahead in life	1	2	3	4
7.	so that I can give back to my community	1	2	3	4
8.	To get praise from my teachers	1	2	3	4
9.	because it makes me feel good	1	2	3	4
10.	because I want to learn	1	2	3	4
11.	because I want my family to live better in the future	1	2	3	4
12.	so others will think I am smart	1	2	3	4

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13.	to show that people form my race group can do it	1	2	3	4
14.	because that is what I am supposed to do	1	2	3	4
15.	for me, getting good grades in school is important	1	2	3	4
16.	for me finishing high school is important	1	2	3	4
17.	for me going to college after high school is important	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX 7:

PEER MENTOR TRAINING MANUAL

Peer Mentoring

Personal and Career

Peers are an important influence. Peer education should provide a context in which a group of peers can collectively renegotiate their peer identities, based on the assumption that behaviour is shaped by peer norms as much as by individual decisions. Peer education should also empower young people with providing them with confidence and negotiation skills, as well a sense of 'youth ownership' of interventions (where young people see themselves as having a role to play in their future, rather than seeing it as the responsibility of someone else.

Kamilla Rawatlal

A mentor is defined as a knowledgeable and experienced guide, a trusted ally and advocate, and a caring role model. An effective mentor is respectful, reliable, patient, trustworthy, and a very good listener and communicator.

You are serving as a PEER MENTOR when

- You help students overcome their fear of a teacher and help them to ask questions in a class or visit the guidance counsellor.
- You show a student how you learned time management to do well in your classes.
- You listen to a student describe a personal problem and explore resources at the school to deal with the problem.
- You help a new student understand a particularly tough rule or procedure — and you explain it in a way that the student is willing to come back to you to learn about other difficult regulations.
- You help a new student understand how to use resources they can go to for help.

Please add your own insights

A Peer Mentor is not …

- A (surrogate) parent.
- A professional counsellor or therapist.
- A flawless or infallible idol.
- A social worker.
- A lending institution.
- A playmate or romantic partner.

PEER MENTOR ROLES IN TRAINING

Peer Mentors can provide a variety of useful and helpful services for schools, depending on the school's needs. They are trained to function in their interpersonal capacity.

What they do

- Identify students who are experiencing personal difficulties.
- Help them clarify / formulate query.
- Refer students to appropriate resources (counsellor, teachers, community members-doctors, social workers).
- Give information to students regarding careers, personal and social issues.

Qualities of Peer Mentors

Time Management Skills, Patience, Co-ordination, Accountability, Role Models

Referral to Support in the School

What support structures already exist in the school and how would a Peer Support System complement this work?

E.g. Guidance Counsellor and Adult support
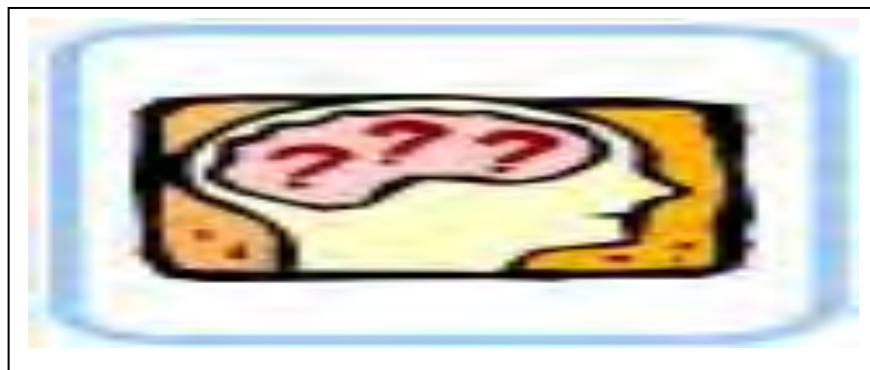
If Peer mentors know themselves and how to take care of themselves they will know how to set boundaries for themselves and other peers.

SELF AWARENESS

In helping others help themselves, I have to understand myself first. I have to?

What are my strengths and weaknesses?

_____

_____

_____

MOTIVATION FOR BEING A PEER ADVISOR

Am I looking for status and control?

Am I looking for close contact with others?

OR DO I

Have an interest in helping people with problem solving
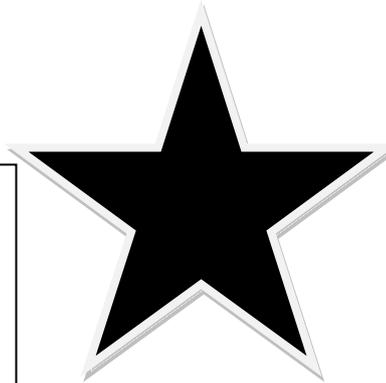
AWARENESS OF MY VALUES

*A Peer Advisor takes into account his/her own wishes, values and beliefs. You cannot divorce yourself from what you value. A Peer Career Advisor needs to value the wishes, beliefs and values of their fellow students.*

I NEED TO QUESTION WHAT ARE MY BELIEFS AND VALUES

_____

_____

_____

BEING A ROLE MODEL

My actions and behaviours will determine whether students will seek help from me.

2. SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DISTRESS: HOW TO HELP
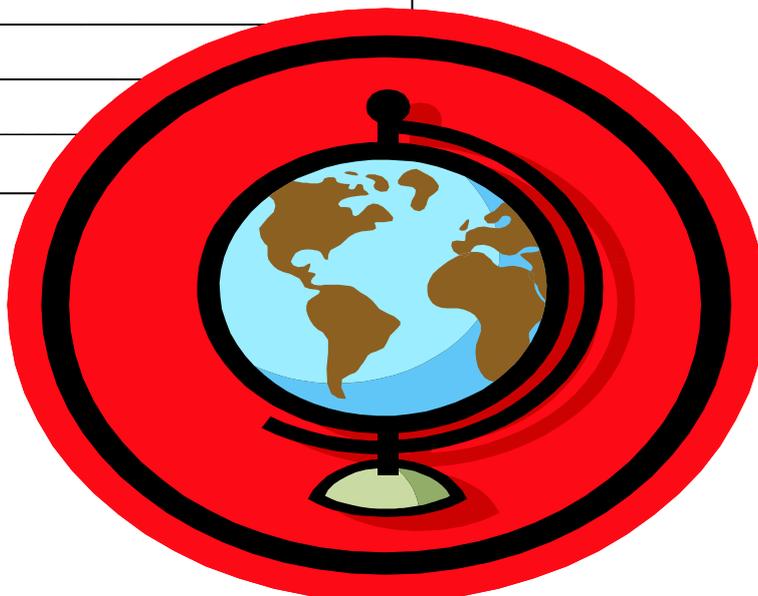
REMEMBER... AS A PEER MENTOR, YOU ARE NOT HERE TO SAVE THE WORLD BUT TO HELP STUDENTS EXPLORE OPTIONS, DISCOVER SOLUTIONS, IDENTIFY AND REFER STUDENTS TO HELP
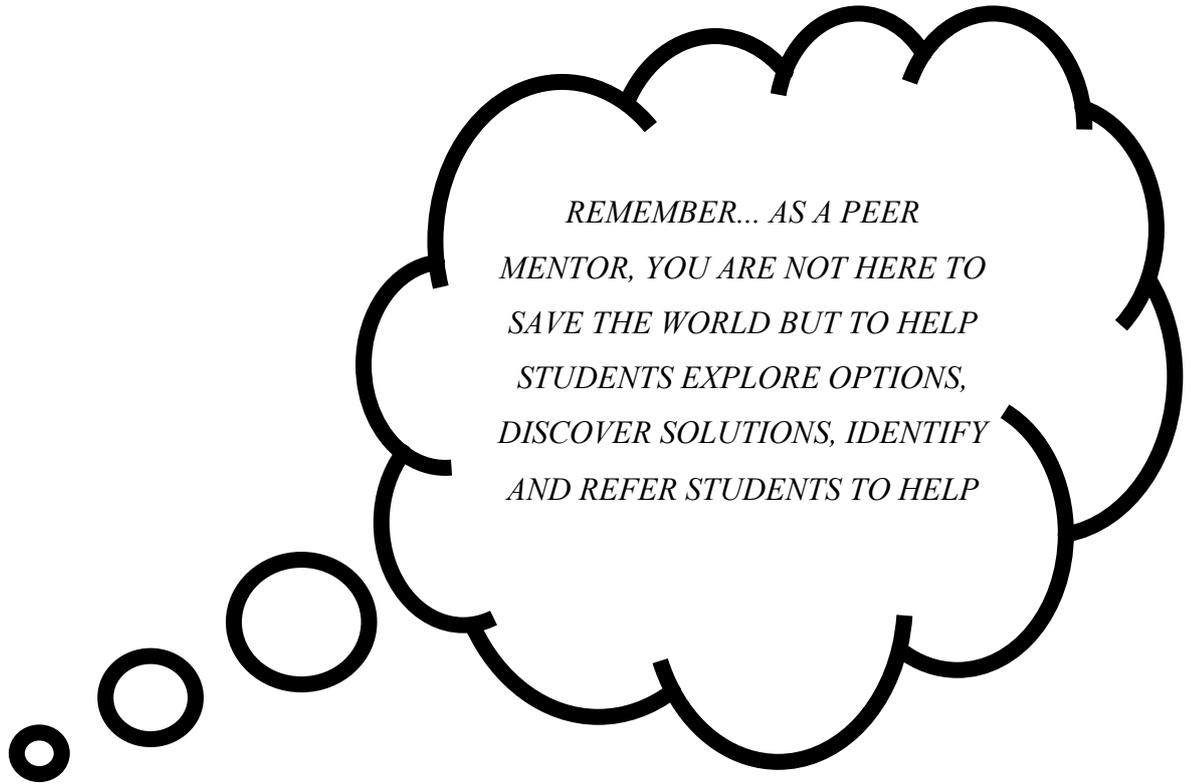
Young people become stressed for many reasons. The most common of these were:

1. Break up with boy/girl friend
2. Failure to achieve a goal or poor grades.
3. Increased arguments with parents
4. Trouble with brother or sister
5. Increased arguments between parents
6. Change in parents' financial status
7. Serious illness or injury of family member
8. Trouble with classmates
9. Trouble with parents

These events are centered in the two most important domains of a teenager's life: home and school. They relate to issues of conflict and loss. Loss can reflect the real or perceived loss of something concrete such as a friend or money, and it can mean the loss of such intrinsic things as self-worth, respect, friendship or love.

How People React To Stress & Problems

Failure on a test, a fight with a friend, an argument with a parent, or a put-down by a teacher can be upsetting.

There are three basic ways of reacting to the problem:

1. You can get angry - scream, shout, throw things, start a fight, or go on a rampage.

2. You can withdraw - take a drink, shut up in a room, take a pill, daydream, stop talking to everyone.

3. You can take charge - think out the problem, try to find a solution, ask for help, or work for change.

Unhealthy Ways to React To Problems

Aggression and anger get attention. Striking out at whoever seems responsible for the problem brings temporary relief. But aggressive actions, like drinking too much, driving recklessly, swearing at people, and breaking up things, can cause trouble in the long run. They don't usually solve the problem.

Withdrawal can also be destructive. It's normal to react, "Just leave me alone!" But if it goes on for a long time, we are without what we need most—sharing, understanding, and help. Alone with a problem, we feel like no one cares. The depression and anger become worse, and we begin to make bad choices instead of healthy ones.

Healthy Ways to React To Problems

When your stomach churns, your head aches, and fear creeps through your insides, your mind and body are reacting to stress. There are a number of things you can do, such as:

➢ talk to someone you trust
➢ share what is bothering you

- ➢ try positive and self reliant problem solving
- ➢ seek friendship and support from others
- ➢ get some physical exercise
- ➢ do something that normally gives you pleasure
- ➢ give yourself a chance to think

These are first-aid actions. They don't solve the problem, but you can blow off some steam. Once that's done, it's a good idea to get in touch with someone you trust and respect. This could be a friend, a friend's parent, a teacher. Go have a good talk; lay out the problem and try to figure out some ways to solve it. These behaviors are appropriate for adolescents who are trying to become independent, take responsibility for themselves, and draw on friends and family for support.

Support You Can Offer To Friends

Take the problem seriously. Even if the problem doesn't seem real important to you, it may be important to them. Things may be piling up. Show them you understand.

Don't put them down. It doesn't help to say, "Things will be better tomorrow" or "Keep your chin up!" Their problem is real to them.

Encourage them to talk to other people as well as to you. Offer to go along with them to talk with some adult friend they can trust.

Offer to join the person in some activity they normally enjoy. They need a chance to have some fun and get their mind cleared.

Let them know you care. They may try to put you off. Stay in touch. Reach out. Invite them to do things with you. Don't force them to be cheerful. Stick with them.

Remember CLUES - Five Action Steps to Help a Troubled Person

C   Connect. Make contact. Reach out, talk to them. Notice their pain.

L **Listen.** Take the time and really pay attention. You don't have to have all the answers. Just listen.

U **Understand.** Nod, pay attention, let them know you appreciate what they are going through.

E **Express Concern.** Say that you care, you are worried, and you want to be helpful.

S **Seek Help.** Tell them you want to go with them to talk to a third person, preferably an adult with experience and the ability to help. Don't agree to be secretive. Enlarge the circle of support.

Being a Helping Friend

It is important to remember that you cannot be responsible for another person's actions when they are stressed, depressed, or suicidal. Whether they are crying out for help or suffering silently in despair, only they can help themselves. What you can do is be the most caring and responsible friend possible during the hard times. This means listening to their concerns, supporting them, and helping them get skilled help from a trusted and capable adult friend.

- List of Referral Numbers for Psychological/Social Support - KZN
- Centre for Applied Psychology, UKZN, Howard College Campus Community Counselling Centre – 031- 2607423
- Career Counselling Services, UKZN, Westville Campus Career Counselling and Career Assessments for Prospective Students – 031- 2607337
- Childline Family Centre - 031- 303 2222
    - Free Call: 080 005 5555
    - Life Line: 031- 312 23 23
- Phoenix Assessment and Therapy Centre – 031-508 07 00 (Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychology, Social Work)

3. SETTING UP A PEER MENTORING GROUP

1. DEVELOP A PHILOSOPHY FOR PEER MENTORING

Think about your own philosophy of helping others. How does peer helping fit in? It is important to articulate this not only to yourself but also to others.

2. MY OWN PHILOSOPHY (I recognize that often my philosophy really is my own mission.)

My Philosophy is……..

3. HOW DOES PEER HELPING FIT INTO MY PHILOSOPHY?

Peer helping fits into my philosophy by…

4. ASSESSING NEEDS

- Take some time to explore what are the needs of students?
- What needs can the Peer Mentors address?
- Whom will the peer programme serve? Grade 0 learners, teachers
- Assist in personal problems and peer career advising
- How many people will be assisted by the peer mentors?
- What are the ages of the people to be served?

5. STATE GOALS

The more specifically goals, objectives, and expected outcomes are stated, the stronger the purpose. Goals can be expressed in general terms, objectives are specific.

For example,

Goal is to improve student's relationships with teachers.

Objective – through peer advisors promoting positive relationships with teachers, through effective communication and networking with teachers.

6. HOW WILL THE PEER MENTORS BE SUPPORTED?

- Adult supervision
- Weekly meetings

LIFE ORIENTATION LESSON PLANS

1. Future Orientation

2. Emotional Competence

3. Self-Regulation

1. FUTURE ORIENTATION

- ✓ If you could become anything you wanted to / accomplish anything in life what would it be?
- ✓ Visualise your goal? What can you see?
- ✓ What can you do to make it happen? Are you doing it? If not, why?

Sometimes, despite our best plans and efforts, we fail anyway. Write about a time when you tried to accomplish something and you failed.

- Describe what happened
- How did you deal with it?
- What did you learn from it?
- Did anything positive come out of it?

Planning for your future

Plot out a course of action of where you are at today, and where you would like to be in the future. Be mindful of any obstacles that may come in your way.
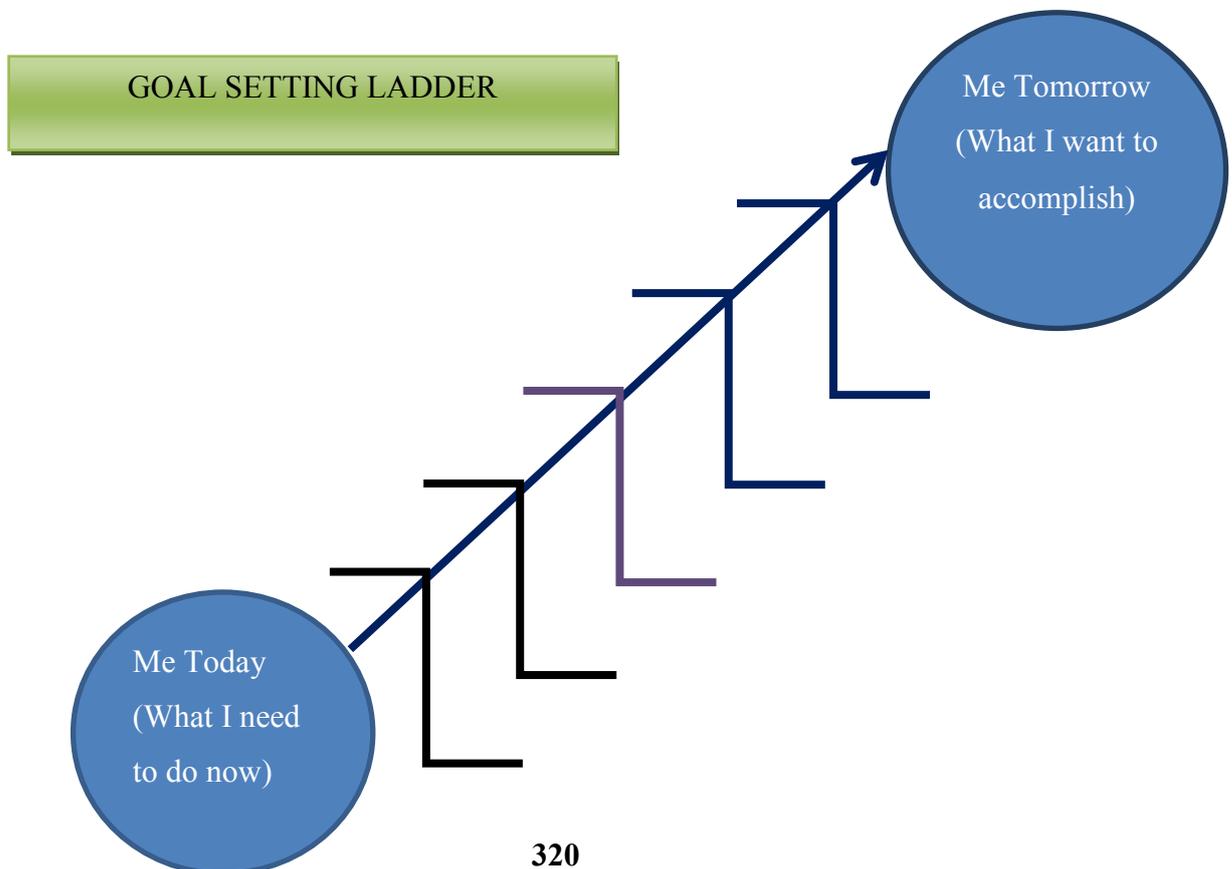
GOAL SETTING LADDER

Me Tomorrow (What I want to accomplish)

Me Today (What I need to do now)

A short term goal is a goal that only takes a few days or weeks to achieve e.g. daily homework tasks.

A long term goal takes several weeks, months, or even a full school semester e.g. to improve a grade in a certain subject.

Goal Setting Questions

1. What is the one area of my school performance I want to improve?

2. What is the one thing I can do to accomplish my long term goal?

3. How can this short term goal be broken down into a step-by step plan?

4. What are the things that might get in my way as I work toward my goal?

5. How will I remind myself of my goal?

Background: Developing a student's emotional competence teaches that not everyone is the same or feels the same. We each have different needs, fears, desires and preferences. This understanding helps students respect each other's feelings and individuality.

The Process

Self-Knowledge

Circle the activities and the qualities that best describe you.

Artistic		**Games**
Creative		**Dancing**
Talking to friends		**Science**
Playing a musical instrument		**Animals**
		Computers
Solving Problems		
Working with		

Healthy	**Patient**
Humorous	**Happy**
Satisfied	**Caring**
Friendly	**Loving**
Fit	**Adaptable**
Energetic	**Unselfish**
Nature Loving	**Honest**
Courageous	**Loyal**
Punctual	**Disobedient**
Confident	**Outgoing**
Inquisitive	**Social**
Moody	
Hardworking	
Stressed	**Selfish**
Sensitive	**Gossip**

Self-knowledge by looking in the mirror

What do you think of when you see yourself in the mirror?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What can you change?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What do you have to accept?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Write a poem about yourself and your special qualities.

- We have to teach students that they have a choice and a responsibility regarding their own thoughts and feelings.

- They have to realise that other people do not control their emotions. Even in situations where they experience negative, uncomfortable feelings, they have options as to how they want to react to these feelings.

- Students have to learn to control their thoughts and feelings rather than to blame other people.

STOP

STOP The red light tells you to stop, breathe deeply and calm down.

THINK

THINK The orange light gives you time to think about your situation and find other ways to deal with it.

ACT RIGHT

ACT RIGHT Gives you the permission to act in the right way to the particular situation.

When you get upset, you have to see the lights of the robot clearly in your mind's eye

WRITE DOWN POSSIBLE SITUATIONS WHERE YOU HAVE TO APPLY
THIS TECHNIQUE

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ENCOURAGE SELF TALK WHILE PERFORMING TASKS? WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO HELP YOU FINISH YOUR TASK? EACH STUDENT CAN CREATE THEIR OWN SELF-TALK MOTTO.

Examples:

"Relax and stay calm';

"Stay cool";

"Even this will pass"

He who conquers others is strong.
*He who conquers himself is mighty. – **Anonymous***

MY MOTTO IS....

EXPLORE A CONFLICT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING AND HOW YOU WOULD SEEK
HELP

RACIAL COMPOSITION OF INTERVENTION AND CONTROL SCHOOL REPORTED BY RESPECTIVE SCHOOLS IN 2013

INTERVENTION SCHOOL		CONTROL SCHOOL	
BLACK	631	BLACK	**539**
COLOURED	28	COLOURED	**14**
INDIAN	134	INDIAN	**121**
WHITE	75	WHITE	**59**
OTHER	Exchange student		

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

2 JUNE 2010

MS. KAMILLA RAWATLAL (204524998)
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dear Ms. Rawatlal

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0316/09
PROJECT TITLE: The development, Implementation and evaluation of an intervention to build School Social Connectedness: A pilot study

FULL APPROVAL NOTIFICATOIN FOR AN AMENDMENT

This letter serves to notify you that your application for an amendment has been granted full approval.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

PROFESSOR STEVEN COLLINGS (CHAIR)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMIMITTEE

cc. Supervisor (Prof. Inge Petersen)
cc. Mr. Pravin Rajbansi
cc. Mrs. S van der Weisthuizen

Founding Campuses: ▬ Edgewood ▬ Howard College ▭ Medical School ▬ Pietermaritzburg ▬ Westville

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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATALI

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO

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3200

228 Pietermaritz Street
PIETERMARITZBURG

INHLOKOHOVISI	PIETERMARITZBURG	HEAD OFFICE
Imibuzo:	Reference:	Date:
Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar	Inkomba: 0036/2009	Usuku: 10 June 2009

MS KV RAWATLAL
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL
HOWARD COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
DURBAN
4041

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to interview Departmental Officials, learners and educators in selected schools of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal subject to the following conditions:

1. **You make all the arrangements concerning your interviews.**
2. **Educators' programmes are not interrupted.**
3. **Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.**
4. **Learners, educators and schools are not identifiable in any way from the results of the interviews.**
5. **Your interviews are limited only to targeted schools.**
6. **A brief summary of the interview content, findings and recommendations is provided to my office.**
7. **A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers and principals of schools where the intended interviews are to be conducted.**

The KZN Department of education fully supports your commitment to research: The development, implementation and evaluation of an intervention to build school social connectedness: a pilot study

It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

Best Wishes

R Cassius Lubisi, (PhD)
Superintendent-General

RESOURCES PLANNING DIRECTORATE: RESEARCH UNIT
Office No. G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3201

INHLOKOHOVISI	PIETERMARITZBURG	HEAD OFFICE
Imibuzo:	Reference:	Date:
Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar	Inkomba: 0036/2009	Usuku: 10 June 2009

MS KV RAWATLAL
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL
HOWARD COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
DURBAN
4041

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF AN INTERVENTION TO BUILD SCHOOL SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: A PILOT STUDY
Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the attached list has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.

2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.

3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.

4. Educator programmes are not to be interrupted.

5. The investigation is to be conducted from 10 June 2009 to 10 June 2010.

6. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s) please contact Mr Sibusiso Alwar at the contact numbers above.

7. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal of the school where the intended research is to be conducted.

8. Your research will be limited to the schools submitted.

9. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Resource Planning.