

**THE ROLE OF HOUSE-PARENTS IN THE PROMOTION OF LEARNERS'
WELLBEING IN A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF IN KWAZULU-
NATAL**

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Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-
Natal**

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DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science, School of Applied Human Sciences, Psychology, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was not used. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Social Science (Psychology) in the School of Applied Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other university.

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DISCLAIMER

The Researcher of this study specifically disclaims all responsibility for any liability, loss or risk, personal or otherwise, which is incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of use of this report or any of the material in it.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Patrick Lenta for all his support throughout my studies.

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I would like to express my gratitude to the following:

My Heavenly Father for His unconditional love, guidance and support in every aspect of my life, and for this, I am blessed and grateful.

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I would like to thank the Department of Education, the school where this research was conducted and the participants who contributed to the research.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the role that house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion in a School for the Deaf. In this qualitative study, a sample of six house-parents and two senior management staff members employed in a residential school hostel at a School for the Deaf in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa were interviewed utilising a semi-structured interview schedule. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Three main themes emerged around the role that house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion in the School for the Deaf. Sub-themes were developed under the main themes. The findings inclusive of house-parents and senior management staff suggest that house-parents play a significant role in learners' wellbeing promotion in the school; they communicate in South African Sign Language (SASL), they offer emotional support to the learners and provide them with care. House parents also mediate between the biological parents of the D/deaf learners in their respective hostels because of communication barriers between hearing parents and their D/deaf children. Barriers to the promotion of wellbeing include the numerous duties the house-parents are required to perform including the multiple roles they play, the long working hours and the lack of integration between the house-parents and the teaching staff. Recommendations to the school include creating space for house-parents to voice their concerns in an un-confrontational setting. In this space, the house-parents can have the opportunity to have their voices heard within the hierarchical school structure where power differentials can otherwise limit freedom of expression. Team-building to foster relationship development across the staff is suggested. Developing and maintaining a grievance policy in line with Department of Education (DoE) specifications is suggested to ensure equitable grievance resolution for all staff.

Keywords: wellbeing; Deaf culture; schools for the deaf; house-parents, community psychology

Definition of Terms

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is described as a positive state of affairs in which the personal, relational, and collective needs and aspirations of individuals as well as communities are met. Holistic wellbeing includes interdependent domains of individual, relational and collective wellbeing (Prilleltensky, 2012).

Deaf culture

Atherton (2009) states that being part of the Deaf culture is reflected in the feelings and attitudes that Deaf people have towards their deafness. They choose to proudly use and embrace the word Deaf (with a capital D) which emphasises their affiliation to the Deaf community (Wilcox, 2006). The Deaf understand themselves as a group of people participating in an alternative lifestyle and culture (Sparrow, 2006).

Schools for the Deaf

Schools for the Deaf are educational institutions which accommodate D/deaf learners. Many of these schools use sign language, the language of the Deaf, as the primary language of teaching and learning, as is the case in many schools for the D/deaf in South Africa (Magongwa, 2010). However, this is not consistent in all schools for the D/deaf and not all teachers are proficient in SASL.

House-parents/hostel staff/care-givers

In this study, house-parents are referred to as the permanent staff employed to take care of the learners in the school hostel during the week. They act in this context in *loco parentis*.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. BACKGROUND

In recent years, the focus on wellbeing in literature has been growing and includes the individual, the family, the school and the wider community (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). Two approaches on wellbeing have become prominent and these include the hedonic and the eudemonic tradition. The hedonic tradition incorporates constructs such as happiness, positive affect, limited negative affect, and general satisfaction with life while the eudemonic tradition incorporates constructs such as positive psychological functioning and healthy human development (Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Saunders, 2012).

Expanding the concepts of both hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing, various authors have described wellbeing in individual, relational and collective domains. Individual wellbeing is described by Ryff (1989) as being a multi-dimensional process, including aspects of the individual, such as what the individual is able to achieve, as well how effectively they are able to engage with others. Relational wellbeing is described as the individual experiencing a sense of wellbeing as a result of access to resources, such as housing and food as well as by being able to develop and sustain relationships with those around him-or herself (McCubbin, McCubbin, Zhang, Kehl & Strom, 2013). Collective wellbeing is defined by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) as individuals' having fair and equitable access to resources which foster social justice. The United Nations, when describing human wellbeing takes into account considerations such as the of quality of one's life, which is understood to be influenced by the living standards one experiences, human development, levels of wealth or poverty and land ownership. A shift in the definition of wellbeing is purported by some authors and include, for example, the capabilities approach proposed by Sen (2009) and Nussbaum (2000). These definitions describe wellbeing as including human capabilities and functioning. Various authors have defined wellbeing in both individual and relational domains but an integrated, multi-level approach, defined as holistic wellbeing, comprising individual, relational and collective wellbeing is applied in this study (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

This study is situated within the domain of deaf education to understand wellbeing promotion

in a school for the Deaf, specifically exploring the role house-parents play in learner wellbeing promotion in the school hostel. Consideration is given to the understanding of the social model of disability which recognizes how society disables those with disabilities (Bengtsson, 2017). The literature reports that the individuals who are proud of being deaf and who ascribe to the Deaf culture refer to themselves as a minority culture with a unique language (Sparrow, 2006). These individuals define themselves as Deaf with a capital D to denote membership with this culture. Despite membership with the Deaf culture promoting feelings of belonging, which contributes to a positive Deaf identity, globally literature reveals multi-faceted challenges faced by D/deaf learners that pertain specifically to their deafness, individually, within the family context and in the wider society (Druchen, 2010). From the perspective of the social model of disability, minority groups, such as the D/deaf, are described as vulnerable and thus the D/deaf are susceptible to potential barriers to health and wellbeing promotion within the educational context. These barriers are found in all three domains of holistic wellbeing defined by Prilleltensky (2012), including individual, relational and collective domains. Nationally, these barriers to wellbeing promotion include a lack of provision for the D/deaf in South Africa in terms of access to fair and equitable educational opportunities and employment opportunities (Magongwa, 2010) coupled with misunderstanding of Deaf culture and the needs and the ways of the Deaf as a group (Groce, 2004). The D/deaf tend to be excluded from society which in turn further contributes to the process of disabling as highlighted in the social model of disability (Bengtsson, 2017).

Further challenges are identified within the context of education. Globally many schools for the Deaf use sign language to communicate. However, this opportunity is not available to all Deaf learners. In South Africa, many Schools for the Deaf use communication methods other than South African Sign Language (SASL) to communicate. The alternative methods include oralism, signed English or the use of American Sign Language (Storbeck, Magongwa & Martin, 2009). In addition, many teachers are described as having limited capacity to sign fluently, which reduces the learner's ability to benefit from an education that meets their unique learning needs as stipulated by White Paper 6 (Magongwa, 2010). The lack of uniformity in the provision of D/deaf education is noted. However, the right to receive an education that meets the individual learner's needs is prescribed by global and national policy. Globally this is revealed in the Dakar Framework for Action (WHO, 1986) and locally in the White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). In both, the right to a meaningful education tailored to meet individual learner need is stated. The literature reveals that South African

Schools for the Deaf have historically experienced limited provision of resources and governmental curriculum materials relevant to the Deaf (Storbeck & Martin, 2013). The Integrated National Disability Strategy (DoE, 1997b) promotes the rights of those with communication disability as well as their right to be accommodated in schools that cater for their specific needs. In 2013, the SASL curriculum was piloted to enhance access to education tailored to meet the needs of the D/deaf in South Africa, a right enshrined by global and national policy. Educational materials have begun to be available to schools accommodating Deaf learners. Despite this action, and despite the approximate 500 000 SASL users in South Africa (Magongwa, 2010), SASL is still not recognised as an official language (Druchen 2010). Whilst the Revised National Curriculum Statements (DoE, 2012) has included SASL in the curriculum, this has not been consistent across all Schools for the Deaf (Storbeck, et al., 2009). The lack of official recognition of SASL as an official language has prevented standardised levels of proficiency in Schools for the Deaf, resulting in many teachers and staff members in schools for the Deaf not being fluent signers. This results in many Deaf learners leaving schools unable to converse fluently (Magongwa, 2010).

In South Africa, an additional difficulty faced by the D/deaf community is late identification of deafness which prevents learners from accessing education in schools for the D/deaf (Storbeck, 2010). Coupled with this challenge, many learners identified as D/deaf do not gain access to any educational opportunities because of financial difficulties, a reality shared with a significant proportion of the general population in South Africa (Duncan, Magnusen, Kalil & Ziol-Guest, 2012). The implication of the D/deaf not having access to good quality education, tailored to meet their unique language need is evident in the limited number of Matriculants and students accessing tertiary study as well as in the high levels of D/deaf unemployment (Magongwa, 2010). Consequently, the Deaf face barriers to integrating effectively into mainstream society as they are marginalized and isolated (Magongwa, 2010).

Due to communication barriers, the Deaf also often experience feelings of isolation both at home as well as in the wider community as many family members and members of the wider hearing community lack the ability to converse in sign language (Krige, 2010). These difficulties faced by the Deaf in South Africa manifest on a global scale and these difficulties often result in the D/deaf experiencing higher levels of mental health problems than their hearing peers (Erlich, 2010). Mental health problems can include elevated feelings of anxiety and depression linked to their experiences of the barriers they face in regard to their deafness,

which are understood to negatively impact their levels of self-esteem (Gascon-Ramos, 2008).

Globally, in the field of education, commitment to addressing health and wellbeing in schools is evident, and is revealed by the development of and implementation of multiple policies in schools. These policies include the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000), the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986), the WHO's Health Promoting School and Coordinated School Health Programme (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002), the European network of health-promoting schools (<http://www.euro.who.int>), Mind Matters and the Gate House Project (Wyn, Cahill, Holdsworth, Rowling & Carson, 2000).

Policies related to health and wellbeing promotion are able to incorporate the principle of inclusion as part of health and wellbeing promotion. Inclusion is defined as providing equal educational opportunities to learners despite disability or learning difference (DoE, 2001). Learners with special educational needs, such as the D/deaf, are included in policy related to health and wellbeing promotion in schools, as indicated in the above-mentioned policies. Such thinking is reflected in the United Nations Convention on Persons with Disabilities which incorporates aspects of wellbeing promotion for the D/deaf. This Convention contains language specific to the rights of D/deaf people for communication to take place through a visual language (United Nations., 2007). The Convention addresses wellbeing in proposing that all people, including those with disabilities, have the right to equal protection of their human rights.

Nationally, the South African School's Act (DoE, 1996) and the White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (DoE, 2001) guide educational practice and encourage equity and inclusion of all learners, despite disability. The South African Constitution (1996) enshrines the rights of the D/deaf to have sign language acknowledged as the language of the Deaf. The Health Promoting Schools initiative was established by the WHO to promote health in schools as well as learners' capacity to learn and develop (WHO, 1998). In order to address health and wellbeing in South African schools, the health-promoting schools network was established. In KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Health (2014) (DoH) aims to have all schools become health promoting schools, where schools link with local communities in order to access support and resources to enhance the health of the entire school community. Health promotion in schools is encouraged through the implementation of the Health Promotion Policy and Strategy 2015 to 2019 (DoH, 2014). Despite a growing awareness globally of the

importance of addressing health and wellbeing in schools globally, there remain many factors in the educational context that have the potential to negatively impact learners' wellbeing (Mash & Wolfe, 2010; Bezuidenhout, 2008).

Whilst many barriers to Deaf learner wellbeing promotion are reported on in literature, residential schools for the Deaf have been identified as environments that can promote and sustain wellbeing (Lenta, 2016). In residential schools for the Deaf, learners can begin to develop a positive Deaf identity as referred to by Sparrow (2006), especially if Deaf culture is respected and promoted. Enculturation happens because of the use of sign language to communicate and through the development of a sense of belonging because of shared language and a shared Deaf identity (Sutton-Spence, 2010). The Deaf culture can be promoted through the use of Deaf humor, through signed story-telling and dramatization and through access to Deaf social and sports clubs (Gascon-Ramos, 2008).

Many schools for the Deaf in South Africa are residential and thus offer weekly or termly boarding for the learners and therefore, the learners spend a considerable amount of time in the hostel. This setting, for a variety of reasons, can potentially play a significant role in the development of the D/deaf learner. As many parents and extended family members of D/deaf learners are not able to communicate with the D/deaf child in SASL (Krige, 2010), the school hostel is identified as a potential setting where a positive Deaf identity can begin to develop due to the learners having access to signed communication. Because the learners have access to language, they might be able to experience feelings of inclusion and belonging rather than isolation and alienation as often experienced outside the Deaf community due to communication barriers (Robertson & Shaw, 2014). Through a sense of belonging, inclusion and acceptance of the learners' deafness in the residential school for the Deaf, learners' self-esteem and self-worth can be promoted (Lenta, 2016). Friendships that develop in the residential school for the D/deaf are often maintained in adulthood through connections to the Deaf community (Robertson & Shaw, 2014).

Currently, literature based on D/deaf education with a specific focus on the residential setting, reports on studies describing enculturation into the Deaf culture (Sutton-Spence, 2010), experiences of those working in residential school settings (Staten, 2011) and accommodations made by schools to include learners with a range of disabilities including intellectual, physical and mental health (DoE, 2001). Only limited research on the role of

house-parents in the promotion of the learners' wellbeing in the residential school setting is currently available.

Previous research on wellbeing promotion in a School for the Deaf in South Africa indicated the potentially significant role that house-parents can play in learner wellbeing promotion (Lenta, 2016). This previous PhD study conducted by the researcher revealed limitations in current provision of support for the learners regarding the house-parents. Learners who participated in this study expressed a desire for more social interaction between house-parents and learners, more learning support from house-parents in regards to the learners' homework and for equal treatment of all learners by house-parents. The findings from this study also revealed that although learners were willing to participate in the study to share their experiences of wellbeing promotion in the hostel, the house-parents were reluctant to participate in the research activities. This study also reported on racial tensions between various staff members at the School for the Deaf impacting learner wellbeing promotion. These findings highlight barriers to learners' wellbeing promotion on individual, relational and collective domains of wellbeing. Further research to understand these reported barriers to learners' wellbeing promotion at the School for the Deaf specifically related to the role house-parents play in their wellbeing promotion was suggested.

Despite barriers to learners' wellbeing promotion identified in the researcher's previous study, house-parents were also identified as providing limited support linked to learners' wellbeing promotion. To build on from this support, a shift in the way in which problems are identified and addressed is argued for. A move from ameliorative support, to transformative practice that utilizes the strengths of the house-parents is suggested. Against this background a deeper understanding of what role house-parents' believe they play in learners' wellbeing promotion is necessary. The social model of disability explores the ways in which society disables people and calls for these barrier to be remedied, thus mirroring the principles proposed by the transformative paradigm. An understanding of barriers to learners' wellbeing promotion as well as what processes currently support the house-parents in this regard is called for. This understanding will potentially assist the school system to support the house-parents more effectively in the role that they in learners' wellbeing promotion in the hostel.

The conceptual framework for this study is comprised an ecological and a critical community psychology perspective with a transformational agenda to understand the role of house-parents in learners' wellbeing promotion in the School for the Deaf. The ecological metaphor describes the relationship between individuals and the multiple social systems in which they are embedded, where the focus is on the important role that social systems play in human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) the ecological metaphor is based on the principle of holism; promoting holistic thinking, feeling and acting rather than a focus on individual experience alone.

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) state that critical community psychology has a focus on social change. This is evidenced by the way values, research and action are balanced to ensure that resources are equally distributed. This balance of values, research and action make critical community psychology a suitable framework for working with those who are, or have been marginalized by the social system. This framework assists researchers in addressing inequality which makes it a suitable framework in which to situate research within the D/deaf community. This is further enhanced by applying the principles of community psychology to address inequality through value-based, participatory work. This approach encourages all members of the community to collaborate to create change within the particular setting. It is concerned with not only how people feel and think, but also what their experiences are, calling for all to work in tandem, resisting oppression with the intention of wanting to create a better world. People are understood within the system that they live in, and not as individuals in isolation, which correlates with the definition of holism promoted in the ecological framework (Swart & Pettifer in Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005).

Mertens (2009) states that by conducting research with a transformative agenda, issues such as diversity and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, disability, social class, religion, age and sexual orientation can be addressed. This agenda includes people pushed to the margins of society including children and minority cultures. These groups of people often do not have a voice and thus, their perspectives are often not heard, compounding their oppression. Giving voice to those who have been silenced historically is therefore essential when applying this approach to research. Transformative research also provides methodological guidance for researchers who work in culturally complex communities as it calls researchers to challenge the current status quo as a way to promote social justice. The researcher aims to address issues of inequality using a transformative approach because it places importance on

the lives and experiences of people. This approach also addresses inequality as a result of difference in power in relationships. It thus helps the researcher to link the results of social inquiry to action (Mertens, 2009). Whilst transformative research calls for inclusion of all stakeholders in the setting, in this study, only the house-parents and senior management staff members were interviewed as the perspectives of the learners and teachers were captured in the researcher's previous PhD study that suggested further inquiry among the management and house parents. This study was therefore informed by these findings. The study is therefore embedded in a social model of disability with a transformative agenda (Bengtsson, 2017).

In order to understand the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion, a qualitative study using in-depth interviews with house-parents and senior management staff members will be conducted in a government urban, co-educational residential school for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal that is representative of all demographic race groups in South Africa.

1.2 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What role do house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion?

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the role house-parents play in the promotion of learners' wellbeing in a residential School for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.

To this end the study has the following objectives:

- To understand house-parents' perceptions of learner wellbeing
- To understand how house-parents view their role in the promotion of learner wellbeing
- To gain insight into house-parents' experiences of school support
- To make recommendations for further support to house-parents in learners' wellbeing promotion
- To understand how the senior management staff, understand the house-parents' role in learners' wellbeing promotion

1.4. ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical clearance was obtained for this project from the UKZN ethics committee. The reference number for this study is HSS/1300/015M. The ethical issues will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, the methodology chapter.

1.5. OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter one provides a summary of the study. This was presented as an overview including the problem statement and the motivation for the study.

Chapter two consists of a thorough review of the literature on wellbeing promotion within the school context and challenges faced within the Deaf community.

Chapter three provides the study's research methodology.

Chapter four presents a discussion of the findings of the study.

Chapter five presents the conclusions, challenges and recommendations emanating from the study.

Chapter 6 presents the researcher's reflection on the research process.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a review of the literature is presented. A brief review of health promoting schools will be presented followed by a review of the literature on wellbeing. Residential Schools for the Deaf will be described, revealing the role of Deaf culture in wellbeing promotion as well as a review of the challenges faced by the Deaf in various contexts including the home, the school and in the wider community. The review will conclude with a discussion regarding the role of house-parents in learner wellbeing promotion in residential Schools for the Deaf.

2.2. Health Promoting Schools - A Global Perspective

Globally there are policies in education that relate to health and wellbeing promotion. Such policies include the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986) which stipulates participation, democracy and health within a whole-school approach (Tones, 2005). International policies in education have been developed that impact health and wellbeing in schools and include the Dakar Framework for Action, developed at The World Education Forum where an international commitment to education for all was made (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) declares the rights of all people, despite disability to have their human rights protected. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) state that all people have a human right to an education that meets their basic learning needs in the best way possible, coupled with a right to be taught how to live together and how to be. This corresponds to the vision of providing education for *all* learners as proposed by The World Education Forum (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000). This statement is particularly pertinent for the D/deaf learners accommodated in residential Schools for the Deaf.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, which was adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality (The Salamanca Statement, 1994) specifies that inclusion needs to guide educational policy in schools. Inclusion in education promotes schools for all, where individual difference is accepted with learning support provided in response to individual need. Buijs (2009) highlights how both the Millennium Development Goals and the SHE network in Europe stipulate that *every* child has the right to be educated in a health-promoting school.

In Australian schools, Mind Matters (Wyn et al., 2000) has been created to help facilitate the positive mental health and wellbeing of young people. In Hong Kong a health promotion framework was developed and implemented to promote health and wellbeing of learners (Lee, Cheng & St. Leger, 2005). The intended aims of the health-promoting school include enhanced learning outcomes, promotion of social justice and equity in the school setting, provision of school safety, developing supportive school environments and fostering both learner participation and empowerment (Buijs, 2009).

The WHO defines health as comprising of physical, mental and social wellbeing rather than simply defining health as the lack or absence of disease (WHO, 1948). Health promotion therefore includes aspects of psycho-social wellbeing not simply health. This is significant for policy regarding health and wellbeing promotion in the educational context.

2.3. Health Promoting Schools in South Africa

In South Africa, the Education Act (DoE, 1996) and the White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) call for inclusion to guide practice in education. These acts and policies propose the same principles as the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and the Salamanca Statement (2004). They state that it is necessary to deliver education that is designed to meet the needs the needs of *all* learners. The White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) calls for a supportive and inclusive psychosocial learning environment in *all* schools. This call is pertinent to the current study because learners living in the residential school hostels are by right, supposed to be supported and included, regardless of their unique abilities and disabilities.

Health is described as a fundamental human right by the United Nations (WHO, 2014). Acknowledging the WHO's definition of health, a commitment to addressing psycho-social

aspects of health is also therefore necessary. The National Health Promotion Policy and Strategy framework (DoH, 2014) sets out legislation and processes that will be used to promote healthy schools in South Africa. This approach is ecological in nature and describes health as comprising of individual and collective domains. The DoH in KwaZulu-Natal addresses health and wellbeing promotion in schools through The Health Promoting School Network (DoH, 2001).

This network was created to correspond with national policy guidelines (DoH, 2001; 2008) with the aim of addressing health and wellbeing and behavior problems in South African schools. Specific areas of action have been proposed by the network and include the call for safe and supportive teaching environments and school partnerships (Lazarus, 2007). In this framework, curriculum intervention that focuses on skills development is called for. Education support services were established through the application of this framework with a focus on preventative health promotion.

Indicative of the ecological approach of this framework, a call for health and wellbeing in schools to be promoted continuously, and upheld by the different relationships in the school and the community which are understood to impact on the quality of the education and care that the learners receive is made (Naidoo & Wills, 2000). This framework offers a means by which to address school problems.

In addition to the Health Promoting Schools Network in regards to health and wellbeing promotion in schools, The Department of Basic Education has developed the national curriculum to include Life Orientation (L.O.) as a learning area that aims to make a difference in the lives of the learners (Prinsloo, 2007b). A holistic support system, inclusive of L.O. is called for. L.O. aims to equip learners with skills and abilities to be able to participate fully in society through the development of understanding of the self within a wider society; an ecological perspective on human development.

In this study, the researcher aims explore and understand the role house-parents play in learner wellbeing promotion and ascertain how the school can further support these staff members in their identified role in learners' wellbeing promotion. A call is made in regards to the implementation of health and wellbeing policy in South African schools to ensure that transformative practice is employed. This approach will help to ensure that all school

community members, inclusive of house-parents and other groups of people who tend to have silenced voices participate in decision-making linked to wellbeing promotion. This is envisioned through sharing of ideas and resources, thus promoting equity and social justice in the school setting.

While these policies provide an adequate framework for wellbeing promotion within the South African education system, this framework is not without challenges. Challenges include problems with policy implementation pertaining to a range of factors, including human resources, both the number of properly trained people in the field and those who have adequate knowledge of working with the D/deaf community, exacerbated further by schools and provincial departments being faced with limited financial resources.

2.4. WELLBEING

Research in the field of wellbeing has been developing in recent years with the hedonic and eudemonic traditions emerging (Dodge et al., 2012). Individual, relational and collective domains of wellbeing are reported on in the literature but a multi-level concept of wellbeing, described as holistic wellbeing will be applied in this study.

Individual Wellbeing

Ryff and Singer (1998) described individual wellbeing as engagement in life. You are impacted on by a variety of factors such as intellectual, social, emotional and physical aspects. The authors describe individual wellbeing to experiencing a good life which includes having purpose in one's life, achieved by effective relations with other people, believing in one's self and experiencing feelings of achievement. This includes being able to experience self-acceptance, autonomy, mastery and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). This experience is described as a multi-dimensional process.

Keyes (1998) includes a social dimension to his definition of individual wellbeing. Social wellbeing includes social integration, contribution, coherence, actualisation, and acceptance which increase with education, affected by socio-economic status and age because of the person's ability to manage their social interaction experiences. Having a positive experience of community is linked to social integration. Healthy individuals are argued as view society

as being positive, experiencing feeling cared for safe in their communities which leads to leading meaningful and coherent personal lives. Self-understanding is developed as a result of feedback from those with whom you engage in the environment. Pertinent to this current study, Keyes (1989) believes that not all people are born into or retain equal resources such as finance, education or access to medical treatment or opportunities that affect their social wellbeing. This is likely to impact the role house-parents play in learner wellbeing promotion in residential Schools for the Deaf.

Relational Wellbeing

Relational wellbeing refers to the quality of life inclusive of the individual's access to food and housing, where the individual is not isolated but rather is part of family and a community (McCubbin, McCubbin, Zhang, Kehl & Strom, 2013). Ideally to promote relational wellbeing, individuals should not feel pain, fear, or anger; where feeling good with the positives in life more prominent than negatives. The individual is seen as integrally connected to others, society and thus the ecological nature of relational wellbeing is highlighted and can be used to develop strategies for intervention; understanding the functioning of individual and family systems.

Further exploring the concept of relational wellbeing, Kitching and Roos (2012) report that when people negotiate the day-to-day interactions with one another, these interactions foster relationships in an on-going manner and are understood to develop in accordance with the ever changing needs of the individuals and community they belong to, for example, in the school context. The authors raise awareness to the fact that such interactions can potentially enhance nurturing relationships in a transformative and preventative manner. McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) report that connections between people in schools have the potential to shape engagement between people within the school. This sense of belonging that is created through connection to others is understood to influence wellbeing, academic outcomes and social development.

Collective Wellbeing

Collective wellbeing is defined by the authors Nelson and Prillentensky (2010, p. 63) as: “distributive justice; or the fair and equitable allocation of bargaining powers, resources and

obligations in society”. In this study, the researcher wishes to explore the allocation of bargaining powers, resources and obligations in the residential Schools for the Deaf to understand the role house-parents believe they play in learner wellbeing promotion and how they understand the school to be able to support them in this regard. The authors Bess, Prilleltensky, Perkins and Collins (2009) report that in order to be able to achieve collective wellness, human service organizations or such settings are required to challenge their current approach and focus on attending to the social justice needs of the wider community. The authors further state that it is necessary to engage community participation in novel ways, and as a result, for researchers to become more explicitly political in the process.

Multi-level Wellbeing

Whilst literature described wellbeing on individual, relational and collective domains, authors Ng and Fisher (2009) understand the promotion of wellbeing on multiple levels. These authors suggest that the work of Prilleltensky (2005) on holistic wellbeing be used as a starting point for a multilevel approach that understands wellbeing as a holistic process where personal, relational and collective needs and aspirations of individuals and of communities are fulfilled. In this approach wellbeing is located in three separate but interconnected domains namely the individual, relational, and collective (Prilleltensky, 2005). When applying the concept of multi-level wellbeing on policy level, it is reported by Camfield, McGregor and Woodcock (2007) that aiming to create universal wellbeing is a challenging goal, but one in favour of simply aiming to meet basic human needs.

2.5. WELLBEING IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY

Deaf Culture

One of the ways in which wellbeing is promoted within a Deaf community is through affiliation to the Deaf culture. Globally, Deaf culture is described membership to a collective group that have a shared history, a shared set of experiences of being deaf in a hearing world, shared institutions including schools and clubs, a language, art, music, and literature which pertain specifically the to the Deaf (Sparrow, 2006).

Atherton (2009) describes the Deaf culture not simply as belonging to the Deaf culture but also as the feelings and attitudes that Deaf people have regarding their deafness. This group has chosen to use Deaf (using a capital D) to indicate their individual and collective affiliation to the Deaf community (Wilcox, 2006). The Deaf see themselves as being part of an alternative lifestyle and culture, not as a disabled population and this is reflected in their attitude towards their Deafness (Sloss Luey et al., 1995). This perspective on being culturally Deaf allows for both personal as well as communal attachment which can lead to the development of close relationships within the Deaf community as well as providing emotional security achieved through a sense of belonging in this community (Atherton, 2009). Deaf culture is comprised of its own social norms, values and sets of beliefs, important historical figures, and forms of art which are linked to identity formation within the Deaf community (Hamill & Stein, 2011).

According to Ram and Muthkurishna (2001) the majority of deaf people in South Africa affiliate themselves to the Deaf Community. The authors describe how the Deaf community is understood as a separate minority language and cultural group. The Deaf in South Africa use Sign Language as their natural language of choice. The authors suggest that the Deaf should have the right to be classified as a distinct group because of being a culturally similar group of people who share a common language. Belonging to a shared community tends to lead to a shared way of thinking and being (Storbeck & Magongwa, in Moores & Martin, 2006). Consequently, the development of the Deaf culture and a Deaf identity leads to common goals and a sense of responsibility to other Deaf community members.

Significantly, the majority of Deaf people live in a world dominated by and catered for hearing people therefore; the Deaf community becomes a place of solace where they experience equality (Hamill & Stein, 2011). This reported finding argues against inclusive education for D/deaf learners and highlights the importance of the school for the deaf where D/deaf learners have the opportunity to engage with others who also ascribe to the Deaf culture thus accessing an educational environment that promotes the needs and the ways of the Deaf.

2003 saw the establishment of a SASL unit in the Pan South African Language Board. In 2005, it is reported that the unit standards for SASL were presented as part of in the National Qualifications Framework (DoE, 2008). This development as begun to address Deaf

learners' right to benefit from an education that meets their needs. Whilst this new development is positive in terms of striving for equity in education for Deaf learners, this development has not been without challenge. Having an SASL curriculum does not immediately result in teachers fluent in SASL nor effective use of SASL in all curriculum areas (Steyn, 2015).

There are approximately 500 000 deaf South Africans as reported by The Deaf Federation of South Africa (Magongwa, 2010). Storbeck (2010) reports that approximately 3.5% of the general population has some sort of hearing disability. 80% of this population are reported to be unemployed (Magongwa, 2010) with 66% of this group functionally illiterate. In South Africa, there are 47 schools for the Deaf. Whilst some of the schools uses SASL as their primary language of teaching and learning, this is not reported uniformly across all 7 schools for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal (Storbeck, Magongwa & Martin, 2009).

Challenges faced by the deaf

The Deaf community faces many particular threats to their experience of wellbeing related to their deafness. Such challenges include broad-based difficulties including discrimination and stereo-typing which can lead to social stigma (Erlich, 2012). This is largely because of the hearing population having misunderstandings about Deaf culture, based on hearing peoples' collective belief systems about the Deaf (Groce, 2004). Russinga (2012) comments on how many traditional cultures still hold negative beliefs about deafness which compounds stigma and prejudice within the Deaf community.

The Deaf as a group often face a sense of powerlessness due to the fact that they often have decisions made for them that affect their lives (Skelton & Valentine, 2003). This is understood to negatively affect self-esteem as well as their view of self-competence. These challenges have a significant impact on the Deaf with the result of them experiencing higher levels of mental illness compared to their hearing peers (Erlich, 2012).

A further identified challenge in South Africa presents as late identification of hearing loss (De Wet, Storbeck & Friedland, 2009). The implication of this is that these deaf children tend to miss early intervention opportunities as well as gaining access to deaf education where language development, socialization, and acculturation into Deaf culture can happen.

This late identification of deafness can lead to the D/deaf child experiencing feelings of isolation which can lead to stigmatization because of their barriers faced in being able to fully engage with others and to gain an education to enable them to access employment opportunities (Swanepoel, Delpont & Swart, 2007).

In the family context, the Deaf tend to face isolation because of language barriers as many family members are not able to communicate in sign language. This can lead the Deaf to experience feelings of rejection and loneliness, exacerbated by low expectation of both educators and parents for deaf children (Blankmeyer-Burke et al., 2011).

A way that a solution is envisioned is presented by Aarons and Akach (2002) who propose that if the Deaf human right to access their own language was actualized, the Deaf would not be classified as disabled any longer. This thinking is in-line with the social model of disability. The authors define deafness not as a physical disability but rather as a language barrier.

A further challenge to equitable opportunities for the Deaf in the South African education system arises from the fact that teachers in schools for the deaf do not have to have a specific formal qualification in D/deaf education (van Staden & Le Roux, 2010). Due to teachers that are employed in schools for the D/deaf without any formal qualifications in D/deaf education, their ability to offer meaningful education, tailored to the deaf learner's unique language needs appears to be limited despite this right being enshrined in an educational policy stated in the White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). Further difficulties arise out of the commonly-held belief that the Deaf are not as capable of achieving as well scholastically as are their hearing peers (Parkin, 2010). Parkin (2010), mirroring global findings, comments on society's low expectations of Deaf learners in comparison to their hearing peers. This attitude filters through to the way the Deaf are seen in society, as well as what their educational opportunities and employment prospects are likely to be (Ibid., 2010).

Druchen (2010) further comments on inequality in education and employment opportunities citing marginalization and unjust treatment of the Deaf as a group as a contributing factor. Hammil & Stein, 2011) states that unjust treatment of the Deaf as a group tends to result from the difficulties faced by the Deaf in regards to their language acquisition. Lack of language acquisition tends to impact the Deaf populations' ability to access academic material linked

to their limited prior learning (Marx et al., 2011) largely because of communication barriers and parental and societal attitudes towards deafness (Krige, 2010). This lack of language acquisition limits the D/deaf learners' opportunities for continual learning and employment opportunities.

This reality faced by the Deaf of having limited access to further education and training is marked by the limited number of Deaf matriculants in the country (Aarons & Akach, 2002). This chronic lack of equitable opportunity for the Deaf in terms of access to fair and equitable educational opportunity compared to hearing peers is concerning as Deaf people are fully capable of achieving academic success at tertiary level, however, they have not been adequately prepared for further education at a tertiary level. Glaser and Aarons (2002) comment on the history of racial inequality in South Africa. Most schools that cater for black and coloured Deaf learners in South Africa do not even offer Grade 12. Until 1995, more than half of black Deaf children of school going age were not enrolled in the formal schooling system. Many of the students in adult literacy classes specifically for the Deaf have actually attended schools for the Deaf for up to ten years, and are still described as being illiterate (Ibid, 2002).

The Deaf face additional barriers to equitable access to information regarding their health and wellbeing. Access to information regarding HIV/AIDS poses significant challenge for many Deaf people as they do not have access to language about the condition as few health care workers are able to sign (Mall & Swarts, 2012). Barriers to communication at home, as identified by Krige (2010) prevent parents or care-givers from freely discussing matters related to development with their D/deaf child if they are not able to sign or communicate with their D/deaf child. In any medical situation Haricharan, Heap, Coomans, and London (2012) comment that without sign language interpreters, Deaf patients in South Africa experience challenges to their rights to health and the likelihood of their dignity being violated, high.

Communication barriers further block equitable opportunities for the Deaf in terms of access to the legal system. Dagut and Morgan (2003) comment on the Deaf populations' infringement of their rights in the judicial system and police stations as a result of communication challenges. Reporting of crimes is stated as a further challenge faced by the Deaf, as those to whom crimes must be reported, tend not to have fluency in SASL. Those

with disabilities are at increased risk for abuse because of their perceived lack of ability to report the crimes committed against them (Duvall, 2005). The lack of effectively disseminated information regarding safe sex practices results in the Deaf facing high rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (Oludunni, 2012).

The Promotion of Wellbeing among the Deaf

Despite the many barriers the D/deaf face in accessing equal opportunities in society, studies reporting ways in which the D/deaf have overcome certain barriers are evident. Overcoming barriers is evident from global and local policy development. Advocacy for health and wellbeing is stated in the Ottawa Charter (1998) for Health Promotion. Globally and nationally there are groups and organisations for the Deaf that lobby for the rights of D/deaf people in order to try and improve the current status quo and promote equity and justice for this minority group.

➤ Education

Globally there are studies revealing opportunities for the promotion of wellbeing of D/deaf learners and Schools for the Deaf. In some schools globally the use of sign language is banned (Anglin-Jaffe, 2013). However, in response to this type of oppression, Deaf learners have continued to use sign language amongst their peers despite this language not being used for the purposes of teaching and learning. Deaf learners in some schools globally have elected to act as peer educators in schools where sign languages are banned, evidence of improved communication within their school context. Miles, Wappling and Beart (2011) report on developments in Uganda focusing on D/deaf children and their right to attend school in their own communities. The combination of governmental support, their focus on teacher education, parent involvement, and Sign Language development has led to a change in attitudes towards Deaf children and their right to attend schools in their local area. In Belgium and Flanders increases in support for the Deaf through interpreters and an increase in cochlear implants and hearing-aid effectiveness has led to D/deaf learners being included in mainstream classes (De Raeve & Lichtert, 2012). In Sweden and Northern Ireland, Doherty (2012) reports on the use of sign language and a culturally Deaf environment which are understood to promote learner wellbeing.

➤ Sign Language

Despite the many challenges faced by D/deaf learners within the school context, there is a growing impetus on the inclusion of D/deaf learners in mainstream education globally and locally, as well as more opportunities for D/deaf learners to be accommodated in Schools for the Deaf than opportunities available to this population historically (Storbeck et al., 2009). As sign language is reported to be the natural language of the Deaf, the challenge of accommodating these learners in mainstream settings is acknowledged (South African Constitution, 1996). In South Africa, the DoE has begun to make accommodations to d/Deaf education. Section 6 (4) of the South African Schools Act 34 of 1996 recognizes SA sign language for use in teaching and learning of Deaf learners in public schools (<http://www.politicsweb.co.za>). The Department of Education has developed a draft Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for South African Sign Language from Grade R to Grade 12 which has been implemented (Government Gazette 36818, 2013, <http://www.education.gov.za>).

➤ **Organizations for the Deaf**

In South Africa, Organizations for the Deaf, such as DeafSA (www.deafsa.co.za), SANDA (<http://www.sanda.org.za>) and HI HOPES (<http://www.hihopes.co.za>) strive for advocacy for the Deaf. The KwaZulu-Natal Blind and Deaf society (<http://www.kznbds.org.za/index.html>) aims to break the isolation which surrounds Deaf and blind people. To overcome these challenges, eDeaf, an employment company for Deaf people in South Africa aims to empower the Deaf through proper education and training for suitable employment opportunities. The National Institute for the Deaf (NID) College where Deaf students from South Africa can obtain accredited international certifications in occupational training (De Villiers, 2010). The Centre for Deaf Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand aims to develop globally competitive standards of excellence in the training of teachers for the Deaf, and provide equitable learning and research in the field of Deaf education (<http://www.wits.ac.za/deafstudies>). Sign Language Education and Development (SLED) is a Deaf non-profit organisation that is committed to providing the Deaf child in South Africa with an equal and democratic right to literacy, learning, and access to information through the promotion of South African Sign Language (<http://www.sled.org.za>). Sinomlando, the Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa, adapted their memory-work methodology developed for orphaned children linked to HIV/AIDS to work with the Deaf, because, like orphaned children, the psychosocial needs of Deaf children are considerable (<http://www.sinomlando.ukzn.ac.za>). Looking particularly at parent support,

THRIVE, a parent-lead program, offers unbiased support to families that have a D/deaf or hard-of-hearing child or children (<http://www.thrivesa.org.za>). This program operates in conjunction with HI HOPES and together these programs provide support in early intervention for the child. A further supportive organisation that offers support for those with disabilities for further education and training opportunities is The I Can Foundation (www.icanfound.org). This organisation assists learners with disabilities who have completed school education and who wish to further their qualifications. This organisation assists people to access training and then further assists people to gain entry to the workforce in supportive and inclusive environments.

Residential Schools for the Deaf

Sutton-Spence (2010) states that the vast majority of D/deaf children are born to hearing parents and these children are then only introduced to the Deaf culture when they start formal schooling. In Schools for the Deaf, the D/deaf learners are exposed to the ways of the Deaf and being to learn and use sign language to communicate. Enculturation and socialization into the Deaf community are important as this is the site where young D/deaf learners begin to develop their Deaf identity. In these contexts, D/deaf learners can experience deafness as belonging to a specific culture that has a unique language (McKee, Schlehofer & Thew, 2013). Educational institutions, such as Schools for the Deaf have been documented in the literature to have played a significant role in the formation of Deaf communities (Kowalski & Meier, 2013). For this reason, Schools for the Deaf are considered as possible sites for the promotion of holistic learner wellbeing.

The D/deaf tend to experience lower self-esteem in comparison to their hearing peers (Sardar, Kadir, Tamiz, Abdullah & Chong, 2012). This is largely affected by isolation from family and society which results from communication barriers and misunderstandings of the Deaf culture. Sardar et al. (2012) also report that self-esteem of Deaf learners is promoted when they are integrated into the Deaf culture. This reported finding again reveals the value of a residential School for the Deaf in learner holistic wellbeing promotion.

Communication with parents and extended family members, friends and peers, and educators is regarded as important for learners' academic and social development (van Staden & Badenhorst, 2009). Hearing parents that have D/deaf children often struggle to develop

healthy bonds with their children because of communication difficulties. Communication barriers can negatively impact these children's abilities to participate in society because of limited accommodations made to support the D/deaf beyond the school setting (Magongwa, 2010). Because some Schools for the Deaf in South Africa use SASL as the language of teaching and learning, including the school hostel staff, these are identified as potential sites for the promotion of learner holistic wellbeing promotion. Whilst using SASL in the school context is identified as a positive aspect of the school's functioning in relation to learner wellbeing promotion, fluency is regarded as an important aspect of this accommodation to meet the needs of the Deaf (Lenta, 2016).

Role of care-givers/house-parents in learner wellbeing promotion

Research states that residential schools for the Deaf have the capacity to promote the wellbeing of learners, in the classroom and hostel setting (McKee et al., 2013). This capacity is influenced by the professionals employed in the Schools for the Deaf ability to communicate in sign language and be familiar and accepting of the Deaf culture (Staten, 2011). The Deaf cultural identification developed and sustained in these settings is understood to prepare learners for life after they complete their education. The author reports that: "pride, self-efficacy, and perceived support" (Ibid, 2011, p. 97) which lead to feelings of inclusion are associated with Deaf learners' experiences in residential school for the Deaf, if the staff members employed in the school support the Deaf through the use of sign language and by providing opportunity for the development of a Deaf identity where Deafness is not perceived as a disability. The residential Schools for the Deaf are referred to as: "becoming a kind of family" (Ibid, 2011, p. 99). The author reports that Deaf learners value academic skills learned at school as well as the skills for independent living skills which can be developed in the classroom and the residential school hostel. These skills lead to the development of self-confidence and knowledge.

2.6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

A review of the conceptual framework that guided this study will be presented and includes a discussion on critical community psychology with a transformative agenda followed by a discussion of the ecological framework describing human development.

A Critical Community Psychology Approach that includes a Transformative Agenda and the Ecological Framework

Critical community psychology offers a means for supporting those who are marginalized by social systems, such as the D/deaf. Applying the principles of community psychology, inequality is addressed by examining equal distribution of resources, with the intention of facilitating social change (Bess et al., 2009). This approach calls for a balance between values, research and action, whilst having the best interest of communities in mind. As the Deaf community often faces inequality, a critical community psychology framework can provide a starting point for change for the D/deaf because it takes heed of the impact of the environment on the consequent development of the individual, and of communities which are all interconnected. What a critical community psychology approach calls for is a value-based, collaborative approach inclusive of all community members in order to facilitate social change. This approach recognizes that people exist not in isolation but within multiple systems; an ecological perspective (Swart & Pettifer in Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005).

A critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda addresses inequality faced by people marginalized by the social system, such as the D/deaf (Mertens, 2009). This makes the transformative paradigm suitable for working with the D/deaf because it allows for empowerment through equitable, active participation of all in the research processes (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). This equitable participation in the research process then has the potential to facilitate the development of self-awareness which can potentially lead to acknowledgement of community resources and identification of community strength.

The transformative agenda too calls for an application of the principles of inclusion and the promotion of equity, achieved through challenging oppressive social structures (Prilleltensky, 2012). To be able to develop relationships with all participants who have been marginalised, it is imperative to build trust. This is understood to be achieved by transparent goal setting and honest and reflexive sharing of findings with all participants. In order to build trust and promote equity, it is important to acknowledge social norms and systems of relating that are

influenced by social class, gender, race and ability is necessary. Social norms and ways of relating can and must be challenged, achieved by valuing perspectives of all participants in the study (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2002). This approach will be included in the critical community psychology framework that the researcher will use to understand the experiences of the participants in context.

From a critical community psychology perspective, schools, including Schools for the D/deaf, are understood as communities where there are continuous interactions between individuals and the environments (Visser, 2007a). Sarason (1974) highlights the importance of a “sense of community”. This is experienced when there is mutual interdependence of individuals and communities. This is understood to result in a feeling of being part of something larger than the individual. McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) further describe a sense of community experienced in schools as a result of “school connectedness”, where activities and experiences are linked. The authors focus on the relationships that develop within the school context, between multiple community members, through learner satisfaction and a feeling of belonging, achieved through participation and by allowing the learners to have a voice. Strike (2000; 2004) describes the school as a shared learning project where coherence (having a communal vision and language), cohesion (a feeling of community), care (the ability to actively engage students), and contact (the structural features of the school) are necessary.

A critical community psychology perspective with a transformative agenda also encourages a change in thinking from a perspective where the individual learner is understood in isolation to an understanding of the individual belonging to a broader, inclusive ecological system which is understood to have an influence on the development of the individual. The ecological metaphor describes the connection between individuals and the many social systems which they are part of and which play an impacting role in human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Environments are understood to influence individuals in a range of specific ways, described as the person-environment fit. The individual and environment are understood conjointly, not in isolation.

Bronfenbrenner proposes that in the social system, a variety of systems exist that impact the individual. The five systems include; the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The macrosystem includes systems of belief, which are contextually

bound, and influence the construction of personal characteristics, which are based on the current culture, society or the community in which the individual is situated (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). The macrosystem is described as a “cultural blueprint” which is comprised of cultural beliefs, resources and opportunities accessible to the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Swart & Pettipher (2011) state that the macrosystem has the ability to impact interactions at all the other levels, therefore giving structure, and content to the inner systems. Therefore, significantly, changes that take place within the macrosystem have the potential to have a corresponding effect on changing communities, as well as school systems, families and the learner.

The microsystem is described as the most profound systems because of the direct influence it has on the individual because it comprises of the direct environment or setting, for example, a family or a school. The microsystem is described as a complex configuration of activities, social roles and interpersonal relationships which take place in the immediate setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This includes family relationships, which are described as transactional, because both the child and family members affect, and are affected by each other (Schweiger & O’Brien, 2005). Peer groups and the neighbourhood where the individual lives are described as other microsystems that play an important role in the development of the child.

The mesosystem is made up of the interrelationship between at least two or more of the microsystems. Experiences that take place in one of the microsystems, such as learner-teacher or learner-house-parent relationship, have the ability to influence interactions in other microsystems, such as the teacher-parent relationship (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). The exosystem therefore influences the relationship between the micro- and macrosystems, where both institutions and practices have the ability to influence other microsystems (Liao, Lee, Roberts-Lewis, Hong, & Jiao, 2011). The exosystem can influence these systems either positively or negatively, especially if the exosystem is currently experiencing stress. The chronosystem refers to the changes that occur over time, inclusive of both the person and the environment where they function.

Bronfenbrenner’s model reveals that individuals are active, rather than passive participants in their continuous development. He further describes how individual perspectives and experiences play a significant role in understanding how each individual will interact with

and respond to their individual environments. Bronfenbrenner describes the four interacting dimensions which impact human development in both systems and contexts and include; proximal processes, individual person characteristics, systems/contexts and time (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

Proximal processes are interactions that occur regularly over significant periods of time. The effectiveness of these processes is linked to the bio-psycho-social characteristics of the individual and the environment where these processes occur. Swart and Pettipher in Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005) as well as De Jong (2013) explain that an individuals' development is influenced by experiences that occur in each of the multiple layers of the ecosystem, and therefore, disturbances in one layer are understood to have a ripple effect on other layers. The application of a community psychology approach therefore implies that a School for the Deaf is perceived as a microsystem functioning within a larger macrosystem.

Application of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks

In this study, the researcher considered the multiple ecological systems described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) which can impact the wellbeing of learners and the processes involved in wellbeing promotion within the school context. Recognition of the multiple, interconnected systems allows for a shift in the way in which problems are identified. Viewing challenges from the perspective of understanding influences on the individual from external sources in the environment helps to shift blame in individuals, allows for deeper understanding of human development and allows for a shift from ameliorative to transformative support harnessing community strengths to facilitate change and growth within the setting, inclusive of the individual. The lives of learners and house-parents can be transformed in support of learner and house-parent wellbeing when systems, such as school structures and processes are amended through participatory mechanisms of all stakeholders whilst simultaneously taking cognisance of the power differentials in the school community. This type of engagement gives rise to the opportunity to address silenced voices.

The approach taken in the study recognises that certain people and groups in society can retain privilege over others due to race, culture or disability allows for those with less power to participate in processes and decision-making that affects their lives. The house-parents will be active participants in discussions regarding their understanding of learner wellbeing

promotion, the role they believe they play in these processes and in sharing their ideas for ways in which they would like to enhance learner provision whilst simultaneously identifying ways in which they feel they could be supported by the school in order to achieve more effective communication between the house-parents and the teaching and management staff as well as between the house-parents themselves.

2.7. SUMMARY

In this chapter, a review of the literature was presented. Globally, Deaf learners face many challenges that negatively affect their wellbeing, in the school and wider community setting, revealing the ecological nature of wellbeing promotion (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Despite some accommodations in South African D/deaf education being made at a governmental level and support provided within the school context, current provision tends to be ameliorative in nature. The researcher proposes a change in the current status quo to shift the focus to transformative, strength-based practice which is proposed through equitable participation in decision-making involving the school management and hostel staff in regards to provision of learner support in the school hostel.

Wellbeing is widely reviewed in current literature in individual, relational and collective domains (Prilleltensky, 2005). Holistic wellbeing, comprising of all three interconnected domains of wellbeing will be applied in this study to the role that house-parents understand they play in learner wellbeing promotion. Globally there are policies and frameworks in education that promote learner wellbeing but these tend to focus on a health and not a wellbeing perspective, which this study aims to challenge by focusing on a wellbeing approach to how house-parents can be further supported by schools to enhance current provision of support for learners in the residential school hostels.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a discussion of the research methodology will be presented. This will include a description of the context in which the research was conducted, the research design and the sampling procedures used. A description of the instruments, data collection procedures and the method of analysis employed will be presented. This discussion will culminate in explaining the rationale for applying these specific processes.

3.2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

In this study, the residential School for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal was purposively selected for multiple reasons. The School for the Deaf in which the research was conducted was purposively selected because of the fact that the school is well-established as it has been operational for nearly 60 years, as well as it being a good example of a School for the Deaf in the South African context. The site is also the location where the researcher's PhD study developed from and thus this current study is responding to the recommendations proposed by researcher related to this previous study in order to understand the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion in the school hostel.

The school has a residential hostel and employs house-parents to oversee the care of the weekly boarders in the hostel. This approach thus allowed for the researcher to deliberately select the case because of its suitability in achieving the purpose of the study; allowing the researcher to access the population under study (Rule & John, 2011).

The school accommodates D/deaf learners from pre-school up to Grade 12. There are 102 enrolled learners with 48 day scholars and 57 learners accommodated in the school hostel which offers a weekly boarding facility. The foundation phase includes classrooms for Grades 1-3, and a remedial and two special needs classes, comprising a junior and a senior group. The intermediate phase has an individual classroom for each Grade between Grades 4

- 6 and a remedial class. The senior phase has a classroom for each grade from Grades 7 through to Grade 12, as well as a vocational class. The school accommodates learners inclusive of the various racial groups in South Africa, including Black, White, Indian and Coloured learners, with the majority of learners being Black, emanating largely from a Zulu cultural background. The learners emanate from a range of socio-economic backgrounds with those experiencing poverty on one end of the spectrum, to those who experience economic security because their parents are gainfully employed.

The school employs six house-parents. There is a Black male house-parent in the senior boys' hostel, a White female house-parent in the senior girls' hostel. There are two Black house-parents in the junior boys' hostel; one Deaf Black male and one Black hearing female. There is one Black female house-parent in the junior girls' hostel. The school employs a White female house-parent in the kitchen who takes care of catering during the week as well as on weekends if there is a function planned at school. There are ten girls accommodated in the junior girls' hostel, and sixteen boys in the junior boys' hostel. There are twelve girls in the senior girls' hostel and nineteen boys in the senior boys' hostel.

Two of the house-parents employed at the school are married but they do not co-habit the same hostel. The house-parents all live away from their extended families. The salary is basic but the house-parents receive free board and lodging at the school as part of their remuneration.

The school management team comprises a principal and a deputy principal. They are both white, hearing females. Both members of staff have over 20 years of teaching experience in deaf education.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Based on both the ontological and the epistemological positions taken in this study, a qualitative case study research design was selected. As qualitative research often develops from real-world or direct experience it can often be based on a researcher's interests (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). This study developed out of my own real-world experience due to being previously employed at a School for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.

Qualitative Case Study

Qualitative case study designs allow researchers to gain an understanding of a particular case in rich detail, rather than simply exploring the case from a wider contextual basis (De Vos et al., 2011). These types of designs are also described as an exploration, or a deep analysis of a bounded system, which is conducted over a period of time. This process is understood to develop the researcher's understanding of the particular case.

In this particular research study, a single, qualitative instrumental case study design was applied (Stake 2005; Yin 2003). Despite this being a single case study, more than one source of information was sought to understand the case. With multiple sources of information, the researcher is more likely to gather representative, rich, in-depth data. This type of data is more likely to result in the researcher gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences and the perceptions of all the participants in the context where the data was gathered (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Case study designs are described by Yin (2004) as being suited to research studies that tend to ask both "how" or "why" questions that are based in real-life contexts. These designs often develop from researcher interests as well as their desire to understand complex phenomena which are experienced in a social context. Case study designs are suited to studies where the researcher would like to understand *current* events and experiences. What is important about this type of design is an understanding on the researcher's behalf that when behaviours are observed in the research process, these are not allowed to be manipulated.

Rule and John (2011) describe case study to explore specific problems in a setting. In this case, understanding the role of house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion in a residential School for the Deaf in South Africa. Gillham (2000) describes how human behaviour, inclusive of both thoughts and feelings, is influenced by the environment. The author therefore suggests that in order to understand people in real-life, researchers need to study people in their context if they are to truly understand their behaviour. As the researcher wished to obtain an understanding of the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion, a case study design corresponded with the aims of the study and allowed for the

researcher to gather detailed descriptions of the lived, everyday experiences of the participants. In addition, case study design allows for the creation of theoretical insights which can potentially be used to help understanding of on other similar cases. This can lead to generalisation and/or transferability of the findings.

The qualitative nature of the case study allows for participant meanings to be captured, reflecting the participants' experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). This research approach acknowledges multiple realities which allows for obtaining an in-depth understanding of phenomena whilst upholding the importance placed on understanding the participants' viewpoints (Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2007). Rich, detailed data was gathered by listening to participant voices and the researcher accurately reporting the participants' perspectives.

Qualitative researchers are called on to open their work to analysis, which requires them to make their findings accessible as well as replicable in other settings, achievable by choosing research methods that will allow for this to take place (Lapan et al., 2012). The study was inductive and naturalistic. This helped to ensure that the complexity of the phenomenon of understanding the role of house-parents in learners' wellbeing promotion. Data was gathered individually but the data and findings were understood holistically.

3.4. PARTICIPANTS

All the house-parents namely six and the two individuals in senior management positions at the school participated. As all house-parents and all senior management staff participated, no selection took place. All participants were approached in person at the school for the Deaf. The purpose of the study and what participation would entail was described in spoken English and SASL to Deaf participants as per the principal's permission. Informed consent forms were signed on the day of data collection (see Appendix E). In total 6 house-parents (N=6) out of 6 and 2 senior-management staff members (N=2) out of 2 agreed to participate.

| Participants | Number (N) | Junior Girls' Hostel | Junior Boys' Hostel | Senior Girls' Hostel | Senior Boys' Hostel | Senior Management |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| House-parents and Senior Management Staff | 8 | 1 black female | 1 black female 1 black male | 2 white females | 1 black male | 2 white females |
| | Total N = 8 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |

TABLE 1
Number of participants

According to De Vos et al. (1011) purposive sampling is sampling conducted under the discretion of the researcher. The research is called upon to select cases where elements of the case are representative of the characteristics or attributes of the population being studied. Purposive selection is further described by Johnson and Christensen (2012) as individuals or cases that are seen as being able to provide information that will accommodate the purpose of the research. The school was purposively selected by the researcher but no further sampling was conducted as all participants agreed to be interviewed by the researcher.

Research Instrument - Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to be able to understand the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion in a residential School for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal, interview schedules were developed to guide the interviews. Interviews are described by Rule and John (2011) as popular method of data collection which tend to elicit a guided conversation, usually on a one-on-one basis, between researcher and participant. The authors indicate a range of skills for interviewing are necessary and include for example; the ability to create an appropriate atmosphere, ensuring participant understanding of the nature and purpose of the study, following ethical procedures, listening and documenting skills.

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured in-depth interviews as one method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews are described as methods of data collection that allows for participant beliefs, perceptions and accounts of a particular topic to be revealed (De Vos et al., 2011). This method allows for flexibility for both researcher and participant but significantly, this type of interviewing is recommended when complexity regarding a personal or controversial topic sought. Rule and John (2011) indicate that the researcher would lead the interview through pre-set questions used to initiate discussion that allow for further spontaneous questions to develop from the interview, allowing flexibility for both researcher and participant (see Appendix F & G). In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 6 house-parents and the principal and the deputy principal (see Appendix H).

3.5. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The researcher first obtained permission to conduct the study from the DoE (see Appendix A). This application was assessed and permission to approach principals in two residential Schools for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal was obtained. The researcher made telephonic contact with the two principals at the schools where permission to conduct the study from the DoE was obtained. The researcher introduced herself, explained the purpose of the study and what permission to conduct the study would entail, for the principal and all other participants. Once initial contact had been established, the researcher emailed permission letters to the two principals describing the study and what participation would entail. The form was signed and returned by one of the principals. By only one principal allowing the research study to be conducted in their school, the study had a narrower focus than the researcher had initially intended but as participation is voluntary, the researcher could not coerce the principal into participation. Permission from the one principal allowed the researcher to develop the research proposal and complete the ethical clearance application from the ethics committee at UKZN, a necessary component of the research process. Once ethical clearance was obtained for the study, individual participants were then approached in person at the School for the Deaf where permission to conduct the research had been granted. The purpose of the study and what participation would entail was described in spoken English and SASL to the Deaf participant, as per the principal's permission. Informed consent forms were signed on the day of data collection (see Appendix E). In total 6 house-parents (N=6) out of 6 and 2 senior-

management staff members (N=2) out of 2 agreed to participate. The interviews were conducted in spoken English to hearing participants and SASL to the Deaf participant.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is widely reported in the literature of the need to ensure ethical practice throughout the research study achieved through ethical decision making (De Vos et al., 2011). In this study, the researcher was mindful of the ethical guidelines purported in literature describing ethical practices related to conduction research with human participants. These principles were applied by the researcher throughout the study.

Before the study commenced, the researcher obtained permission to conduct study from the DoE, the school where the research was to take place and the UKZN ethics committee. The researcher followed the regulations guiding research and practice for those working with human participants throughout the study (De Vos et al., 2011).

The data will be safely stored for a period of five years in the research supervisor's office in a secure location where only the supervisor has access to the material. After the allocated time period, the data will be destroyed.

The findings of the study will be disseminated to the DoE, the school that participated and organisations for the Deaf (DeafSA) in South Africa that granted permission for the researcher to conduct research in the school.

Johnson and Christensen (2011) state that informed consent must be obtained from participants. This requires a description of all the features of the study that might have an influence on the participants' willingness to take part in the study by making, achieved by making them aware of the nature and purpose of the study. The authors describe voluntary participation, which indicates the participants' right to withdraw, at any point, without consequence. The researcher is required to protect all participants' physical and mental wellbeing throughout the research process, as far as is possible. Hearing participants were provided information regarding the study and what participation would entail in spoken and written English and the Deaf participant in written English and SASL. Informed consent thus guided the participants' decisions to consent.

The authors describe the need to make explicit that participants' confidentiality, anonymity and privacy will be protected (De Vos et al., 2011). In this study, the names of participants were replaced with numbers and the name of the school will not be revealed in the write-up of the study. The principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence, where no harm and maximum benefit to the participants guides practice. All six house-parents were invited to participate as well as the members of the senior management team. Whilst the study aims to promote learners wellbeing through further understanding the role house-parents play in their wellbeing promotion in the hostel, learners' perspectives were not included in the data collection process of this study as their perspectives had been captured in the researcher's previous PhD study which led to the development of this current study. The researcher explained that there would be no compensation for participation other than the possible benefits derived from participants' sharing their experiences and ideas. The researcher reviewed findings with participants to ensure the themes revealed as a result of theme analysis accurately reflect participant meaning.

3.7. DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic Analysis

In this study, the data were analysed using thematic analysis. The data was summarised so as to make sense of the cumulative findings of the study. This process helped to make the data useful. Thematic analysis allows for the reduction of data sets resulting in themes and sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2009). Data is reduced into smaller, meaningful amounts of information, which makes it easier to communicate as feedback, in this instance, feedback to the school, the DoE and organisations for the Deaf, so that the cumulative findings of the study can become transferable and accessible to a wider audience.

Thematic analysis is described by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Attride-Sterling (2001) as both a useful, flexible and malleable method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data sets in rich detail.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe a theme as something important about the data. The theme needs to be important in relation to the research question and common throughout the entire

data set. Because of the way in which data is understood using theme analysis, Vaismoradi et al., (2013) describe it as a suitable approach for answering questions that explore peoples' concerns, opinions and/or beliefs.

When conducting thematic analysis, the researcher is called upon to work reflexively, moving back and forth between the data sets to clearly identify salient themes and sub-themes within the data. This reflexive process will allow for a thorough analysis of the data rather than a superficial examination of the material and accurate creation of inclusive themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe six distinct but inter-related phases of thematic analysis. This includes becoming familiar with the data which can be achieved through reading and re-reading, resulting in the creation of initial codes. Setting out the data into meaningful groups and identifying themes requires the researcher to look at the data from a broader perspective. Codes combine to form a main theme and corresponding sub-themes. Each theme needs a written analysis which describes the theme and its relation to other themes and the data as a set. Lastly, the final analysis and the writing of takes place. The report should be clear, simple and an accurate review of the story the data tells. The write-up contains evidence of the themes and includes examples from the data from which the themes were derived (Babbie, 2013).

The inductive theme analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2007) took place in six stages, requiring the researcher to move back and forth between the data sets. This process of submerging oneself and moving back and forth between the raw data culminated in the emergence of main themes which stood out in the entire data set. Sub-themes related to the main themes organized the data under the main theme. Initially, the researcher read and re-read the transcribed data. Codes were allocated. These codes were used to identify the emergent themes. The data falling into the themes and sub-themes is refined throughout the process, collating the ideas into the main ideas that that the participants put forward. The process condenses the data but also organizes the raw data into meaningful units which can be used to understand the role that house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion in a residential school for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.

The study was inductive and naturalistic which helped to ensure that the complexity of the phenomenon which was understanding the role of house-parents in learners' wellbeing

promotion, from the participants' perspectives. This was achieved by exploring participants' meaning, as well as what assumptions underpin the meaning, to help to answer the research question. This process is understood to be impacted on by the quality of the data collection. It is deemed necessary to ensure that participant meaning was accurately captured (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The researcher used member checking to ensure participant meaning had been accurately captured. In this study the researcher employed inductive analysis and thus the thematic analysis was data-driven.

During the data analysis phase of the study, the researcher met with her supervisor to discuss the data. Collaborative discussion regarding the researcher's emergent themes helped ensure validity and reliability of the findings. The emergent themes were reviewed multiple times to ensure that each theme is distinct and captures the essence of the participants' perspectives.

3.8. RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

Guba (1981) has provided researchers with an alternative to reliability and validity within the qualitative paradigm in the form of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is described by Cohen et al. (2007) as the extent to which the researcher is able to convince his or her readers that the research findings, the research process and the conclusions are credible. Cohen et al. (2007), states that to ensure the study has rigor, the researcher has to present findings that are credible, transferable, dependable and conformable. Guba (1981) further describes the concept of transferability; an alternative way of describing the generalisability of the study and credibility, the researcher's ability to have represented the essence of the study. Dependability replaces reliability focusing rather on methodological rigor. Confirmability allows for the researcher to evaluate their influence on the study and their unique biases. If the research is deemed to meet these criteria, the study is described as trustworthy (Cohen et al., 2007).

In this study crystallisation, described as the combination of multiple forms of analysis and genres of representation into a clear, coherent text replaces triangulation (Ellingson, 2009). To ensure the trustworthiness of this research through crystallisation the researcher used methods and procedures that were aligned with the aims of the research. The researcher also listened to all the voices of the participants. Transparency was ensured by informing the participants throughout the research process. The researcher acknowledged her own biases in

the process and addressed these through self-reflexive engagement with the researcher supervisor. The researcher presented rich descriptions of the data. The researcher adhered to ethical considerations throughout the process by showing respect for participants' right to anonymity and confidentiality. These processes followed were guided by the work of Ellingson, (2009) and Tracey (2010).

3.9. QUALITY CRITERIA

Cohen et al. (2007) state that to ensure that research is trustworthy, the findings of studies need to be credible, transferable, dependable and conformable. According to De Vos et al. (2011) the research report produced is required to stand independently; the message the researcher intends to convey must be clear, informative and thorough.

3.10. SUMMARY

In this chapter, a description of the methodological aspects of the study were presented. A description of the research site, the selection of participants, the instruments and methods of data collection and analysis were presented. The chapter concluded with a discussion regarding the rigor of the study and the ethical issues the researcher addressed.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a review of the findings will be presented. The findings of the house parents will be presented first followed by the findings of the school management team. An integrated discussion of the various perspectives will conclude the chapter.

4.2. FINDINGS OF HOUSE PARENTS.

The various house-parents that participated in this research study described their understanding of wellbeing and what they perceive their role in learners' wellbeing promotion in the school hostel to be. The house-parents understood wellbeing to include being able to complete the duties expected of them, coupled by the strategies they use to help them cope. These strategies employed facilitate their ability to care for the learners' multiple needs. Main themes emerged from the data set in this regard and include 'challenges faced in the hostel' and 'strategies used by house-parents to help them cope'. Within these main themes, various sub-themes emerged. A discussion of the main and sub-themes will follow.

4.3. MAIN THEME 1: CHALLENGES FACED IN THE HOSTEL

The house-parents all described various challenges faced by the house-parents that influence the promotion of the learners' wellbeing. The house-parents experience burdens related to being in a caring role. Such burdens include the multiple duties they are required to perform. These challenges impact their ability to effectively carry out all tasks expected of them, which they understand to consequently negatively impact the promotion of learners' wellbeing, such as the reported lack of house-parent empathy. Various communication related challenges are reported to impact the house -parents' ability to promote learners' wellbeing in the hostel. Such communication challenges include communication challenges between parents, relational difficulties between house-parents and strained relations between house-parents and teachers. The table below represents the house-parents' main theme 1 and the sub-themes related to main theme 1.

| MAIN THEME 1 | SUB-THEMES |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Challenges faced in the hostel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibilities and burdens of being in a caring role • Lack of house-parent empathy • Communication • Power differentials |

TABLE 2

Main theme 1 and Sub-Themes Related to Main Theme 1

4.3.1. SUB-THEMES

The main house-parent theme ‘challenges faced in the hostel’ is comprised of various sub-themes including: responsibilities and burdens of being in a caring role, lack of house-parent empathy, communication and power differentials. A discussion of these various sub-themes is presented below.

- *Responsibilities and burdens of being in a caring role*

House-parents across the sample made reference to the challenge related to their house-parent role. The house-parents expressed that the burden of their duties impacts their ability to care for the learners in the hostel. House-parents report feeling over-extended and often unrecognized for their effort at school. This is revealed by a comment made by Participant 1: “Another thing that is hard for us is that we have to take full responsibility for the small children in the junior hostels. This can be very difficult. We have three-year olds and they are still in nappies, which we have to change”.

The participant added later that:

‘Outside schools, with no boarding facilities, have day-duty only. If we worked there, we would send children home who messed themselves. Here, a child in class, if they wet themselves or soil themselves, it becomes the house-parents’ problem (even if they are not a hostel resident). This means that your duty never stops because you are involved in the class and the hostel, day and night. If the children mess themselves at night, we have to get up and change them and their bed. This means we work both day and night’.

These identified burdens result in the house-parents feeling over-extended at work, which can have a potential negative impact on their and the learners' wellbeing as the house-parents are tired and stressed. This is confirmed by Participant 2: *"Medication is another challenge. In the day we have the school sister (nurse) but at night it becomes the house-parents' responsibility."*

Some participants indicated that certain parents do not take responsibility for their children at school. This is highlighted by a comment made by Participant 8: *"It is different working now compared to how it was before. The parents now just want to give responsibility to the house-parents"*. One way in which this manifests is through the ineffective delivery of medication to school and inappropriate administration of medication at home. This is highlighted by the following comment: *"Parents who are not responsible make it hard for us to do our job properly."* (Participant 2). The participant later commented: *"There is a lack of medication administered in the home often. The children are not well and the meds are supposed to come from home; this is the parents' responsibility"*.

Some participants described how certain learners in the school hotel are diagnosed with serious illnesses. House-parents reported that by parents and care-givers not wanting to disclose details of their child's HIV status makes it challenging to provide effective support for the learner as the child is often unwell or unable to concentrate properly due to their illness, or because of the side-effects of their medication but this information is not directly disclosed to the teachers or the house-parents. *"If they send the child to school sick, this is careless"* (Participant 1). Further evidence related to house-parents feeling over-extended is evidenced by their being required to administer medication to sick learners which can be stressful due to the seriousness of the illnesses the learners can be diagnosed with. This causes the house-parents to need to check on learners throughout the night. This is made evident by: *"We have to administer serious medications to sick children, like HIV. We have to get it right otherwise the child can get sick"* (Participant 2).

The house-parents acknowledged that many parents or care-givers do not converse with their D/deaf children and thus the responsibility to teach the D/deaf learners about life after school, their future, becomes part of the house-parent role. This is made evident by: *"We have to talk to them about their future"* (Participant 5). Some house-parents believe part of their role is to teach the learners about being proud of who they are. This is highlighted by the following

comment: *“We need to show them love, teach them who they are so that we can develop a positive attitude for the Deaf child”* (Participant 8). The participant elaborated later that: *“We need to teach the children about respect. This is not a matter of age; motivate the child to be better. As a house-parents, I am like a father”*. Participant 1 understands the role of house-parent to include teaching life skills to the learners in the hostel; understood to impact learner wellbeing, but which also adds additional responsibility to the role of the house-parent. This is highlighted in the following comment: *“The house-parents also try to teach the learners about the household, teach them responsibility. They do not seem to have a sense of responsibility instilled in them”*. One participant described the contrast between the learners in the hostel; some being taught well and are prepared in being able to look after themselves and their possessions independently, others are not taught at all and their biological parents or care-givers, who then expect the house-parents to impart these skills to the learners. Other learners are described by the house-parents as being indulged at home and are thus not willing to help themselves. Another participant commented on the lack of guidance the learners have at home which the house-parents are then required to address at school, placing further burden on them: *“The children lack training at home; bathing, dressing, manners, social skills”* (Participant 8). These aspects of being in a caring role are reported to result in house-parents feeling overburdened in their role which has a reported negative impact on the learners in the hostel.

Parkin (2010) raises awareness of people having lowered expectations of the Deaf in comparison to their hearing peers. She believes that the Deaf are capable of achieving the same as hearing learners. This low expectation is evidenced in parents not expecting their Deaf child to be an active and contributing member of the family. This attitude often leads parents to not teach their D/deaf child life-skills that he or she needs to develop to manage independently one day. This becomes a duty that then falls on the shoulders of the house-parent to teach the learners in their hostel skills for independent living, which further burdens the house-parent. Rather than being able to consolidate skills taught by parents, house-parents are forced to teach the hostel learners basic skills, which is described as time consuming and frustrating but when the learners and parents or care givers are grateful, the house-parents described this as rewarding and thus his enjoyment of his job, enhanced.

As a way forward, Participant 4 was curious to hear what other house-parents are expected to do in their job descriptions’. This is reported by: *“The job description of a house-parent at*

this school is different to the role of a house-parent in others schools. It would be good to meet with other house-parents to see how the job description differs". The issue of not having a standard job description for house-parents from the DoE might be seen to play a role in the house-parents feeling over extended. As indicated in a statement made by Breakwell (2016), having a clear indication of what is expected of a house-parent throughout hostels in other schools for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal would help the house-parents generally to frame the expectations of what their role entails. This can place house-parents in a position where equity in role expectations guides practice in schools with school hostels. This practice would then promote social justice.

- ***Empathy by house-parents***

Whilst all participants acknowledged the many challenges faced by house-parents in the caring professions, some participants raised awareness to the importance of showing the learners love and compassion despite the challenging work. Awareness was raised to the fact that a lack of empathy shown towards the learners in the hostel is thought to negatively impact learner wellbeing promotion. This is highlighted by: "*Some of the house-parents are not empathetic towards the children. They are not loving parents. The children then go to other house-parents for love and care*" (Participant 5). The participant explained how empathy for the learners is vital for the children to feel at home in the school hostel. The participant explained the need of having to think in creative ways to meet the needs of the learners, despite the challenge this presents. This is made evident by the comment: "*You make a plan to help them*".

Participant 5 believes that providing relational support to learners in the hostel is vital for the promotion of their wellbeing and is made evident by: "*You need to find ways of really listening to the child*". Participant 5 believes that some house-parents are quick to shout and punish learners in the hostel rather than listening to what they have to say in their defense. This is highlighted by the following statement: "*Part of our role is to calm the kids down. Some of the house-parents are not empathetic towards the children. They are not loving parents*". The reported findings indicate that the house-parents are struggling to meet the learners' needs in the respective hostels.

One participant raised awareness of the importance of understanding the impact of body language of the house-parents on learner wellbeing promotion. The house-parent stated that Deaf learners use body-language as a means to communicate. The D/deaf child is able to pick up hostile body language. If the house-parent is upset or angry, this might be evident in their body language when communicating with the learners in the hostel. The difficulty is that the house-parents anger might not be related to the child with whom they are interacting but this has the potential to be interpreted by the child as anger related to them. The D/deaf child might misinterpret this as anger shown towards them as they are sensitive to body language. Miscommunication or misunderstanding can thus easily develop if the house-parents do not take this consideration into mind. This is confirmed by the following comment made by Participant 3: *“They see your body language so even if you sign nicely to them they can see how you really feel by your body language. You need to look them in the eye, go down to their level and really engage with them. This will make them feel good”*. The importance of understanding the needs and the ways of the Deaf is identified in the literature in Chapter 2 as impacting learner wellbeing in the residential school for the Deaf and made evident in this above-mentioned house-parents’ comment (McKee et al., 2013). Understanding the specific needs and ways of the Deaf is essential to wellbeing promotion, as indicated by participant 3. Participant 3 further confirms the sentiment proposed by McKee et al. (2013) in the following comment:

“We were taught that you don’t get a bad child, you get bad parents. I get shocked when I see things here. I’m like the mom here. The kids come to me if they are sick. The kids can read our body language. A hug in the morning improves things for them. Love is good for children”.

This comment made by Participant 5 indicated the importance of providing love and care to the learners in the school hostel.

- ***Communication***

Communication was identified as an integral aspect of learner wellbeing promotion evidenced by all house-parents. The school requires communication to take place through SASL because of the educational policy of signed bilingualism guiding practice at the school. This school policy corresponds to the Dakar Framework for Action (WHO, 1986) and locally

in the White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) where the right to a meaningful education tailored to meet individual learner need is stated. This policy allows for learners to be able to communicate in a language suited to the communication needs of the Deaf. This aspects of residing in the hostel is understood to correspond positively to learner wellbeing promotion and an aspect of the role of house-parent which impacts learner wellbeing at the school as indicated by Lenta (2016) in Chapter 1 and 2 as house-parents are all able to use SASL to communicate however, true SASL fluency is not evident amongst all hostel staff. Applying the critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda situated within a social model of disability, calls for addressing inequality to promote social justice, in this case, the learners' rights to benefit from an education tailored to their specific needs (DoE, 2001). In this regard, house-parents SASL fluency is necessary and this is a matter to be addressed by the senior management staff and the governing body to ensure that training and support are provided to house-parents with the development of skills in this regard.

Lack of parental SASL fluency

One of the major challenges raised by the participants was the lack of parental fluency in SASL at home. Some learners who live in children's homes have no access to signed communication on the weekends or school holidays and thus parenting then falls on the shoulders of the house-parents at school. This is made evident by the following comment: *"Also, in the homes where the orphans live, no one communicates in South African Sign Language. Because of the lack of communication, these learners are always happy to come back to the hostel on Sunday night because we can communicate with them (Participant 1).*

To address this challenge, as indicated in Lenta (2016), the school offers free SASL classes to families of the learners on the weekends. Due to contextual challenges such as the cost of traveling to the school to attend to the lessons or because of transport difficulties, many families cannot access this free resource. The school and the parent support group at school have taken cognoscente of this and have now made SASL resources available electronically. Participant 2 commented that as SASL resources are available on USB: *"Now there is no excuse!"*. Some house-parents still raised the importance of being able to attend SASL classes in person and thus the suggestion of widening the catchment area to facilitate classes in areas where many of the parents reside is made. The financial burdens faced by many South African families, especially those in rural areas are acknowledged (Duncan, Magnuson,

Kalil, & Zoil-Guest, 2012). These such challenges impact the ability of families of Deaf learners to access these opportunities resulting in unfair access to resources and thus hindering social justice. The implication is thus that accommodations to enable parents to access such support requires providing support in ways that meet the target audiences' needs. As the school is limited in its capacity to provide a wider support network to parents and families of Deaf learners, partnering with organizations for the Deaf and the DoE in this regard is suggested.

The importance of family-wide communication for D/deaf children's wellbeing is revealed in the literature by Sardar et al. (2012). The lack of fluency leads to misunderstanding which causes distress and frustration for D/deaf children. This distress and frustration is brought to the hostel where the house-parent is often required to address the child's concerns. Some house-parents described this as adding pressure to their job as they have many duties to perform when the learners arrive on a Sunday afternoon and having to address the learners' family problems on a weekly basis, is described as both tiring and time consuming. Participant 3 indicated that learners in her hostel have reported that her parents have been angry or fighting but when the biological parents were asked, feedback indicated that the parents were not arguing, just talking expressively. This lack of understanding due to communication barriers is understood to negatively impact learner wellbeing, as these learners were concerned about home circumstances. However, their concerns might not necessarily be based on fact. This is revealed by: "*Sometimes the D/deaf child thinks the mother is shouting but they might not be. The body language of D/deaf and hearing people is different*". McKee et al. (2013) have indicated the importance of recognizing and attending to the needs and the ways of the Deaf. The house-parent in her own way has understood this sentiment and recognizes the importance of body language when communicating with a Deaf child. Body language can convey a message that might not be transmitted in the signed conversation and can thus cause confusion for the Deaf child. Empowering parents in understanding this aspect of Deaf culture would assist the house-parents and the D/deaf learner in wellbeing promotion as learner confusion might be reduced, parents would feel empowered, and house-parents less burdened, which corresponds with the critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda nested in a social model of disability.

Some parents have unrealistic expectations of the house-parents and this is confirmed by the following: "*They call the house-parents for homework support on the weekend.*" (Participant

2). Building on from this lack of understanding due to communication barriers, the biological parents of the learners have limited capacity to support their children with their homework due to lack of SASL fluency, which is identified as a necessity for building strong relationships within the family unit (Sardar et al., 2012). This places undue pressure on the house-parents, which has a negative impact on their wellbeing, and impacts their attitude at work as they feel reluctant to be bullied by the parents and frustrated that if homework is incomplete, the teachers will inform the house-parents in an accusatory manner. This is highlighted by the comment made by Participant 2: *“Some parents view the house-parents as surrogate parents; the house-parents will take the responsibility. The problem is SASL!”* Whilst this issue is related to communication, this lack of parental communication with the Deaf child is understood to contribute to house-parent burnout, as indicated in the literature by Breakwell (2016).

Communication breakdown between house-parents and parents

Barriers to communication between parents/care-givers and house-parents is identified as impacting the role house-parents play in learner wellbeing at the school. This is expressed in the comment made by Participant 1: *“It can be difficulty to get hold of them (parents). They also don’t always get back to you”*. By not attending meetings at school, house-parents are not afforded the opportunity to directly interact with parents or care-givers to address such matters. Findings ways to encourage rather than blame parents are proposed as a way to facilitate change and development, as called for by the critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda, situated within a social model of disability that guided this research study.

Communication barriers between orphanages and the house-parents cause frustration for the house-parents which has a direct impact on the emotional wellbeing of the learner. This is revealed by: *“One of the most difficult parts of our job is working with the children who are orphans. Trying to make contact with their homes. Sometimes the children don’t know when they are going to be collected from the bus and often they have no money with them”* (Participant 1).

Some house-parents indicated that they find themselves caught between families who experience relational difficulties or who are legally separated or divorced. In-order to meet

the needs of the children the house-parents sometimes need to ask both sets of parents for items needed in the hostel. This can result in their getting caught up in family difficulties and facing the anger of some family members. This is made evident by: *“When parents have split up, we sometimes get caught up in the middle of the problems”* (Participant 2). Supporting house-parents in the development of mediating skills might facilitate a change in the way challenging relational situations are handled which might reduce house-parent stress and burnout.

- ***Power differentials***

Participant 3 raised awareness to the unequal role house-parents have in comparison to teachers. She reported that teachers use learners to gather information about teachers and about the house-parents whilst this practice is not enacted by house-parents. This is made evident through the following:

“Teachers ask children what happens in the hostel. House-parents don’t question the children about what the teachers do in the classroom. It is not an equal role that we have. We have to make sure the kids stay good kids. I really don’t believe in using the kids for gossip; for information related to fights between the teachers”.

Evans, Hanlin and Prilleltensky (2007) raise awareness of the importance of promoting equity and social justice if communities are to move from ameliorative to transformative support. As participants raised inequality in terms of power related to position, it appears necessary to address this matter within the school.

The house-parents raised awareness of the unequal power positions within the school, where the learners and house-parents do not share equal power with the teachers. Teachers are able to administer punishment on learners and then report to the that house-parents claiming that they, the house-parents are not supervising homework. However, some house-parents believe that the learners sometimes have not finished their homework because there was too much work given or the learner was not able to answer the tasks. A suggestion for differentiated homework was made by participant 5: *“I have had some kids try to sneak off to try to finish their homework because they are scared of their teachers”*. It is suggested in the literature that learners work collaboratively and with the support of adults to build their capacity to

identify and address harmful conditions, as indicated by Evans et al. (2007) in their article on youth and democracy in regards to wellbeing promotion.

Some house-parents feel isolated from the rest of the staff members and feel that they are taken advantage of and not given due recognition for the work that they do, especially when this is above and beyond their call of duty. This is made clear by a comment made by Participant 5:

“House-parent here are just a floor-mat. We are not involved in whole-staff events such as the Valentine’s Day event. In the staffroom, they are all friends. At the Christmas functions, people don’t mingle. That does not happen. It’s not nice to go. People shout out in the kitchen, the HODs. Am I deaf? I can’t answer back. I don’t always want praise but it’s also tough when people don’t thank you for all you do. I’m not just the cook. I do so much. I never say no.

Participant 5 raised awareness to the fact that house-parents are often excluded from school-wide initiatives and fun activities. The house-parents consequently believe that they are taken for granted as they are only called upon when their services are required for additional work, such as school weekend events. This speaks to the possible effect of burnout of those in the caring profession as indicated by Breakwell (2016). Finding ways to include house-parents, as well as providing a forum for them to share their experiences openly and constructively, might help to facilitate change in a health and wellbeing promoting way, in line with the critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda guiding this research study.

Whilst this reality of it being a low-paid and challenging job, Participant 5’s comment describes a passion for the job he does which motivates him to continue to work hard despite the many challenges that he faces in his job. This is made evident by the following comment: *“You can’t just do this job for the salary and provide only basic care”*. Building on from participant 5’s comment, the school can aim to shift the current dynamic to that of a ‘strength-based, preventative and empowering, community-oriented approach to wellbeing promotion’ (Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 59). This type of approach can thus encompass the house-parents understanding of the roles and responsibilities that are part of the caring profession but likewise an approach that is humanizing and supportive.

4.3.2. DISCUSSION OF MAIN THEME 1

‘Challenges faced in the hostel’ was identified as the main theme. These identified challenges are understood to impact the house-parents’ ability to care for the learners in the hostel as they tend to feel over-burdened and underappreciated.

‘Responsibilities and burdens of being in a caring role’ is identified as a sub-theme. Referring to the study conducted by Breakwell (2016), certain conditions tend to lead to stress and burnout in the caring professions. Such conditions include long and unsociable working hours, not having a clear indication of what is expected of them in their role, limited salary and improbable chances of promotion and limited opportunity to be a stakeholder in decision-making opportunities that affect the care worker. These conditions were explicitly remarked upon by the majority of house-parents and thus their feelings of demotivation, stress and possible burnout are understood from this perspective.

A lack of empathy for the learners is noted by some house-parents. When trying to understand the causes of the lack of empathy shown to learners, the participants reported the stress of being in a caring role as impacting their ability to provide support and containment to the learners. The literature regarding burnout in caring professions is common. Findings from a study conducted by Breakwell (2016) report that those in a caring profession, such as nurses, tend to withdraw from patients when they experience stress which leads to burnout. The same thinking can be applied to the findings of this study where house-parents experience demotivation and lack of empathy because of the excessive demands of the job and the impact this has on their functioning. A call to move from punitive to supportive practice, as suggested by Siegal and Bryson (2015) in all the hostels is made by some participants; some house-parents are caring but others described as uncaring towards the learners. Findings ways to address house-parent stress is suggested to facilitate a move to care and compassion being shown to the learners in the hostels which is in-line with the transformative agenda for this study.

Lack of empathy and frustration can be the result of the effect of stress (Breakwell, 2016). Such effects are reported in the literature to include behavioural, psychological and emotional effects. Some house-parents were reported to be frequently absent from duty, which can possibly be as a result of work-related stress. Participant 5 described writing in her diary as a means to process her frustrations as she feels that she does not have the freedom to voice these publically without recrimination. This can possibly be linked to work-related stress. Acknowledging and addressing such effects is necessary for the house-parents to be able to full-fill their role as responsible house-parent. Some house-parents referred to lack of job satisfaction because they believe they are not appreciated, nor their feelings taken into consideration. Having to follow instructions from teachers results in house-parents experiencing power-differentials that leave them feeling frustrated and powerless which leads to dissatisfaction with their job. Lack of freedom to voice concerns in meetings with the senior management where grievances tend to result in accusations of racism, some house-parents do not speak up and thus the cycle of silenced voices, those with less power in settings, is perpetuated.

The relationships in school and with the parent body are described as complex and often poor. House-parents identified the importance of having good, clear, open communication between the school as well as with the parent body. HPS (DoH, 2014) call for collaborative networking between all participants. The importance of this noted by house-parents. Development of ways to facilitate collaboration between the staff is a suggested.

In regards to power-differentials within the school system, house-parents feel that they are spoken to by teachers in ways that they would not be able to speak back to teachers. This frustration feeds into the feelings of historic injustices due to Apartheid ideology and this is understood to breed contempt and dissatisfaction amongst the house-parents. This can result in lack of motivation and feelings of frustration. The call made by Mertens (2009) to consider all points of view within the community for the process of transformation speaks to this finding. This leads to the need to develop opportunity for house-parents to have their points of view heard. Responding to the call for equity and social justice to guide practice as indicated by Evens et al. (2007) is suggested as promoted by the critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda that guided this study.

4.4. MAIN THEME 2: STRATEGIES USED BY THE HOUSE-PARENTS TO HELP THEM COPE

The house-parents described the various strategies that they use in the hostel to help them cope, which they believe influences the promotion of learners' wellbeing. These strategies span from the hostel to the wider school community. A discussion of these strategies will follow. The table below represents the main theme 2 and the sub-themes that emerged from the data set pertaining to the house-parents.

| MAIN THEMES | SUB-THEMES |
|--|---|
| Strategies used by the house-parents to help them cope | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining professionalism • Disciplinary processes • Supportive interventions |

TABLE 3

Main theme 2 and Sub-Themes Related to Main Theme 2

4.4.1. SUB-THEMES

The main theme 'strategies used by house-parents to help them cope' is comprised of a number of sub-themes including; maintaining professionalism, disciplinary processes and supportive intervention. A discussion of these sub-themes will be presented below.

- *Maintaining professionalism*

The house-parents indicated that the maintenance of boundaries impacts learner wellbeing in the school hostel. Being able to differentiate themselves from the parents and care-givers makes it possible for the house-parents not to feel overwhelmed in their job. Boundaries take the form of separation from the home-life of the learners in the hostel through boundary establishment and maintaining professionalism on the job.

One house-parents described how she has to be able to put aside personal challenges and focus on the job of being a house-parent. Participant 3 indicated the value in remaining professional in the hostel; keeping personal difficulties to herself. This is highlighted by: "At

work, your problems have to be out and you need to focus on your work; even with big things. You must not let your problems invade your work with your children”.

- ***Disciplinary Processes***

Participant 2 believes that learner wellbeing is promoted through the establishment of rules in the hostel. This is revealed in the following comment: *“There are rules about what the house-parents like and don’t like. This helps things in the hostel”*. When rules are broken, this house-parent believes that consequences to this help to restore a state of wellbeing. This is made clear in the following comment: *“The house-parents give warnings if the hostel learners break the rules”*. Some house-parents believe it is part of their role to discipline but within this role as disciplinarian, appropriate means to address learner behavior need to be established. This is made evident by: *“Don’t shout at the child. You need to find an alternative to shouting. “You need to find ways to motivate and encourage.”* (Participant 8).

One house-parent indicated that whilst there are rules and regulations and support structures to support the house-parent. This is revealed by: *“The house-parents can also report behavior to the HODs and then there are consequences for the learners”*, as indicated by Participant 2. One house-parent commented that the house-parent cannot always go to the senior management to resolve problems in their hotel as this diminishes their relationship with the learners in the hostel. This is revealed by the comment made by Participant 5: *“You lose the father role if you punish all the time”*. Empowering house-parents with behavior management skills is understood as a means to facilitate change and development that it in-line with learner wellbeing promotion and a way in which aligns with the critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda situated within the social model of disability as is called for in this research study.

Participant 3 indicated that the principal at the school is supportive. The house-parent feels that she is able to disclose mistakes that she has made and can share her problems with the principal. This is revealed by the comment: *“If I make a mistake, I feel it inside, I have to go and say sorry to the principal. I have support from her. I can report things to her. It is a good system.”* The participant further indicated that the HODs do not understand the difficulties the house-parents face and the participant feels that she does not have support from the HODs. This sentiment is made evident by the following statement: *“The HODs do*

not understand.” The participant indicated that feedback regarding the learners in their hostel is not reported directly, only via the principal in their weekly meetings. The participant believes direct communication would improve wellbeing for both learners and house-parents. This is made explicit by: *“If the HODs get a report on a child, they don’t come to the house-parents. In the meeting with the principal, we get the feedback about the child where she re-tells the HOD feedback”* (Participant 3). One house-parents raised awareness of the lack of supportive, collaborative relationship between teachers and house-parent; poor communication which leads to relationships that are not build on trust. This is highlighted by the following statement from Participant 5: *“Everything comes with trust. This is also between parents and the teachers. Teachers and house-parents only interact when there is a crisis. If relationships between house-parents and teachers were better things would be easier”*.

There are currently supportive structures in place at the School for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal. These support structures provide processes and practices that support both staff and learners. Building on from these support structures is necessary for the principles of the transformative paradigm, described by Mertens (2009) in Chapter 2. Identifying and building on from current community strengths, helps the school community to shift from ameliorative to transformative support. Such support comes from structure within the school from the senior management staff to HODs. These identified members of staff are there to support both teachers and house-parents in their particular phases. Whilst this structure is supposed to aid the house-parents, due to available time, meetings between these members of the staff are minimal. *“There are not enough house-parent meetings”* (Participant 6). Additional challenges were revealed through the relational difficulties between house-parents and HODS as purported by the house-parents.

Amicable conflict resolution was identified a potential challenge to maintaining house-parent relationships. Barriers include racial tensions between house-parents. Conflicts between house-parents and between house-parents and other members of staff have been addressed through teaching unions in the past rather than through internal processes utilizing senior management staff members in-line with school policy. This is revealed by the following comment: *“Even if you say something to the principal, some house-parents go to the unions”* (Participant 5). The participant raised awareness to the racial conflict between hostel staff. This is revealed in the following statement made by participant 5: *“No one believes me if I*

say anything anyway. I write in my dairy. I don't complain in the meetings either because it's always just a problem between racial allegations. Other participants believe that some house-parents are not treated equally. Some house-parents are reported to take leave without permission being granted. Despite frequent leave being taken without permission, some participants believe that the repercussions do not result in significant reprimand or consequence for the person who did not comply to the rules regarding the lack of permission granted to take leave. This attitude is described as unfair by participants and causes some house-parents to feel demotivated as their continual attendance at work and their fulfillment of their duties is perceived not to be recognized. The lack of uniformity in conflict-resolution appears to frustrate some house-parents who feel accused of various transgressions whilst other house-parents appear to break rules with limited or no consequence. To facilitate social justice, equity in policy development and policy adherence to conflict resolution is therefore proposed as this will facilitate an activation of the critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda in this study.

- ***Supportive interventions***

Some participants raised awareness of the value of supportive interventions such as memory work. These interventions are understood as means to support learners with emotional difficulties. Some interventions are established at the school and they can be further developed and the facilities more actively utilised, moving from identified community strengths to facilitate change and development that promotes learner wellbeing. Participant 3 made the following comment: *“I think memory work was very helpful for the children. The problem is that the parents don't like it. Some mothers have told their child that their father has passed but this is not always true. This puts us in a difficult position with the child”*. Finding ways to work collaboratively with parents and care-givers of the learners appears vital to the success of this intervention and would be a way to facilitate change and development; as called for by the transformative agenda of the study.

4.4.2. DISCUSSION OF MAIN THEME 2

The house-parents identified a range of strategies that they employ to help them cope with the challenges they face in the hostel. These include maintaining professionalism, disciplinary processes and supportive interventions.

Maintaining professionalism allows for house-parents to focus on their job which is identified as the provision of care to the learners in their respective hostels. Being able to turn their attention to their tasks at hand is identified as important. To facilitate their ability to focus on their tasks at hand, the researcher promotes the necessity of finding a space for house-parents to freely discuss their concerns and problems in an environment that is safe and contained where all perspectives are recognized and valued is made evident. Having such a forum will allow for silenced voices to be heard, and thus for matters to be addressed rather than suppressed which currently tends to lead to house-parent stress, frustration and potential burnout. Some house-parents reported that they experienced a feeling of catharsis during the data collection interviews as they had an opportunity to be heard, to voice their ideas and experiences in a non-judgmental space. The ease at which the participants shared openly with the researcher indicates the need to provide such a forum for them as this will facilitate their ability to remain professional when engaging with the learners as their emotions can be addressed in an appropriate space rather than having unresolved feelings affecting their ability to connect to the child. In conjunction with providing a space for house-parents to openly share their concerns and for conflicts to be addressed in a co-operative and non-conflictual manner, some house-parents hoped that over-reliance on teaching unions to address conflict, noted as a demotivating factor for some house-parents is potentially reduced as matters can be internally rather than externally addressed.

Disciplinary processes provide ways for the house-parents to manage the learners' behaviour in the hostels but caution was raised by some house-parents to not focus exclusively on punitive measures but rather to encourage and motivate learners. The researcher makes a call for team-work to manage learners' behaviour is promoted. Equipping the house-parents with skills to help them facilitate or mediate communication between all stakeholders involved in the learners' wellbeing including house-parents, teachers is identified as necessary. The child is described as suffering if effective, amicable communication does not take place between all stakeholders.

Siegle and Bryson (2015) describe discipline as a process to teach rather than punish the child. The researcher suggests such an approach to managing learner behavior in the hostel is called for in response to the punitive approaches favoured by some house-parents. This is reported to include positive parenting, boundary establishment and maintenance through

teaching learners rather than punishing which is favoured by some house-parents. This highlights the complexity faced by the hostel staff where they have to find the balance between maintaining good behavior, ensuring homework is completed whilst simultaneously ensuring that the learners feel that the hostel is their home and it is a place where they can relax and feel happy. Managing this dynamic is understood as an important but challenging aspect of the role as house-parent. Training for house-parents in this regard is necessary as this might be an unfamiliar approach to some.

Relational wellbeing is described as a facet of multi-level wellbeing and thus a vital component of wellbeing promotion in the school hostel (Ng & Fisher, 2013). The research suggests the school should find ways to address relationship breakdown within the school community as this was identified by house-parents as having a negative impact on the learners' wellbeing promotion in the school hostel. The value of relationships is revealed in previous research conducted on wellbeing promotion in residential schools for the D/deaf (Lenta, 2016) and thus the benefits of supporting the stakeholders in the D/deaf learners' lives in skills to enhance relationship development is promoted. As indicated by Staten (2011) the residential school hostel is identified as a setting that has the potential to positively impact learners' wellbeing promotion and thus the importance of providing support measures to facilitate this opportunity is noted.

As revealed in Chapter 2, the Deaf tend to develop more psychological problems than their hearing peers due to issues related to their deafness, including isolation and alienation (Erlich, 2012). This finding speaks directly to the statements made by participants who recognised the value of providing supportive interventions to learners at school and in the hostel. Such interventions include memory-work which all house-parents received training from Sinomlando, the Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in South Africa for as indicated in Chapter 2. Despite the value for the learners, the house-parents face difficulties in negotiating the transfer of relevant information in the memory work activities with some parents who are reluctant to disclose accurate details pertaining to some learners' lives. The researcher proposes helping the house-parents develop skills to negotiate with the parents and care-givers of the learners, to assist them with skills to handle difficulty and potentially emotionally charged conversations. This is identified as a means to facilitate learners' wellbeing promotion as the literature reveals the importance of developing a strong sense of self identity, achievable through knowing who they are, where they belong, addressing loss

and identifying plans that they have for their future, all of which are addressed through memory work.

4.5. FINDINGS SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The two members of the senior management team participated in the data collection interviews. The participants described their understanding of the challenges faced of being in a caring role, and the responsibilities that the house-parents are expected to cope with. The participants described personal characteristics required of the type of person likely to be suitable for this type of work.

4.5.1. MAIN THEME 1: IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE JOB

The two members of the senior management team’s responses comprised of one main theme ‘identifying the right person for the job’ with various sub-themes pertaining to the main theme. A discussion of the main and sub-themes will be presented below.

| MAIN THEME 1 | SUB-THEMES |
|--|--|
| Identifying the right person for the job | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to change • Responsibilities as part of the house-parent role • Discipline • Interpersonal challenges • Collaboration between staff members • Relationship development |

TABLE 4

Main theme 1 and Sub-Themes Related to Main Theme 1

4.5.2. SUB-THEMES

Senior management main theme 1 is comprised of various sub-themes including; resistance to change, responsibilities as part of the house-parent role, discipline, interpersonal challenges, collaboration between staff members and relationship development. A discussion of these sub-themes will be presented below.

- ***Resistance to change***

The senior management staff indicated that support to encourage and teach house-parents ways to engage effectively with the learners in their respective hostels has been provided previously. Whilst support has been provided, intervention has not always been effective. This is highlighted by:

“There has been lots of intervention given to the house-parents in terms of child development. There are always meetings where ideas have been shared on how to extend the kids or to have fun with them. This is not always received well. The hostel appears to have become institutionalized” (Participant 7).

Participant 6 believes that change in attitude and behavior in the hostel regarding the way the house-parents run their home is necessary, despite many previously unsuccessful attempts to teach house-parents new strategies to maintain discipline. This is revealed by: *“There is an attitude of resistance with the house-parents. We need to encourage change. Is there not an easier way? It’s exhausting but I can’t give up”. “More can only come out of the heart of the person, that ‘ah ha’ moment, it’s intrinsic and linked to personality” (Participant 7).*

Identifying the right person for the job is identified as being a contributing factor to learners’ wellbeing promotion. Whilst the house-parent is paid for the work that they do, as well as receiving board and lodging as part of their terms of employment, the salary paid to house-parents is described as being a ‘*low salary*’ as indicated by Participant 7. No qualification is required for the post and thus, those applying for the job are likely to not hold any professional qualifications and thus due to their limited credentials, are willing to apply for the job of house-parent. This has possible implications for the base-line knowledge that house-parents are likely to have in relation to child development, being able to support the learners with the academically-based homework activities and encouraging them to plan for their future. These comments made by the one senior-management staff member indicate the need to develop a base-line qualification and criteria for application for the job of house-parent.

In addition to the limited salary offered to the house-parent, those applying for the job are likely to face additional challenges on the job that might prevent some people from applying

for the posts. Such challenges include being away from their families during the working week. This is made evident by: *“We should be mindful to employ house-parents carefully. The problem is that it is not an easy role. They are away from their own family”* (Participant 7).

- ***Responsibilities as part of the house-parent role***

The senior management staff members indicated that learner numbers in the hostel is identified as a potential barrier to learner wellbeing promotion. There are a limited number of hostel staff employed and due to the many duties the house-parents are expected to perform, having large numbers of learners in the hostel is understood to add extra burden to the role of house-parent. This is highlighted by: *“The hostel is full, 19 senior boys 17 junior boys. We need space. This is looking for problems. This compromises what they get”* (Participant 6). Taking guidance from the DoE (2014) in their SIAS document, the Department of Basic Education is proposing that schools, including schools for the deaf, follow the guidelines provided in terms of screening, identification, assessment and support for how to handle challenges in the school and who to refer to for support.

Participant 6 raised awareness that house-parents do have extra burden placed on them when day scholars are not collected promptly after school. The house-parents are responsible for the weekly boarders at the end of the school day when teachers dismiss the learners from class at 2:00pm. The learners in the hostel participate in afternoon activities with members of staff from 2:45pm-3:45pm. The house-parents are not responsible for learners at this stage but if learners have not been collected between 2:00pm and 2:45pm, the house-parents are responsible for those day scholars. At the end of the afternoon activity time, the house-parents are then responsible for the learners in their respective hostels. If day scholars have not yet been collected, these learners are again attended to by the hotel parents. This places additional burden on the house-parents. This is revealed by: *“More day scholars mean extra pressure on the house-parents who stay until 4pm to be collected from after care.”*. This duty then falls on the shoulders of the house-parent; an extra duty that they simply have to accept, of looking after the day scholars that have not been collected on time.

The school has a desire to employ house-parents who are able to full-fill the role of *‘loco parentis’* as indicated by Participant 6, a senior-management staff member. Due to the

above-mentioned challenges, this is not always an easy task, made evident by the following comment: “*We (the house-parents and school staff) are the mother and father*” (Participant 6). However, participant 6 believes house-parents are expected to attend to the needs of the children, including homework: “*We (referring to the house-parents) have to ask, how was your day, your game? We should know when they have tests. We need to reassure them. At tea and lunch we need to ask how their test went, as you would if you were their parent*”. This is further evidenced by:

“The house-parents are always challenging their job description. They see themselves as victims in their job description; rather than being there for the child. We are not just dealing with people, we have to deal with mindsets, priorities, and these are not all equal at school. If you have taken a job as a ‘house-parent’, some things should just be accepted” (Participant 7).

The researcher acknowledged the conflict between the senior management staff members and the house-parents in regards to the role of the house-parents. Finding ways to reach consensus is suggested to assist the school to grow and develop in this regard, as called for by the transformative agenda and as a way to enhance learners’ wellbeing promotion.

The role of house-parent, according to the senior management staff members who participated, requires mediation between the various stakeholders in the learners’ lives. This is revealed by: “*The role of house-parents is an integrated role between teacher, child and house-parents. If there is a weak link in the chain, the child suffers. There needs to be connection between parental role of biological parents and house-parents*” (Participant 7). Ways to enhance relationship development and communication between teachers and house-parents were suggested. This is evidenced by: “*House-parents should meet teachers, as in parent meetings. This could encourage house-parents and make them aware of the individual needs in the hostel; help to accept the individual*” (Participant 6).

- ***Discipline***

Whilst this punitive approach to learner discipline is favoured by some house-parents, senior management participants believe more care, compassion and love shown towards learners in

the hostel would promote learner wellbeing. A shift to a restorative rather than punitive approach is made by senior management staff, made evident by the following comment:

“Disciplining the children is part of the house-parents’ role. It seems to be easier to do things the ‘old way’; authoritarian, institutional. This leads to the children not respecting the house-parents. In the case of the house-parents; if the rules were not there, then what? Who has responsibility? Who is accountable then? Because of the rules and authoritarian way of running the hostel, it’s the kids that are held accountable” (Participant 7).

Participant 6, a senior management staff member also believes a softer approach to discipline would be preferable than a punitive approach. Behavior management in the hostel is described as authoritarian: *“Discipline is authoritarian; you can’t let your guard down. You can’t be soft and loving and supportive which is the sad part. The house-parents watch to see who will do something wrong, not encouraging the kids.”*. The importance of positive parenting that build the child up rather than lowers their sense of self-value and self-worth is stated in Siegel and Bryson’s (2015) work. The authors encourage discipline processes that build the change behavior and build the child’s brain by activating the thinking part of the brain. The house-parents appear to require training on matters such as being able to understand child behavior. In terms of discipline, the senior management staff concur with Siegel and Bryson who propose that the parent or care-giver needs to try understand why a child has acted in a particular way, and for them to think about what they can teach the child from that particular opportunity, in the best way possible.

- ***Interpersonal challenges***

Conflict management was raised by both house-parents and senior management staff. Participant 6, a senior management staff member believes that conflict resolution regarding house-parent role has become a union matter rather than a school matter, made evident by the following comment: *“In a meeting, if things don’t go the way some house-parents like, they call the union. They use this as leverage. Some will not complete the children’s homework. This is in their job description. There is no need for the union”*. Some house-parents feel that they cannot make any comment regarding the ways the various hostels are run without their comment being reported to the unions.

A further difficulty arises in lack of effective communication between hostel parents and the school management staff. This makes it challenging to address issues as they arise. This is made evident by the following statement: *“There are not enough house-parents meetings. The problem is logistics; hours in the day. One time a term, a meeting between HODs and house-parents would give us all a platform to discuss things”* (Participant 6). The researcher believes that it would appear that priority needs to be placed on the house-parents and the role they play in learner wellbeing promotion. By not ensuring the time for their meetings indicates lesser importance on their value within the school because weekly staff and management meetings take place. For transformative practice to take place, as indicated by Evens et al. (2007) systems structures and role relationships can change through a change in the philosophy of the organization, or school; shifts in beliefs, accountability and participation.

- ***Collaboration between staff members***

Linked to staff relationships Participant 6 later commented: *“Relationships between staff and house-parents would improve the wellbeing of learners. Teachers often don’t know the full picture therefore their immediate reaction is to blame the house-parents. Mediation between teachers and house-parents is not always easy”*. This is indicative of the ineffective communication that often impacts the learners as both teachers and house-parents experience frustration, contributing to break-down in relationship, a fundamental aspect of holistic wellbeing promotion as indicated by Lenta (2016) in Chapter 1.

- ***Relationship development***

Establishing relationships is identified as a way forward and directly addresses the principles for the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2009) as discussed in Chapter 2. A suggestion was made for a paid for weekend away for the house-parents to foster collaborative relationships amongst the staff members in the hostel. This was revealed in the following comment:

“I would love to see the house-parents enjoying each other’s company. Maybe we need to send them on a weekend away? They could be like an extended family, draw on each other for support. Maybe some training on story-telling? Maybe a Bible Study group? Gives

the house-parents a sense of the importance of their lives; empower them from within”
(Participant 7, senior management staff member).

4.5.3. DISCUSSION MAIN THEME 1 – SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The senior management main theme 1 ‘identifying the right person for the job’ is comprised of various sub-themes relating to the main theme. A discussion of these various sub-themes will be presented.

Resistance to change is identified as a barrier to learners’ wellbeing promotion. The findings suggest that resistance is experienced within the house-parent staff but this is understood to be influenced by various factors such as the low salary offered to house-parents coupled with the burdens of being in a caring role.

The way that discipline is managed in the hostels is identified by the senior management staff to vary with some house-parent favouring authoritarian, punitive forms of discipline. Such processes are understood to negatively impact the learners’ wellbeing promotion. Siegel and Bryson (2015) propose that when disciplining children, the adult needs to take time to consider how the house-parent can best teach the child a lesson in response to their action, instead of simply punishing the child. The researcher suggests that parents, in the home and in the hostel need to give children practice in making good choices. Being able to manage the duties that the role of house-parent is comprised of, the senior management staff reported that they believe that specific characteristics are required for the role of house-parent that would enable them to cope with the demands of the job. The participants raised caution when appointing house-parents for the job as the important role they play in learners’ wellbeing promotion is clear. Having the right person for the job, who has the characteristics required to perform the duties expected on someone in a caring role, need to be evident in the person; this can be enhanced through support such as training and intervention but the senior management believe that the house-parents need to possess these qualities innately.

Developing relationship between the house-parents themselves as well as relationships with house-parents and the teachers is identified as a way to facilitate change and development within the school in regards to learners’ wellbeing promotion. A collaborative approach to change and development, including house-parents, management and teachers is suggested.

This approach speaks to the HPS (DoH, 2014) that describes the necessity of collaboration within the school as well as in the wider community.

Speaking directly to relationship development between the house-parents, a call to find ways to support relationship development between house-parents is suggested including a weekend away for team-building as well as relaxation to help house-parents cope with the demands of being in a caring role. Further suggestion to develop a prayer group amongst the house-parents is also identified a way of developing the relationships between the individual house-parents. This initiative was suggested as a means to directly address house-parent demotivation and burnout. Finding ways to facilitate better working relationships between the house-parents themselves, between house-parents and teachers and between house-parents and parents and care-givers is identified as fundamental to learners' wellbeing promotion. The value of having good communication between all stakeholders in learners' wellbeing facilitates effective networking between all groups and leads to collaboration, an aspect of health promoting schools, indicated in Chapter to 2 by Buijs (2009).

4.6. DISCUSSION OF CUMULATIVE FINDINGS OF THE HOUSE-PARENTS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT THEMES

The cumulative findings of the house-parents and the senior management staff indicate that house-parents play an important role in learners' wellbeing promotion in the school hostel. The role house-parents play is understood to be influenced by factors within the wider environment, described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as the person-environment fit. Recognition of the influence of these factors in learners' wellbeing promotion is necessary to enable the school to support the house-parents in their identified role in learners' wellbeing promotion in the school hostel.

As indicated in the literature review in Chapter 2, Bronfenbrenner describes human functioning as comprised of a hierarchy of five systems that interact with one another. These five systems include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the microsystem as a complex mix of activities, social roles and interpersonal relationships which can be found in the immediate setting. Family

relationships, relationships within the local community and relationships within the school environment fall into this category. Experiences in one microsystem which could include, for example, a learner-teacher or learner-house-parent relationship might impact the individual's social interactions in a corresponding microsystem. The mesosystem is comprised of the interrelationship between two or more of the microsystems. Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the exosystem as comprised of the space between the micro and macrosystems (Liao, Lee, Roberts-Lewis, Hong, & Jiao, 2011). The macrosystem is made up of a systems of beliefs that are contextually bound. Bronfenbrenner (1979) states that this system plays a role in the development of a person's personal characteristics. We are required to take cognoscente of the impact of the culture, society or community at the current time as this can, and does change and develop over time (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). The authors describe this broad level of influence to impact all other levels of functioning for the individual, including influence within the community, the school setting, within the family unit and within individual functioning. The chronosystem examines changes that take place over extended periods of time.

Bronfenbrenner highlights the active role people play in their development. People are described as having agency and as being able to influence their development. Whilst individuals play an active role in their development, influences in the environment are still however understood to impact the individual. Influence in one system is understood to have a ripple effect on other systems. With this understanding of the individual in society, the School for the D/deaf, inclusive of the hostel, is understood to be a microsystem nested within a bigger macrosystem with influence from multiple systems. The individual and the school hostel are therefore not viewed in isolation. The individual, the hostel and the school are understood holistically, with recognition of multiple influences impacting the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion. This conceptualization of the hostel, the school and the individuals who reside in the hostel correlates with the critical community psychology perspective with a transformative agenda, situated within a social model of disability that guided this study. This approach values collaboration between all members of a community, in this case, the school hostel and the school community, deemed necessary to facilitate social change in the setting. This approach acknowledges those pushed to the margins of society, as indicate by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010).

The cumulative findings that emerged from the data analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) in Chapter 3, reveal the multiple levels of influence that affect the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion. The cumulative findings regarding the role and the corresponding responsibilities of house-parents in learner wellbeing promotion suggest that there are barriers and challenges that hinder learners' wellbeing promotion as well as structures and processes that are currently in place that promote learners' wellbeing.

Examining microsystem influences that affect the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion, Staten (2011) indicates that the hostel is a location that has the potential to facilitate learners' multi-level wellbeing (Ng & Fisher, 2013) promotion in the school. Having access to language, in this context, SASL, facilitates the process of enculturation to the Deaf culture. Sparrow (2006) speaks of the importance of recognizing and upholding the needs and the values of the Deaf; respecting those who identify with Deaf culture. These microsystem influences impact learners' wellbeing promotion, as they have access to language and communication that meets their unique needs. This speaks directly to the principles put forward by United Nations Convention on Persons with Disabilities which enshrines the rights of deaf people for communication to take place through a visual language (United Nations, 2007). This approach to communication with D/deaf learners mirrors local educational policy. The Education Act (DoE, 1996) and the White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) call for education that is designed to meet the needs of *all* learners. However, the researcher calls the senior management team to carefully consider the SASL fluency of the house-parents to ensure that the learners do in fact benefit from the principles promoted by the various above-mentioned policies.

Whilst the house-parents are able to communicate with the learners and this is a positive experience for them, the house-parents experience stress because of the responsibilities they are faced with in terms of parenting and supporting the child with matters that they believe should be addressed by the biological parents or care-givers at home. As the majority of South African parents are not able to communicate effectively with their D/deaf child (Krige, 2010) this responsibility tends to fall on the shoulders of the house-parent. When parents cannot communicate with their D/deaf child, the house-parents assist the learners with matters that would be attended to at home if parents were able to converse with their child. Finding ways to include and support parents in this regard corresponds with the critical

community psychology approach with a transformative agenda, situated in a social model of disability that guided this study.

Effective communication between stakeholders is identified as a barrier for learners' wellbeing promotion at a micro and mesosystem as referred to by Naidoo and Wills (2000) in Chapter 2. These include communication barriers between hostel parents and biological parents or care-givers, between house-parents and teachers and between house-parents and learners. House-parents described the challenge of being able to get hold of certain parents. Parents are reported to not attend meetings where such issues could be raised. House-parents described limited contact time with teachers and further, that when communication does take place, it is unsatisfactory by house-parents, as teachers purported to have more authority than house-parents and thus more power. Communication between learners and house-parents was described as having both positive and negative aspects. Positive aspects of communication are that SASL is used as the language of communication in the hostel but some house-parents do not consider their sometimes hostile body language and facial expression that can lead to miscommunication between the house-parent and learner. Some house-parents described learners misinterpreting information because of the lack of consistency between what is being signed and the body language and facial expression used. Communication barriers therefore impacts the way in which the house-parents are able to facilitate the promotion of wellbeing of the learners in their hostels. Finding ways to facilitate more effective communication between all stake-holders is deemed necessary to prevent disturbance in the various layers of the eco-system described by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Further micro-and mesosystems influences were identified that are linked to communication in the hostel. Collaboration between the various stakeholders in the residential school hostel including learners, house-parents, parents and teachers is identified in the literature as being necessary for optimal learner wellbeing promotion. This is confirmed by Buijs (2009) in Chapter 2 who highlights the necessity of collaboration between *all* stakeholders in the health promoting school context. Collaboration is thus understood to promote health and wellbeing in the school. Thus finding ways to develop collaboration between stakeholders is necessary, as revealed by the participants. The house-parent is identified as a key role-player in mediation between the various stakeholders. Weak links in the communication chain were reported to negatively impact the learner.

Influence is also exerted by factors beyond the school setting described as meso-and exosystem influences. House-parents reported challenges mediating between parents who have joint legal custody over learners in the hostels. Sometimes parents do not provide resources their children require in the hostel. Mediating between these parents and coping with the lack of resources is understood to negatively impact the house-parents' ability to promote learners' wellbeing as a result of the stress and frustration that results from these types of situations. Breakwell (2016) describes conditions in care-giving professions that can lead to stress and possible burnout. The house-parents' experiences of managing these challenging situations, which they have not had specific training for can therefore lead to stress and burnout which, in turn leads to resistance and demotivation, as reported by the house-parents.

The responsibilities of being in a caring role impact the house-parents' ability to facilitate learners' wellbeing promotion in the hostel. Such micro-and mesosystem influences include their having to perform stressful duties. Such duties include having to administer medication to seriously sick children, such as those diagnosed with HIV. The house-parents indicated that some parents send their children to school sick and without the correct medication, resulting in the house-parents having to manage at school with insufficient support. The suggestion to provide training for the house-parents in this regard is made. This is understood to potentially reduce stress which can lead to burnout, as indicated by Breakwell (2016). The responsibility of administering medication without a medical background might lead house-parents to feel ill-equipped to carry out this specific duty. The reality is that this comprises part of the house-parent role, but support for the house-parents in this regard to ensure the health and wellbeing of the learners is suggested. The findings indicate that house-parents require adequate time to meet the needs of each learner. Because there are many learners in each hostel house-parents might not be able to adequately identify and address their individual problems and/or concerns and this might lead to difficulties or problems for the learner and school. Further suggestion is made to develop a standard base-line qualification required for the house-parent role. Training in this regard can be provided to the prospective house-parent before commencement of such a post therefore reducing the possibility of ill-equipped hostel staff. Offering a solution to lack of house-parent skill and ability to handle complex health and wellbeing related matters through the development of a

minimum qualification for the post corresponds to the critical, community psychology approach with a transformative agenda that guided this study.

Supportive interventions, such as memory work training, as indicated by Sinomlado in Chapter 2, are identified as playing a role in learner's wellbeing promotion. The D/deaf are vulnerable to the development of mental health problems, more so than their hearing peers, as indicated by Erlich (2012) in Chapter 2. In response, such interventions that support the learners are understood to play a role in their wellbeing promotion. House-parent ability to empathize with learners, to be able to show them love and compassion, are identified as further ways to promote learner wellbeing. When house-parents take time to work with learners in the prescribed memory work activities for which they have been previously trained and are able to empathize with the challenges the child faces, the ability to develop a close bond between house-parent and learner is potentially enhanced. Finding a space for house-parents to share their burdens in a safe, contained space will enable them to be able to provide love and care for the learners. They will then be more likely to be able to contain the learners they are offering such lay counselling to as they are likely to not be as heavily burdened by their own worries as they would be without a forum to share of their own difficulties, worries or challenges.

Further influence on the house-parents is exerted though the impact of the relationships between the various stakeholders including house-parents, learners, parents and teachers. These can be described as mesosystem influences: the inter-relationship between two microsystems. Currently, the number of staff members, including the house-parents, who still offer memory work to the learners at school is limited. Resistance to such work is expressed by the house-parents for a number of reasons. Reasons include being overburdened by other tasks, experiencing their own stress and frustration and therefore not being able to contain learners' emotional expressions, as well as parents' reluctance to share information with memory workers which makes understanding their family and the relationships within the family challenging.

Participants expressed awareness to the change in the way things function at school currently compared to how things used to function previously. This is identified as a exo-and macrosystem influences. Maintaining professionalism is identified as a strategy to help some house-parents cope. This means to put their own problems aside and perform their duties as part of their house-parent role. Other house-parents experienced challenges in this regard.

Some house-parents reported an atmosphere of conflict, blame and resentment amongst the hostel staff and the teachers. Some house-parents feel aggrieved by some duties that they are now expected to perform which they were not expected to perform previously. This is noted by some participants as negatively impacting wellbeing of both learners and house-parents. Racial tensions are identified as barriers to relationship development and collaborative work between the house-parents. Findings ways to address these issues in a controlled environment is envisioned as a means to promote unity and cohesion amongst the staff so as to enhance relational wellbeing. This is described by Kitching and Roos (2012) address the possibility of such relationship development growing out of day-to-day interactions within the school setting.

The participants in the study identified challenges in the hostel that impact learners' wellbeing promotion. Influences in the microsystem, described as a complex combination of activities, social roles and interpersonal relationships were identified. These included factors relative to the individual house-parent: their personal characteristics, their internal motivation and their ability to empathize with the learners in their respective hostels. Building the discussion around relationship development, some house-parents are described as using punitive measures to discipline learners in the hostel. Some participants suggested a move away from the disciplinarian, punitive approach to behavior modification. Siegel and Bryson (2015) suggest alternative ways to discipline children. Such methods include taking opportunities to teach the child when they have done something wrong rather than simply punishing them. Senior management staff revealed that training has been provided to house-parents in this regard but not all house-parents have implemented such strategies. The possibility of accessing outside support and training for house-parents in this regard was suggested by one participant.

Another example of exosystem influence is grievance resolution at school. As no standardized policy is provided by the DoE for conflict resolution within schools for the deaf, various house-parents are appealing to teaching unions to resolve internal school matters, disregarding the school's internal grievance policy. HPS schools call for co-operation and collaboration between stakeholders in the school setting in South Africa (Naidoo & Wills, 2000). This behavior is described as causing some house-parents to feel demotivated. This demotivation is described as having a negative impact on the learners in the hostel as house-parents are frustrated, causing certain house-parents to withdraw and not voice their concerns,

as any grievance raised is described as being a racial accusation. Some house-parents feel that they cannot make any comment regarding the ways in which the various hostels are run without their remarks being reported to the unions. This hampers freedom of speech and prevents an open forum for discussion from emerging, which directly inhibits change and transformation. As indicated in Chapter 2, health-promoting schools (DoH, 2016) aim to access support measures and resources to enhance the health and wellbeing of the entire school community. Conflict resolution and racial tensions between the various house-parents prevent the enhancement of health and wellbeing promotion of both learners and house-parents. This lack of conflict resolution is understood to possibly impact house-parent motivation and job satisfaction.

Looking at macrosystem influences which impact the attitudes and beliefs of communities, the importance of health and wellbeing promotion within the school context is evident through multiple policy development globally and nationally. Enshrining of individuals' rights in the South African Constitution (1996), an attitude of inclusion in educational policy (DoE, 2001), and promotion of rights of those specifically with disability (DoE, 1997b,) all lead to an attitude of schools looking to promote learner wellbeing. Whilst there is an attitude of striving towards wellbeing promotion within the Deaf community in South Africa, acknowledgement of the barriers to wellbeing promotion are noted. The house-parents do play a valuable role in learners' wellbeing promotion at the school for the deaf despite the identified barriers. Examining influence from the chronosystem in regards to the role house-parents play in D/deaf learners' wellbeing promotion in the hostel at a school for the deaf, global and local policy that promotes equity and inclusion of all learners facilitates wellbeing promotion.

As a way forward, it is suggested that including the house-parents' perspectives into intervention development could be a means to potentially address house-parent resistance to supportive intervention implemented by senior management for the benefit of the learners. Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010), from a critical community psychology approach, indicated in Chapter 2, raise awareness to the value of listening to silenced voices. Listening to silenced house-parent voices will provide opportunity for community change and development as called for in the framework that guided this study. The management staff's acknowledging the challenges faced by house-parents can potentially foster the development of more inclusive, collaborative engagement between the various stakeholders in the school

setting. As senior management staff also feel tired and frustrated due to having to deal with the various challenges in the school, inclusive of the hostel, identifying ways to continue to motivate them is recommended.

Acknowledging the low salary offered to house-parents, and their having to live away from their family during the week as well as house-parents not being required to possess a minimum qualification for the job, coupled with matching the right characteristics of the employee and the post, can be challenging. The lack of specialized training for house-parents is identified as a barrier to learner wellbeing promotion in the hostel by the senior management staff. The development of a base-line qualification therefore appears necessary to assist the house-parents in their role in promoting learners' wellbeing in the school hostel.

4.7. CONCEPTUAL FINDINGS

The study employed an ecological framework and a critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda, situated in the social model of disability. These approaches were used to understand the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion in a residential school for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal. As indicated in Chapter 2, the ecological metaphor describes the relationship between individuals and the multiple social systems in which they are embedded, where the focus is on the important role that social systems play in human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) state that critical community psychology has a focus on social change. Mertens (2009) states that by conducting research with a transformative agenda, issues such as diversity and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, disability, social class, religion, age and sexual orientation can be addressed. These approaches are well suited for research in the Deaf community due to historic inequality faced by this population in terms of access to education and employment opportunities because of their deafness. The house-parents are a vulnerable group due to their status within the school hierarchical system. Due to historic disadvantage based on race in South Africa linked to Apartheid ideology, some house-parents have had limited access to high quality education and employment opportunities. These factors impact the role house-parents play in learners wellbeing promotion at the residential school for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal. In this study, it was important to acknowledge the multiple social systems that impact human development. It was also important to take a research stance that focuses

on the promotion of equity and social justice by challenging the current status quo. Simultaneously, identifying current community strengths is identified as a way to further develop the school community, specifically the residential school hostel. Collaboration with all community members is necessary to promote equality and inclusion thus giving voice to those historically silenced.

When reflecting on the challenges that arose in the study related to the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion, the burdens of being in a caring role were reported across all participants. The house-parents report feeling overburdened and frustrated. Whilst the term 'burnout' as described by Breakwell (2016) was not used by participants, staff members appear to be at risk for burnout. Understanding the context using an ecological framework, multiple influences in the various sub-systems as identified by Bronfenbrenner (1979) are identified that influence the participants' experiences of burnout. Micro-system influences such as the individual temperament of the house-parent affect the role that house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion. Some house-parents display more resilience which enables them to focus on the positive aspects of their job, such as enjoying working with the children. Others feel frustrated, alienated, rejected and misunderstood which negatively affect their role in learners' wellbeing promotion. Meso-system influences include the lack of support from parents and the extra burden this places on the house-parents. The parents are reported to rely on house-parents for support with homework on weekends and for explaining family information to the D/deaf child that the hearing parent is often unable to do. Sometimes the D/deaf child has misinterpreted events due to communication barriers and this causes them emotional distress which the house-parents are then forced to address at school as they can communicate with the D/deaf learners in SASL. Exo-system influences include limited support from the DoE in terms of unified job descriptions for house-parents or for schools' grievance policies. Not having unified policies and processes has resulted in house-parents following different grievance process which results in different resolutions. This causes demotivation for some house-parents.

Whilst the house-parents have chosen to work in a caring role, some house-parents reported frustrations linked to their role of house-parent. Such frustrations included long working hours and multiple duties that they are expected to perform both day and night. Some of these duties are reported to not be explicitly stated in the house-parent job description and therefore some house-parents feel resentment in having to complete these tasks. Due to

power-differentials among the staff, house-parents feel that they do not have the power or authority to refuse instructions from teachers or to question the teachers' interactions with the learners in their respective hostels. Meetings are scheduled for house-parents to meet with senior management and heads of departments, but it is reported that these meetings often tend to be cancelled due to time constraints at school. This leaves the house-parents without a forum to address their worries and frustrations. This might also give the house-parents the impression that they are less important than other members of the school community. Some house-parents indicated that when these meetings are conducted, they do not feel free to voice their concerns openly because this often results in racial allegations and the use of teaching unions to then resolve internal conflicts within the staff. Some house-parents are reported to rather internalise their frustrations rather than voice them. This leads to demotivation, frustration and feelings of worthlessness amongst some house-parents.

Critical community psychology calls for a focus on social change. To address silenced voices, a forum where house-parents are able to voice their ideas, concerns, frustrations and wishes is therefore suggested. Communication break-down amongst some members of staff, such as relationships between house-parents and between some teachers and some house-parents suggests that finding ways to communicate effectively but amicably is necessary. Conflict management strategies appear to be ineffectual in some circumstances. Some house-parents reported being able to voice their concerns openly and honestly to senior management and therefore this indicates that there is the potential to have open, direct and un-confrontational dialogue between the various community members. To enhance current perceived community strengths, as required by transformative research, providing training to all staff members in this regard should be prioritised. Engaging with an outside agency to assist the school in communication styles and effective listening skills is suggested.

Some house-parents report feeling alienated from the rest of the school staff. They are not invited to or included in some school-wide events and this is reported to cause hurt and feelings of rejection. When all staff are included in events, the house-parents feel that they are not included and they end up sitting together with limited interaction with other members of staff. Applying the principles of transformative research, Mertens (2009) issues such as diversity and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, disability, social class, religion, age and sexual orientation can be addressed. Therefore, finding ways to include those that are alienated because of their status in the school should be prioritized. Providing a safe space

for house-parents to disclose is suggested. Again, an outside agency to provide such a service is suggested. A support group or individual therapy or psycho-social support is suggested.

Identifying house-parents' strengths is suggested. The transformative approach to research calls for current community strengths to be used as a starting point for social change and development. Some of the house-parents reported feeling frustrated by their lack of opportunity historically. Such feelings have led to resentment and demotivation. Such historical injustice impacts current functioning and is an example of a exo-and chrono-system influence on the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion. A critical community psychology approach with a transformative agenda, situated within the social model of disability calls for social injustice and equity in opportunity to be addressed. Identifying house-parent strengths and further enhancing these can be a means to address this identified challenge. Finding opportunities for those to develop their careers and possibly study to enhance their skills is suggested.

4.8. SUMMARY

In this chapter the findings of the house-parents and the senior management staff were presented. The main and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis were reported. These findings were linked to the literature.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a summative review of the study will be provided. The conclusions, the limitations of the study and the suggested recommendations will be presented.

5.2. SUMMATIVE OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

The cumulative findings of the participants revealed that the house-parents, as a result of their duties performed as part of their job description, play a role in learner wellbeing promotion at the school for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal. These findings were established as a result of the theme analysis conducted on the data, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) in Chapter 3. The participants, including both house-parents and senior management staff, described facilitating factors which they felt impact the house-parents' role in learners' wellbeing promotion as well as barriers faced in this regard.

A transformative approach, situated within the social model of disability, was applied as the theoretical framework for this study. This approach calls for change and development within the school to emanate from a point of inclusion, equity and social justice. This corresponds to the conceptual framework of the study, the ecological framework which incorporated a critical community psychology approach. This approach has a specific focus on social change. As indicated in Chapter 2, the balance of values, research and action make a critical community psychology an appropriate framework for working with those who are, or have been marginalized by the social system. This provides a way for the researcher to address inequality in the specific context. The cumulative findings of the study revealed that the house-parents desire a platform for their silenced voices to be heard. The call for inclusion in school-wide events in response to their feelings of isolation and alienation was made. Communication barriers as a result of power differentials in the school result in demotivation and frustration for house-parents who feel unappreciated and unrecognized within the school. Despite previous intervention being provided for house-parents to facilitate their ability to

care for the learners in the hostel, such as training to become memory work facilitators, evidence of these types of interventions are not widely evident in the hostel.

Some house-parents described the significance of the burdens of being in a caring role. Such responsibilities included their need to be on call 24-hours a day. This is particularly demanding in the junior hostels where the young learners often require soothing or changing young learners who have soiled themselves in the night. This lack of rest is understood to impact the house-parents' enjoyment of their job and their desire to give of their best at all times. The senior management staff however believe that the role of *loco parentis* requires the house-parents to perform such duties, as a parent of a child at home would do. To add to the house-parents' frustrations, they feel that some teachers do not appreciate the demands on the house-parents and thus do not offer them support, appreciation or recognition for the duties they do perform, especially those that assist teachers such as attending to day scholars who have soiled themselves at school. As the learners are not under the care of the house-parents, this duty is understood to be an extra demand made on the house-parent. Due to power differentials between house-parents and teachers, the house-parents feel that they are not in a position to refuse the teachers' requests. These house-parent responses implied that if they are expected to perform a specific duty, this should be clearly stated in their job description. The physical and emotional wellbeing of the child in this situation is recognized by the senior management staff. They believe that the soiled learner is reported to likely experience physical and emotional discomfort and therefore the situation needs to be handled with care and compassion by the house-parents, not with reprimand and frustration as is reported by some participants.

The house-parents raised awareness of the power differentials in the school structure that tend to leave them feeling unheard and unrecognized. House-parents experienced frustration when teachers demand information regarding their practices in the hostel or when they require assistance from them in attending to learners who have soiled themselves at school, whilst reporting that they receive little respect or consideration from some teachers. Some participants raised awareness to the need to find ways to acknowledge silenced voices and acknowledging past hurts that might feed into racial conflicts. This suggestion speaks directly to the principles guiding the transformative approach to research and a critical community psychology approach to wellbeing promotion in the school. Hearing the various house-parent perspectives provides a means by which to understand house-parent resistance

to change through planned school interventions. Currently, intervention is often resisted as reported by the participants but the reasons why the resistance is experienced is not clear. The senior management staff indicated the necessity of good communication between all stake holders in the learners' lives. A way in which this is envisioned is by making time for house-parent meetings with management staff. A further suggestion is for house-parents to meet with teachers, as biological parents or guardians to discuss the individual child's development. This will allow the house-parent to view the learner's books, and hear about their progress and their achievements, as well as being made aware of areas that require remediation and development. This will allow for more effective support to be provided by the house-parents in the hostel. Senior management staff further envision that relationship development between staff members throughout the staff, especially between the house-parents, can have an impact on learner's wellbeing promotion when the various stakeholders in the learners' lives work collaboratively at school.

House-parent compassion was identified as a contributing factor to learner wellbeing promotion in the school hostel. Some participants noted the loving and caring way some learners are treated in the hostel. Addressing the learners in age-appropriate ways and using appropriate body language and facial expression as indicated by Sparrow (2006) in Chapter 2, were identified as important to learners' wellbeing promotion. Some participants identified the use of positive and warm body language as an important factor in interacting with the Deaf child. Greeting the child warmly, going down to their level and engaging with them is understood to promote wellbeing as the child is reported to feel welcomed and loved by their house-parent in this regard. Maintaining professionalism, as indicated in the house-parent responses, allows house-parents to engage warmly with the learners despite the circumstances they face. Other house-parents raised frustrations regarding the burdens and responsibilities as part of a caring role that create barriers to them being able to engage empathetically with the learners. Such barriers are being on duty 24-hours a day and being asked to perform duties that are not explicit in their job description. This lack of compassion is understood by some participants to breed contempt in the learners in the hostel. This can result in some learners then requiring the attention, love and care of other house-parents other than their allocated house-parent. This is reported to then add further burden to their already busy schedule. Some house-parents are described as punitive and uncaring towards the learners in their respective hostels. Being able to communicate warmly with learners is understood to impact learners' wellbeing promotion. D/deaf learners are sensitive to body language, as

integral aspect of Deaf culture. Therefore, understanding the needs and the ways of the Deaf as indicated by Kowalski & Meier (2013) in Chapter 2, is crucial for the promotion of wellbeing of the Deaf child.

Being able to communicate in SASL with the learners in the hostel is identified unanimously by the participants as significantly impacting learner wellbeing promotion in the hostel. As many families in South Africa are not able to communicate in SASL, as indicated by Krige (2010) in Chapter 2, the hostel provides a setting where conversations can take place between child and parent, in this case, the house-parent. Being able to communicate in SASL highlights the house-parents' ability to recognize and respect the needs and the ways of the Deaf, described by Sparrow (2006) in Chapter 2. Building learners' self-concept in this regard, by recognizing their unique language needs and ways of communicating can bolster self-esteem thereby potentially reducing the potential of the Deaf learner in developing mental health difficulties, as identified by Erlich (2012) in Chapter 2. Barriers in terms of communication between staff as well as between house-parents and parents are identified as negatively impacting learners' promotion of wellbeing. Facilitating the development of house-parent mediation skills was identified as necessary.

According to the senior management staff, when house-parents adhere to their conditions of employment, this is understood to impact learner wellbeing promotion positively. Some participants believed that certain house-parents employed at the school did not always comply with their conditions of employment. This lack of adherence to conditions of employment had led to some members of staff feeling frustrated and demotivated. An example of this type of behavior includes some house-parents often being absent from work, often without explanation, resulting in the burden of responsibility being placed on the staff members who are at work.

Concern over the reliance of some house-parents relying on teaching unions to resolve matters that are able to be handled internally was raised by participants. Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) as described in Chapter 2, highlight the importance of recognizing the minority groups who are vulnerable to exploitation and whose voices are often not heard. The use of unions to address matters provides some house-parents with an arena to have their voices heard but some participants believe that equity in the process, with action and policy developing from guidance provided by the DoE and in-line with school policy will

alleviate tension in this regard. Currently, despite having a grievance policy at school, the processes surrounding how grievances are handled is reported to not be uniformly conducted.

In conclusion, educational policy in South Africa whilst providing an adequate framework for learners' wellbeing promotion requires attention in the implementation of such policy in conjunction with development of the human resources in the schools and governmental departments who need to implement these policies, focusing on the development of knowledge, skills and positive attitudes supported with financial resources which links to the social model of disability.

5.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in a single school setting and the findings pertain to the particular school under study and cannot be transferable to other settings. Whilst acknowledging that the findings are not directly transferable or generalizable, the findings can be used as a point of departure for consideration when attempting to promote wellbeing in residential Schools for the Deaf because the theoretical parameters of the research have been clearly stated (Cohen et al., 2007).

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations related to policy, practice and research are made below.

Policy

It is recommended that the school continue to uphold the current educational *policy of signed bilingualism* where SASL is used for teaching and learning and the primary language of communication with written English being used for spoken and written text. A recommendation to *uphold this policy in the hostel* is to ensure that learners are exposed to a home environment that supports and promotes the Deaf culture and sustains the needs and the ways of the Deaf with house-parents proficient in SASL. *House-parent fluency in SASL* is recommended. Provision of continued development in this regard is suggested through weekly lessons at school.

Building on from this above-mentioned recommendation, a suggestion to ensure fluency in *SASL across all staff members* employed at the school is made. A recommendation is made that all staff employed in the school, inclusive of the house-parents to access *SASL training* to ensure fluency within a set period of time as part of the conditions of employment in the school for the Deaf. Encouraging staff members employed on the school property in the grounds, laundry, kitchen and cleaning staff are encouraged to develop their skills in SASL. *Assessment through external examiners* is suggested for all teaching, management and hostel staff. Having a *time frame* for the development of *basic SASL competency* is recommended for all staff to ensure accountability for staff members to develop these skills that enable them to adhere to the school's educational policy.

Some house-parents employed at the school utilise the teaching unions to resolve conflict at school. A recommendation to *establish and uphold a policy in-conjunction with DoE legislation and guidance* that clearly outlines the processes required by the school and the house-parents to address complaints or *grievances* is made. Having a clear policy in place that is in-line with DoE specification will assist the senior management staff and the house-parents in effectively addressing such matters. Having uniformity in processes and equitable treatment of all staff members is understood to be of great importance to facilitate a feeling of cohesion within the staff as a whole and within the house-parent cohort. Having such process in place will facilitate a feeling of motivation for some staff members who feel that despite the use of unions in situations that do not comply with current school policy, renders them impotent s they feel that there are no structures in place to protect them.

A recommendation for the *DoE to establish a single generalised policy regarding grievances in school related matters* is made. This policy can be used by schools in South Africa to assist the senior management with a structure that will provide means to treat all employees equitably and fairly, thus promoting social justice as stipulated by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) as indicated in Chapter 2. Enlisting the support of a *broker relations specialist* would potentially assist the school in regards to effectively addressing grievances at the school.

Development of a mandatory base-line qualification for house-parents in all special needs schools inclusive of a basic level of understanding child development, understanding ways to provide psycho-social support for the child, understanding positive discipline, conflict management and positive communication with a child is recommended. Many of the house-

parents employed at the school have not been afforded the opportunity to study or develop their careers and thus their willingness and their desire to do their job well is potentially held back because of lack of opportunity being made available to them in the past. It is recommended that the *DoE and the school commit to providing opportunities for the house-parents to further enhance their qualifications and skill set as part of the school development plan.*

In Practice

Deaf learners are identified in the literature as facing numerous challenges which have the potential to negatively impact their wellbeing promotion. Having house-parents who can communicate with the child in SASL, communication congruent with the needs and the values of the Deaf culture, is understood as important. Findings in the current literature indicates the reality that many D/deaf learners do not have family members that are able to communicate in SASL (Krige, 2010). This gap in effective communication can be addressed through the potential support provided by house-parents in the residential school setting. The findings of the study indicate that D/deaf learners can misinterpret communication between hearing people and this misunderstanding can lead to their experiencing fear and anxiety over matters that do not necessarily exist. The importance of the staff members employed at the school in understanding this reality is important as body language and facial expression within the deaf community is an important aspect of their communication (Sparrow, 2007). It is recommended that the school provide *continuous professional development opportunities for the staff, including house-parents and parents on the development of the D/deaf child.* Understanding *early childhood development* for D/deaf children is understood to be critical to learners' promotion of wellbeing in the hostel, the school and the home environment. Such training can include the development of communication skills as well as specific mediating skills, positive methods of discipline using authoritarian rather than authoritative parenting and communication to build collaboration across all staff. Sourcing professional assistance from sources outside of the school is suggested to avoid historic difficulties from arising.

What is made evident for this study's findings is that the house-parents themselves do not all feel contained, supported or included in the school community and thus the support they are able to provide to the learners is impacted. As a means to address the development of collaborative working relationships at school, recommendations to provide *containment to*

the hostel staff is made. Accessing support from beyond the school setting is made. This is envisioned partnering, for example, with local universities who have students enrolled in social science programs might be able to offer therapeutic intervention or to assist the school to develop support structures within the school. Suggestion of offer a forum for house-parents to voice their concerns in is suggested as many barriers to inclusion were identified in this study. Suggestion for a safe, collaborative space where management and house-parents could collectively discuss new ideas exploring the role house-parents play in learner wellbeing promotion is also made. Providing a space for those affected by historical injustice and oppression to share openly in a space of non-judgement is recommended to begin to facilitate relationship building between staff members. It is recommended that *training be provided across the school staff to facilitate more effective communication.* Providing the staff members with skills to be able to make themselves understood but in non-confrontational ways that build the school and the various stakeholders up rather than inflicting blame which creates conflict and frustration is suggested. This is likely to create more effective collaboration between the staff. This is suggested to *facilitate a change in the school climate* and a way to address feelings of historic injustice and resentment.

Working collaboratively with house-parents to explore ways in which they could feel more included in the school is made. House-parents report feeling excluded and alienated from the staff. Opportunities when the staff come together tends to result in the house-parents sitting together and not *integrating* because of historic divide between the staff. *Deliberate efforts to address integration is recommended.* Whole-school initiatives such as *catered social events or team-building activities* is suggested. Again, if possible, accessing services outside the school is suggested.

Listening to house-parents' ideas on how to promote learners' wellbeing could potentially allow for the house-parents to take ownership of the initiatives. Historically resistance to intervention has been experienced and *findings ways to initiate new practices that resonate with the house-parents in learners' wellbeing promotion* is recommended. Findings ways to listen to all stakeholders, were ideas are developed collaboratively is a possible way to address resistance to change and development.

To date, the school has historically provided support and training to the house-parents to help equip them in their role as house-parent. Currently, there does not appear to be a school or

DoE policy on training of house-parents and thus training and intervention becomes ad hoc. *A recommendation would be to develop a policy at national level within the DoE which can be filtered down and applied within the specific school context.* Having policy at a national level will help to ensure that house-parents are more effectively equipped to do their job and could therefore be less likely to suffer from frustration and burnout. This policy and subsequent training can be added to schools' development plan thereby formalising resource and time allocation to this aspect of school functioning. Utilising support from the DoE or organisations for the Deaf in this regard is suggested due to limited funding and staff allocation within the school.

It seems prudent to *identify career paths for the house-parents; achieved by working collaboratively with each house-parent to understand how they envision development within their role at school.* The house-parents each have unique skills and abilities which can be promoted and utilised which would potentially motivate them and enhance self-esteem which is under-utilised currently though untapped potential. Working collaboratively with the house-parents to identify areas of strength, areas they wish to develop and areas they feel are under-utilised in their repertoire of skills could provide a way of recognising the house-parents and celebrating their strengths and successes so as to address their general feeling of being under-valued, under-appreciated and overlooked. This recommendation is made not in criticism but from understanding the situation from a transformative perspective as utilising current perceived community strengths as a way to remedy deficit; moving from ameliorative support to individual need to looking broadly as to what the community has to offer.

As a way to achieve this recommendation, partnering with an organisation such as an institution of higher learning is made. This can form part of staff *in-service training at school.* *The institution can work collaboratively with the school leadership team and the house-parents to develop programs to support the house-parents-based on the school's needs.* Accountability and sustainability of the program can be achieved through a formal agreement made between the school and the university. The recommendation aims to facilitate a *change in the school climate.* Having the training or program run by an outside organisation is understood to potentially contribute to the acceptance of such an intervention as there is no historical relationship between the two organisations that might hinder staff willingness to participate in the program.

Research

Relational wellbeing appears to underpin individual and collective wellbeing and thus further researcher to establish ways in which to *facilitate healthy and positive relationships between these staff members is recommended to effectively promote multi-level wellbeing* described by Ng and Fisher (2013) where promotion of all three domains of wellbeing are understood to be necessary. Strained relations amongst the teachers, including the HODs and the house-parents indicate the need to enhance opportunities to foster relationships amongst the staff as a whole.

Exploring the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion is called for from the perspective of the learners as these were not included in this study due to the limitation in scope of a single Master's dissertation. The learners' perspective regarding holistic wellbeing promotion was included in the researcher's PhD study however, deeper understanding of how the learners' perceive the role house-parent play in learners' wellbeing promotion in the hostel would further enhance our understanding of this role based, on further studies conducted.

There appears to be a lack of willingness on behalf of some house-parents to undertake certain tasks that pertain to their caring role which can hinder learners' wellbeing promotion in the hostel. Research to understand the resistance of house-parents to full-fill certain expected tasks would facilitate an understanding of how best to support schools, learners and house-parents in this regard as assumptions cannot be made without consultation of the role-players. Findings ways to challenge and address systemic barriers is called for.

Whilst there is evidence of policy development in South Africa pertaining specifically to education and even special needs education, there appears to be a lack of policy implementation which is understood to affect learners' wellbeing promotion, especially in schools that require special accommodations. Research into the barriers regarding policy implementation can facilitate a move towards social justice for learners affected by lack of policy implementation.

5.5. SUMMARY

In this chapter, a review of the study was presented with a reflection on the limitations of the study. Recommendations in terms of policy, practice and research were presented. This chapter will be followed by a reflection on the research process presented in Chapter 6

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTION

6.1. INTRODUCTION

As a means to conclude this study, a final reflection chapter has been written in which I reflect on the process of conducting research in a school for the Deaf in KwaZulu-Natal. I was previously employed as a teacher at a school for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal. Part of my role as Head of Department was to oversee the psycho-social wellbeing of the learners in the school. During my four years of employment in the school, I became aware of the many challenges faced by the learners and their families impacting learners' wellbeing promotion. As a means to address some of these challenges, ameliorative interventions were developed, including memory work and individual and group psycho-social support, after staff members had completed short courses in play therapy.

As the staff members who had completed the short courses in play therapy are no longer employed in the school, and because of resistance by some members of staff who trained as memory work facilitators to working with the learners in this regard, limited support is available to learners. Due to the many multi-faceted challenges identified in D/deaf learners' wellbeing promotion, the need to provide support is clear. The school has limited financial or staffing resources to employ staff members specifically to address learners' wellbeing. The DoE has not made a post in this regard available, thus the need to identify current processes and resources within the school or community is necessary. These current processes and resources can be used as the starting point for further development. This type of practice aligns with the principles of a transformative approach to research as described by Mertens (2009) in Chapter 2.

One of the key findings from the study was the potential for the hostel as a site in which learners' wellbeing can be promoted through communication taking place in SASL and through enculturation into the Deaf culture. This is achieved by recognising the needs and the ways of the Deaf. The cumulative findings of the researcher's previous study indicate that there are challenges faced in the hostel that impact learners' wellbeing promotion. This makes the residential school hostel a potentially valuable site for learners' wellbeing

promotion is not be utilised to its full potential. Thus this study was developed to explore the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion in order to ascertain how house-parents experience wellbeing, what they believe their role in learners' wellbeing promotion to be and how they envision school support in this regard.

Conducting this study has been both interesting and challenging. One identified challenge lies in my familiarity with the school and the participants. The advantage of this was that rapport between researcher and participant did not need to be developed due to the researcher being familiar with each participant. The disadvantage of this familiarity is that it can lead to potential blind-spots in understanding the data. To compensate for this potential limitation, I checked participant meaning during data collection which added to the trustworthiness of the study. I also only reported on findings related to the current data collection and not on ideas or experiences from when I was previous employment, or from previous study conducted at the school.

After conducting this study, I was left with a sense of excitement and hope for the possibility of change and development in the school. It has, at the same time, left me with feelings of frustration and concern as to the depth of some of the barriers to learners' wellbeing promotion that appear to pertain to the school climate as resistance to change amongst some members of staff is evident.

6.2. REFLECTION

My initial anxiety regarding the possibility of obtaining participants was unfounded. I was expecting resistance from the house-parents due to their reluctance to participate in the school-wide research project that I conducted for my PhD study in psychology. I understand the difference in their attitude towards participation in this current study because the purpose of this particular study appealed to the house-parents, since it relates to the role they play in learners' wellbeing promotion. Their enthusiasm to participate suggest that the house-parents had a desire to share their experiences, to describe their challenges and to strive for ways forward after identifying aspects of their job that are difficult and which negatively impact learner wellbeing. This understanding excited me and confirms the notion of giving voice to previously silenced voices as indicated by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010). Having a platform to share openly in a space of non-judgement appears vital to understanding

individual school community members. This in turn is likely to enable the school community to begin to work collaboratively towards transforming current practices.

After completing this study exploring the role house-parents play in learners' wellbeing promotion in a residential school for the Deaf in South Africa, I am excited by the willingness of some members of the school community to embrace change. This was made evident in their preparedness to confront challenging issues and to seek alternative solutions to problems faced. This attitude allows for the school community to harness their current strengths in order to mobilise forces for change and transformation. This approach moves practice from ameliorative to transformative support and allows for the school community to access a strengths-based model for development.

I am made aware of the challenges faced by school in addressing the issue of institutionalised ways of operating as a system. When staff members have been employed at the school for many years or are past pupils of the school, it is easy to understand how ways of operating can easily be influenced by historical practices. This can make it challenging for community members to shift perspectives and to try to see things in new ways. I understood how institutionalised ways of being develop but I also witnessed how willingly the house-parents shared their experiences. This openness provided me with a sense that if communication between all members of staff was more open, reflexive, inclusive, safe and non-judgmental, the possibility of change and development might be possible.

I am also made aware of the difficulties in repairing hurt, frustration and anger at the experience of historical injustice. This is evident from a political perspective linked to Apartheid legacy. Due to lack of opportunity to access educational opportunities in the past, some participants carry hurt and resentment. Being in a low-paid job where the individual does not feel heard, appreciated or included does not help to address experiences of previous oppression.

In my previous school-wide study exploring holistic wellbeing promotion, house-parents were reluctant to participate. The difference in the house-parents' willingness to participate in this study compared to my previous study was noted. In the current study, house-parents reported feeling alienated from the staff as a whole. This helps me to understand their resistance to participate in a study exploring school-wide wellbeing promotion. By providing

a space for house-parents to reflect on their experience of wellbeing as well as exploring the role they play in learners' wellbeing promotion, allowed for silenced voices to be heard. I reflect that in future practice, listening to silenced voices is of paramount importance to promote social justice within the D/deaf community. I recognise the importance of identifying house-parents' skill, talents and abilities. Assisting the house-parents to hone and develop these skills, talents and abilities can help to enhance opportunities for learners' wellbeing promotion. By encouraging house-parents to access training or career development opportunities could allow the school to access untapped potential amongst staff members employed at the school.

What became apparent to me in this research study is that there appears to be a feeling of collective burnout in the house-parents. This is made evident in the lack of joy that the majority of the house-parents report in their day to day experiences in the hostel. Long working hours, multiple activities required to be performed daily, and managing challenging children appears to have resulted in staff members being demotivated and feeling unappreciated and unnoticed. The house-parents feel alienated from the teaching staff and thus isolated and rejected. When reflecting on my experience of this, I felt overwhelmed at the challenge of shifting things for the good and how difficult it is to begin to repair past injustices and hurts. I understood from a new perspective what it is like for the house-parents, which I had not fully understood before. This helped me to understand house-parent resistance to suggestions made for them to promote health and wellbeing in their hostels. The need to understand house-parents' perspectives whilst developing intervention for learners' wellbeing before implementing such interventions is highlighted. Collaboration between stakeholders is suggested.

Since data collection took place, several house-parents have made continuous contact with me via instant messaging and social networks. What I understand from this behaviour is their desire for me not to forget the house-parents and the information they shared with me. I have a sense that they hold a desire for me to act on the matters that were raised. The house-parents' willingness to share their experiences and to following up regularly with me indicates that they valued their perspectives being heard without judgement. What excites me further is this desire for their voices to be heard and their perspectives understood. This energy and enthusiasm can be harnessed in the activities suggested in the recommendations.

I would like to raise awareness about the importance of working collaboratively with schools for the deaf to implement some or all of the recommendations. They see value in sharing the findings of the study with schools and organisations for the D/deaf as well as the DoE. This is important because of the willingness of the participants to share their experiences which can potentially be used to assist other schools for the D/deaf to enhance learners' wellbeing promotion in other schools.

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Addendum

Appendix 1 – DoE Permission



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane

Tel: 033 392 1004

Ref.:2/4/8/498

Mrs T Lenta
69 Somerset Country Estate
450 Queen Elizabeth Avenue
Manor Gardens
DURBAN
4001

Dear Mrs Lenta

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"THE ROLE OF HOUSE-PARENTS IN LEARNER WELLBEING PROMOTION IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF IN SOUTH AFRICA"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 August 2015 to 31 August 2017.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Nkosisinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 22 July 2015

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa
PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004
EMAIL ADDRESS: kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za / Nomangisi.Ngubane@kzndoe.gov.za
CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363; Fax: 033 392 1203 WEBSITE: www.kzneducation.gov.za

Appendix 2 – Permission from School



Psychology Discipline

School of Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Tel: 031 260 2612/2425 Fax: 031 260 4811 or 260 4810 Email: psych@ukzn.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Research Project: The role of house-parents in learner wellbeing promotion in residential schools for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.

1. We are asking your permission for house-parents, principals and/or deputy principals employed in your school to take part in this research study to help us understand the role that house-parents play in the promotion of learner wellbeing in residential schools for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.
2. This research study has been granted ethical approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Should you wish to contact them their contact details are: (031) 260 4769 or (031) 260 3587.
3. The research study is being conducted by a Master's student from University of KwaZulu-Natal. The regional Department of Basic Education KwaZulu-Natal has given permission for the Master's student to conduct the study among house-parents employed in residential schools for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal. The regional department of Basic Education has reviewed the Masters student's research proposal.
4. We would like the house-parents, principals and/or deputy principals to participate in an interview that will be facilitated by the Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
5. The interview will be about 30 minutes and will be conducted at a time that is convenient for participants when they are not supervising learners or fulfilling duties ascribed to them in their employment contract. They will be asked permission for the Master's student to record the interview with an audio recorder or filmed using a recording device if the participant is deaf.
6. If you agree to grant permission for the participants to participate in this study, they will be asked to share their views on their understanding of learner wellbeing, the role house-parents play in learner wellbeing promotion at the school and how they feel the school could further support the house-parents in this regard. They will not be forced to share any sensitive information they do not want to reveal.
7. Participation is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any stage. They will not be disadvantaged or penalised should they not want to participate in the study.
8. The sessions will be recorded by film or audio recording, or via note taking if the participant is not willing to be filmed or audio-recorded.
9. Their participation will help us to understand what house-parents understand wellbeing to be, the role house-parents believe they play in learner wellbeing promotion and how they understand the school to be able to further support house-parents in learner wellbeing promotion.

Appendix 3 – Consent from DeafSA

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR DIRECTOR OF DEAFSA INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Research Project: The role of house-parents in learner wellbeing promotion in residential schools for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.

1. We are asking your permission for house-parents employed in residential schools for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal to take part in this research study to help us understand the role that house-parents play in the promotion of learner wellbeing in residential schools for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.
2. This research study has been granted ethical approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Should you wish to contact them their contact details are: (031) 260 4769 or (031) 260 3587.
3. The research study is being conducted by a Master's student from University of KwaZulu-Natal. The regional Department of Basic Education KwaZulu-Natal has given permission for the Master's student to conduct the study among house-parents employed in residential schools for the deaf. The regional department of Basic Education has reviewed the Masters student's research proposal.
4. We would like the house-parents, principals or deputy principals to participate in an interview that will be facilitated by the Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
5. The interview will be about 30 minutes and will be conducted at a time that is convenient for participants when they are not supervising learners or fulfilling duties ascribed to them in their employment contract. They will be asked permission for the Master's student to record the interview with an audio recorder or filmed using recording devices if the participant is deaf.
6. If you agree to grant permission for the house-parents, principals or deputy principals to participate in this study, they will be asked to share their views on their understanding of learner wellbeing, the role house-parents play in learner wellbeing promotion at the school and how they feel the school could offer further support in this regard. They will not be forced to share any sensitive information they do not want to reveal.
7. Participation is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any stage. They will not be disadvantaged or penalised should they not want to participate in the study.
8. Their participation will help us to understand how schools can further support house-parents in wellbeing promotion.
9. If you decide to grant permission to participate, participants and the school's identity will be kept confidential and participants will be allowed to participate on an anonymous basis. We will not share any information they provide us with by name to any of the staff from the school. The research reports and publications from this study will be reported at the level of the school, area or district and not by the names of people who participated in the study. The recordings from the interviews will be stored in a secure location and only the researchers will be allowed access to them. They will be destroyed after 5 years.
10. Should you have any questions or queries about the study please feel free to contact the Master's student's supervisor Prof. Anna Meyer-Weitz with the contact numbers below.
11. Signing your name at the bottom means you agree to grant permission to participate in this study, in keeping with the conditions specified below.

Addendum 4- Informed Consent for Participants

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR HOUSE-PARENT/PRINCIPAL/DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Research Project: The role of house-parents in learner wellbeing promotion in residential schools for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.

We are asking your permission to take part in this research study to help us understand the role that house-parents play in the promotion of learner wellbeing in residential schools for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.

This research study has been granted ethical approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Should you wish to contact them their contact details are: (031) 260 4769 or (031) 260 3587.

The research study is being conducted by a Master's student from University of KwaZulu-Natal. The regional Department of Basic Education KwaZulu-Natal has given permission for the Master's student to conduct the study among house-parents employed in residential schools for the deaf. The regional department of Basic Education has reviewed the Masters student's research proposal.

We would like you to participate in an interview that will be facilitated by the Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The interview will be about 30 minutes and will be conducted at a time that is convenient for you when you are not supervising learners or fulfilling duties ascribed to you in your employment contract. You will be asked permission for the Master's student to record the interview with an audio recorder or filmed with recording equipment if the participant is deaf.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to share your views on your understanding of learner wellbeing, the role house-parents play in learner wellbeing promotion at the school and how you feel house-parents could be further supported in this regard at school. You will not be forced to share any sensitive information you do not want to reveal.

Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any stage. You will not be disadvantaged or penalised by your school should you not want to participate in the study.

Your participation will help us to understand how the school can further support house-parents in learner wellbeing promotion.

If you decide to participate, your identity will be kept confidential and you will be allowed to participate on an anonymous basis. We will not share any information you provide us with by name to any of the staff from the school. The research reports and publications from this study will be reported at the level of the school, area or district and not by the names of people who participated in the study. The recordings from the interviews will be stored in a

secure location and only the researchers will be allowed access to them. They will be destroyed after 5 years.

Should you have any questions or queries about the study please feel free to contact the Master's student's supervisor Prof. Anna Meyer-Weitz with the contact numbers below.

Signing your name at the bottom means you agree to participate in this study, in keeping with the conditions specified below.

I, _____ give my consent to participate in the study described above. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, that my identity will not be reported in any publications or reports and that I can withdrawal from the study at any time. If I have any questions after today I can call Mrs Theresa Lenta on 0728028199 or Prof. Anna Meyer-Weitz on (031) 260 7618.

Participant name

Participant signature

Date

Appendix 5 – Research Questions for House-Parents

Research questions

Semi-structures interview questions for house-parents at residential schools for the Deaf (approximately 30 minute interviews)

I want to find out about wellbeing at school. Wellbeing involves people feeling well and doing well.

What makes you feel well at school? (What makes you feel happy, what makes you enjoy being at work, feeling like you want to be at work?)

What makes you do well at school? (What helps you do your job well, what motivates you, what do you enjoy about your work?)

What helps learners feel well at school? (How are the learners supported, encouraged, assisted when things go wrong?)

What helps the learners do well at school? (How are they supported, encouraged, rewarded, praised, challenged to succeed?)

What is your role in the hostel/school? (What is your main responsibility, what do you do in your job, what you are expected to do daily, special responsibilities that are just pertain to you?)

What is your role in helping learners to feel well and do well (What do you do to encourage learners, help learners, encourage learners, teach learners?)

Which people help you in your role in promoting learner wellbeing at school? (Do you encourage the school or learners to try new things, go to new places? Do you suggest ways of doing things at the school and in the hostel?)

What processes help you in your role in promoting learner wellbeing at school (Training, meetings, team-work etc.)?

What systems help you in your role in promoting learner wellbeing at school (Management structure, dual-house-parents in the hostel sharing responsibilities etc.?)

What would you like to see happen at school to help you in your role of promoting learner wellbeing at school? (What ideas do you have that could make things better for you, for the learners, in the hostel, what would you be excited to suggest or try at school?)

Appendix 6 – Research Questions for Senior Management

Research questions

Semi-structures interview questions for principals or deputy principals at residential schools for the Deaf (approximately 30 minute interviews)

I am interested in wellbeing in your school.

What does wellbeing mean to you? (What is it that makes people feel well and do well at school?)

What contributes to learner and house-parent wellbeing at school? (What processes, approaches, structures are in place that help people feel well and be well)

What is the role of house-parents in the hostel/school? (What do the house-parents do in the hostel? What is their primary job description?)

What is the role house-parents play in helping learners to feel well and do well? What are the house-parents expected to do that makes learners feel well and do well in the hostel?)

Which people help the house-parents in their role in promoting learner wellbeing at school? (Who do the house-parents get support from within the school? Who monitors them? Who encourages them?)

What processes help house-parents in promoting learner wellbeing at school? (What processes are currently in place that support the house-parents if they have problems, suggestions or ideas for doing things differently?)

What systems currently house-parents in their role in promoting learner wellbeing at school? (What systems are currently in place that support the house-parents if they have problems, suggestions or ideas for doing things differently)

What would you like to see happen in helping learners do well and feel well in the hostel? (Do you think there are things that could be improved upon in the hostel linked to learner wellbeing? What works well and what can be improved on?)

How do you envision the school further supporting the house-parents in this regard? (What would you love to see happen in the hostel in the future to improve learner wellbeing? How do you think this could be achieved?)

Appendix 7 – Transcribed Interviews

Data Collection - 8 February 2016

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Participant 1

Participant 2

Participant 3

Participant 4

Participant 5

Participant 6

Participant 7

Participant 8

Researcher's Reflection on the Data Collection Process

All interviews were conducted on Monday as all house-parents are on duty on Mondays. The interviews were conducted in the HOD office where privacy was maintained. The participants chose not to be recorded but were happy to have the researcher take notes to be transcribed after the interviews took place. All participants were eager to participate in the interviews. Consent forms where ethical considerations and the purpose of the study and what participation would entail. All participants signed the documents which have been stored safely by the researcher. All participants were thanked for their contribution.

The overall experience was very positive. The participants were all keen to participate. This was different to the experience of asking the house-parents to participate in the data collection activities for the PhD study which this current study developed from. Only 1 house-parents agreed to participate in the previous PhD study (interview). All house-parents attended the world café event held at the school to discuss the promotion of holistic wellbeing in a school for the Deaf in South Africa. Despite their attendance, they sat excluded from the group and had to be encouraged to join the two groups of participants. Only 1 house-parent

made a comment during the data collection event and this comment made reference to injustice experienced by specific racial groups and access to I.T. facilities such as cellphones and computers. This comment raised awareness to hostile feelings between hostel staff and the others staff members employed at the school.

In the event, the learners in the senior phases indicated a desire for more interaction with house-parents socially and for academic support. They made comments of a punitive approach to discipline in the hostel with favouritism apparent between some hostel staff and some learners.

Each participant was told that these were semi-structured interviews. Once the researcher had explained the interview topic and asked the first question, the participants all just spoke freely. They had many experiences to share and the researcher did not refer to the interview questions often as the participants were so engaged in sharing their experiences with the researcher.

Overall, this behavior led me to think that this is not a topic that is often addressed at school and one that the house-parents seem to be very keen to discuss openly. I got the sense that the house-parents were holding onto a hope that after sharing with me the many difficulties that they experience in conjunction with their role as house-parent, that things would change for them at school. Other house-parents seemed to use the interview as a form of therapy; sharing their difficulties openly knowing that there it was not my role to fix things for them. Some house-parents seemed to enjoy talking about the things they love about their job and the things that they feel they do well. This led me to think that there is the possibility that house-parents do work hard; some feel too hard and others that they are not recognized or praised for their efforts. The striking difference in participation between the PhD study and this current research was noteworthy. There was significant reluctance for House-parents to participate previously but keen interest in this respect. This leads me to think that the house-parents do not feel connected to the school community and this could have contributed to their reluctance to participate in school-wide research. When the focus was on the role house-parents play in learner wellbeing promotion, the interest in participation was greatly increased. This leads me to think that the house-parents might not feel on equal standing to the rest of the school and due to historic racial and socio-economic disadvantage, they do not have a significant voice in the school and resistance arises through lack of participation.

Whilst this might not be the current status quo, it could be an unconscious way of the system behaving. Linking this to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, disturbance in one layer has a corresponding effect on other layers in the system.

Transcribed Interviews

Participant 1

Communication is a big thing. I use writing and the phone to communicate with the learners' parents or care-givers. It can be difficult to get hold of them. They also don't always get back to you.

One of the most difficult parts of our job is working with the children who are orphans. Trying to make contact with their homes. Sometimes the children don't know when they are going to be collected from the bus and often they have no money with them. Also, in the homes where the orphans live no one communicates in South African Sign Language (SASL). Because of the lack of communication, these learners are always happy to come back to the hostel on Sunday night because we can communicate with them.

Some parents are responsible and this helpful for us but some are not. Parents who are not responsible make it hard for us to do our job properly. With clothing, some children come with clothes and they also return to school with their uniforms. Some children have parents and step-parents. Sometimes the step-parents are more involved with the children than their real parents! Some of the real parents don't seem to care, they don't ever react. When parents have split up, we sometimes get caught up in the middle of the problems. Some parents who have split up don't want the other parent to know that they have not done what they are supposed to have done but as house-parents we need to have all the things for the children; shoes, clothes etc. so if one parent does not supply it we have to ask the other then they sometimes get cross.

Another thing that is hard for us is that we have to take full responsibility for the small children in the junior hostels. This can be very difficult. We have 3 year olds and they are still in nappies which we have to change them. Outside schools (no boarding facilities) with day only, we would send children home who messed themselves. Here, a child in class, if they wet themselves etc. it becomes the house-parents' problem. This means that your duty never stops because you are involved in the class and the hostel; day and night. If the children mess themselves at night, we have to get up and change them and their bed. This means we work both day and night.

Medication is another challenge. In the day we have the school sister (nurse) but at night it becomes the house-parents' responsibility. We have to administer serious medications to sick children, like HIV. We have to get it right otherwise the child can get sick. This is the house-parents' responsibility. There is a lack of medication administered in the home often. The children are not well and the meds are supposed to come from home; this is the parents' responsibility. If they send the child to school sick, this is careless. The parents often send the incorrect meds to school then it looks like we are not doing our job correctly in the hostel. Sometimes then the children get so sick they are absent for 3 weeks then they miss out so much. The parents don't seem to care. We need the parents to have compulsory parent training workshops. They need to know SASL. Some parents just don't care. They say transport is a problem. Now the training is available on a USB so there is no excuse, they just don't want to be educated. They think that the house-parents and teachers job to do. Some parents vie the house-parents as surrogate parents; the house-parents will take the responsibility. Parents have unrealistic expectations. They call the house-parents for homework support on the weekend. The problem is SASL!

The parents try to avoid meetings at school. Only some parent come. The school needs to talk to them, address them all.

Participant 2

HP are happy when things go well. There are rules about what the HP like and don't like. This helps things in the hostel. The HP give warnings if the hostel learners break the rules. They can also report behavior to the HODs and then there are consequences for the learners.

The HP also try to teach the learners about the household; teach them responsibility, such as take the rubbish out etc. They do not seem to have a sense of responsibility instilled in them. We teach them as we would our own children, like how to fold clothes, get dressed independently etc. They need to learn to keep their rooms tidy. This is done collaboratively between staff and learners in the hostel. High School learners should be responsible. If the parents could sign at home, they would be able to teach their children these skills but because they don't sign, they don't teach their children so they come to the hostel without these skills which then becomes the house-parent responsibility.

Participant 3

Q. What is wellbeing?

I think it is important for the children to be happy at school. To feel happy, they need to be greeted nicely when they arrive on Sunday. They see your body language so even if you sign nicely to them they can see how you really feel by your body language. You need to look them in the eye, go down to their level and really engage with them. This will make them feel good. Their own parents don't know how to speak to D/deaf children. The parents say their child is naughty but they are not, they just can't understand, it's a communication problem, therefore, I can say its communication, SASL, not the child being naughty. Sometimes the D/deaf child thinks the mother is shouting but they might not be. The body language of D/deaf and hearing people is different.

Sometimes children in the hostel have seen fighting at home. House-parent need to be mindful to keep their face and body language calm because the D/deaf child can often misinterpret this. They can misunderstand if you are angry or sad. It's important for the house-parent to ask the child why they think you are angry or sad to explain and avoid misunderstanding. You have to check in with the kids, ask: "How are you?"

Q: what makes the children do well/feel well in the hostel?

I think it's important to make the D/deaf children in my hostel feel that I am fine, even if I'm having problems with something of my won. At work, your problems have to be out and you need to focus on your work; even with big things. You must not let your problems invade your work with your children.

If the children have been naughty in the hostel, I do punish them by sending them to bed early.

What makes the children feel well/do well?

SASL is a big help at school. I also try to be perfect, be the best that I can. If I make a mistake, I feel it inside, I have to go and say sorry to the principal. I have support from the principal. I can report things to her. It is a good system.

The HODs do not understand. If the HODs get a report on a child, they don't come the house-parent. In the meeting with the principal, we get the feedback about the child where she re-tells the HOD feedback.

Teachers ask children what happens in the hostel. House-parent don't question the children about what the teachers do in the classroom. It is not an equal role that we have. We have to make sure the kids stay good kids. I really don't believe in using the kids for gossip; for information related to fights between the teachers.

The principal listens.

Kids think all adults are good, they trust us, therefore the principal does not expect for the kids to be used in gossip.

I think memory work was very helpful for the children. The problem is that the parents don't like it. Some mothers have told their child that their father has passed but this is not always true. This puts us in a difficult position with the child.

Participant 4

Some of the challenges we face in our role as house-parent is the different backgrounds that we all come from. We need to have multiple ways of dealing with the kids. We need to be able to shift our mind-set where we can; understanding that we come from different backgrounds, not necessarily cultures, we are two different people. Why must I come to match you? This is the challenge the kids present, they not always willing to try understand where the house-parents are coming from. This is their home, so we need them to feel at home. Parents and house-parents need to communicate, help the kids find a balance between the two homes. Some kids come from privileged backgrounds but in the hostel, they have to help themselves, therefore, it is the house-parents' responsibility to teach them these skills. When the kids are grateful, then you feel you are doing your job well. Parents also acknowledge this sometimes. Life skills for the kids begin to develop in the hostel.

There is a very serious part of our work, we need to make the kids aware of life beyond school. We have to talk to them about their future. Choices for employment etc. Some parents communicate with their kids but some parents expect the house-parent to do this. They trust us.

Relationships. Everything comes with trust. This is also between parents and the teachers. Teachers and house-parent only interact when there is a crisis. If relationships between house-parent and teachers were better things would be easier. Sometimes, the house-parent gets told by the teacher that the child from their hostel got punished but the house-parent does not get the full story. It would be nice to hear the full story from the teacher and the kid.

Teachers don't ever say when the boys have been good. In class, we never get when they got positive praise. Positive praise would make house-parent and kids feel good. If the teachers are going to give negative comments, it would be good to do it with the child present too. If the teacher tells the house-parent the problem and the child is not there, then the house-parent has to repeat the story to the child later, it's hard to repeat the exact story again.

If I have a problem, I can go to the deputy or principal but you can't take all cases there. The kids stay with you. You lose the father role if you punish all the time. If there is a big problem, like sex, then you can call the principal but if they are little things, you must solve yourself. Once things have been spoken about, they are finished, done. Don't bring it up again and again.

We have support from the HOD and principal. It is complicated because there are different roles in the hostel and in the school. In the hostel, it is their home. They can't just work all the time. It's not right to study, have supper and study, they need some free time. If they don't finish their homework, it's bad in class for them. They might be stuck on a job from the teachers. They study from 4-5pm, plus two hours again, where is their free time? 9pm its bath, 9:30 it's bed. If they study too much, the next day, their mind is not working, too much pressure because they have worked too many hours. Sometimes they still have not finished even after working all those extra hours. As a parent, you would not want your child doing 3 hours of homework, so it's the same in the hostel. Do parents have 3 hours at home to do homework with their child? No. Then in the hostel, you have to split the children between those who have finished and those who have not. Therefore, those who have not finished, see those others playing and they also want to do that.

Homework should be one hour. That would be my suggestion to promote wellbeing. The kids would feel encouraged if there was less homework. Homework should be differentiated. Teachers always just ask in passing why the homework was not finished. The role of the house-parent is to look after the wellbeing of the kids. I have had some kids try to sneak off to try to finish their homework because they are scared of their teachers. They need time to relax, to watch TV and to chat. If they don't get to play and chat, they lose out.

The school is supposed to try to achieve; lots of things have been started and management usually supports us. If things don't work out well, we just stop them. I don't have any ideas or suggestions for wellbeing promotion at the moment but I know if I have a n idea, I will have the management's support. If they say no to my idea and I feel very passionate about it, I will carry on and see without them! When we meet in the middle of the road, we can revisit where we got stuck. If you use your own time, and if its productive for the kids, management usually accept.

A difficulty we face is how can we work 24 hours? Schools have different problems now. The job description of a house-parent at this school is different to role of house-parent in others schools. It would be good to meet with other house-parent to see how the job description differs.

Parents must realize that they are parents. Parents want house-parent to dedicate themselves to their kids. You can't just do this job for the salary and provide only basic care. If I retire, who will do my job? Who will take care? New recruits have to be here to do more than just earn a salary. You have to screen for the right person. Make sure he is aware of what will be expected of him in the hostel. It's not just waiting; there is always something to do in the hostel.

We give praise in the hostel. If we give positive feedback and support. They need a dad in the hostel. You need to find ways of really listening to the child.

Participant 5

Things that are challenging are things like the training competition (triathlon) which was over the weekend. The hostel was full. You have to make sure the kids have clothes and food from the kitchen. There is a lack of empathy for how hard these kinds of things can be.

Part of our role is to calm the kids down. Some of the house-parents are not empathetic towards the children. They are not loving parents. The children then go to other house-parent for love and care.

At the Leslie du Toit Home we were taught that you don't get a bad child, you get bad parents. I get shocked when I see things here. I'm like the mom here. The kids come to me if they are sick. The kids can read our body language. A hug in the morning improves things for them. Love is good for children. We are not supposed to hit the children here. If the kids want extra food, they come to me not their own house-parent. If some kids have a problem eating vegetables, I liquidize them and make it into a gravy so they still eat their veggies. You make a plan.

I cannot say no to the kids. I end up using my own money. Our role as house-parent is to teach them from the beginning. If you say to some house-parents, they just go to the unions. Even if you say something to the principal, some house-parent go to the unions. I have learned just to help myself. I listen to music. No one believes me if I say anything anyway. I write in my dairy. I don't complain in the meetings either because it's always just a problem between racial allegations.

House-parent here are just a floor-mat. We are not involved in whole-staff events such as the Valentine's Day event. In the staffroom, they are all friends. At the Christmas functions, people don't mingle. That does not happen. It's not nice to go.

People shout out in the kitchen, the HODs. Am I deaf? I can't answer back. I don't always want praise but it's also tough when people don't thank you for all you do. I'm not just the cook. I do so much. I never say no.

My job description and what I actually do are totally different. A bit of respect, not downgrading people. I don't always expect to be involved but it would be nice to be asked if we want to be involved in things. But who do we talk to? I only get a "hi" if people need something from me. I'm a door-mat.

The triathlon at school is exciting. Relationships with the kids keeps me going. It's the relationships with the adults that frustrates me. It's not always my job when the kids ask for things but to do something for others is good. I'm here for the kids.

In the hostel, all the kids are around. If they are outside, it's the house-parent responsibility to take care of them. Some kids have been found to be ordering Steers take-out and getting it from the delivery man alone. This is dangerous. The house-parent must just say no. Some house-parent juts sit in a chair and delegate to the kids. It's hard not to interfere but I don't want to step on other house-parent toes.

In C2 some of the kids don't bring their clothes back after the weekend.

There seem to be different rules for different people. Some house-parents get away with murder. If I'm sick, I still work. Some house-parent are racist. Others are sick often.

Participant 6

Our role is loco parentis, we are the mother and father. We have to ask: “how was your day, your game?” etc. We should know when they have tests. We need to reassure them. At tea and lunch we need to ask how their test went, as you would if you were their parent.

Authoritarian, you can't let your guard down. You can't be soft and loving and supportive which is the sad part. The house-parent are petty; this is part of the problem; they just need to be adult. You would imagine after all the training they have had they would understand, but no.

In the dining room, we have round tables and an adult per table. The house-parents dishes up as it would be in a family; a family event. But this is stilted, staring, the house-parent watch to see who will do something wrong, not encouraging the kids. There is no feeling of encouragement where it is okay for the kids to engage.

Regimented in the boys' hostel. You keep in line. Model authority, instruction. It can't be their home. For 16 years, it's just been a repeat of the same thing. We need to encourage change. Is there not an easier way? This feels 'not real'. Them and me, separation but I feel it should be a relaxed atmosphere, like at home. It's exhausting but I can't give up.

There is an attitude of resistance with the house-parent.

In a meeting, if things don't go the way some house-parent like they call the union. They use this as leverage. Some will not complete the children's homework. This is in their job description. There is no need for the union.

There are not enough house-parent meetings. The problem is logistics; hours in the day.

One time a term, a meeting between HODs and house-parent would give us all a platform to discuss things. Interpreting is an issue. Participant 8 does not want Participant 1 to do it but is happy for the principal to interpret. This creates limits when we have a meeting.

Memory work was invaluable and the play therapy, a listening ear. I understand where arguments come from. This was invaluable support. You can't change their situation but they can get to share their feelings.

Interpersonal relationships between children promotes wellbeing. There is an inclusive attitude at school which helps.

The hostel is full, 19 senior boys 17 junior boys. We need space. This is looking for problems. This compromises what they get. Social skills are a problem; some kids come late and are not where they should be therefore in the hostel, we have our hands full. Some are not even potty trained. I do understand where the house-parent come from.

Relationships between staff and house-parent would improve the wellbeing of learners. Teachers often don't know the full picture therefore their immediate reaction is to blame the house-parent. Mediation between teachers and house-parent is not always easy.

House-parent should meet teachers, as in parent meetings. This could encourage house-parent and make them aware of the individual needs in the hostel; help to accept the individual. There is pressure form the teachers for the kids, the house-parent could help plan with and guide the teacher.

Confidentiality and ethics is difficult in terms of medication. This is restricting us being able to support the child in totality.

More day scholars mean extra pressure on the house-parent who stay until 4pm to be collected from after care.

Participant 7

Role of house-parent is an integrated role between teacher, child and house-parent. If there is a weak link in the chain, the child suffers. There needs to be connection between parental role of biological parents and /hp.

It really depends on the person in the job. Some people are easy and some are not. There are also specific problems at a school for the Deaf – things can be misunderstood and sometimes people are not able to express themselves properly. It can be lonely at times. In the hostel, in previous times, I've tried to show house-parent how to have a harmonious supper etc. The sole description of the house-parent is to be a parent at school. The bulk of the time, the house-parent are positive but it can also feel desperate at times.

High maintenance in the behaviour context in the boys' hostel. The joy seems to have been stripped from the job. There are tantrums etc. Numbers and behaviour of the girls is low and good. The boys' hostel is run like a military camp. Also, if 1 house-parent not there it's really hard.

Relationship between house-parent; tensions, not talking to each other. I', not sure why there is tension.

Visual clues, body language, it's hard for the kids.

Relationships between house-parent – there are tensions; often not talking to each other. There is often tension between house-parent and the kids. I'm not sure why? The kids get the visual clues given off by the house-parent body language. This is hard for them.

There has been lots of intervention given to the house-parent in terms of child development. There are always meetings where ideas have been shared on how to extend the kids or to have fun with them. This is not always received well. The hostel appears to have become institutionalized.

If the house-parent are the parent for the child during the week, why are they not concerned for the child? More can only come out of the heart of the person, that 'ah ha' moment, it's

intrinsic and linked to personality. We should be mindful to employ house-parent carefully. The problem is that it is not an easy role. They are away from their own family. The salary is also low.

Looking at the development of the Deaf child, you have to teach the house-parent/ Deaf children are not the same as hearing children in terms of what they need from a developmental perspective. They do seem to bond with the house-parent, even if they are not good house-parent.

One of the problems we face is that we do not have a good communication loop between the house-parent and the biological parents. And the child. The principal needs to be involved and aware but management loses control when biological parents and house-parent communicate and make decisions regarding the child without the school's awareness.

The house-parent are always challenging their job description. They see themselves as victims in their job description; rather than being there for the child. They feel they are there just for their union members' rights. This attitude robs the person of being generous.

We are not just dealing with people, we have to deal with mind-sets, priorities and these are not all equal at school.

If you have taken a job as a 'house-parent', some things should just be accepted.

Disciplining the children is part of the house-parent role. Some of the house-parent cannot accept this though, they are just not mature enough. This leads to the children not respecting the house-parent. We have given letters of warning; measures have been taken but we are unlikely to be able to get rid of any of the house-parent despite their behaviour which warranted a written warning. If the management team inherited a bad person or employed such a person, government schools have very little say in such matters, therefore, you have to work with what you have got.

It seems to be easier to do things the 'old way'; authoritarian, institutional. Giving the house-parent the freedom to develop things their own way would be ideal but that has not happened, they like the old way. If your own experience has been deprived, then it's easier to just

follow the rules; you lose the ability to be free. In the case of the house-parent; if the rules were not there, then what? Who has responsibility? Accountable? Because of the rules and authoritarian way of running the hostel, it's the kids that are held accountable.

For ideas for the future promotion of wellbeing I would love to see the house-parents enjoying each other's company. Maybe we need to send them on a weekend away? They could be like an extended family, draw on each other for support. Maybe some training on story-telling? Maybe a Bible Study group? Gives the house-parent a sense of the importance of their lives; empower them from within.

Participant 8

It is different working now compared to how it was before. The parents now just want to give responsibility to the house-parent. We are expected to work 24 hours a day. We are up in the night; toilet, changing nappies, changing wet sheets etc. The little boys in the hostel are wild. Some of the little ones are still in nappies.

Kids at home are supposed to learn things but they don't. There is no communication between the children and their parents. It is difficult with some parents in our hostel. We get stuck in the middle of fights between divorced or separated parents. Sometimes there are court battles but we still have to do our job and need the parents to send things for their children; clothes, toiletries etc. but sometimes they don't provide it and we have to ask the other parent and then they get cross. Some of these children need special attention in the hostel then because of what they are going through at home. The responsibility then falls on the house-parent to explain to the child what their parent's relationship problems are.

The children lack training at home; bathing, dressing, manners, social skills etc.

In the senior boys' hostel, the kids are older so you can talk to them, prepare them for things. In the junior boys, it is different, you need the co-operation of the parents. The parents need to come and visit the hostel so that they can see how the house-parent teach the children to eat properly, to use SASL. The parents can't always just use the excuse that they don't understand SASL.

As a house-parent, I am like a father; I need to encourage the boys in my hostel. In SA, the Deaf usually don't have fathers. They often have young mothers too. Grandparents often have to step up to help the mothers. You can trash a Deaf child about punishment but it does need both parents.

As house-parent, we need to try to motivate the child to be better. We need to make them aware of environmental dangers; how to act. If they have strict discipline now, they will know how to behave as an adult.

We need to teach the children about respect. This is not a matter of age. I try my best to do this. I need to teach the children about privacy.

The children often have low self-esteem in the school. They get into a lot of fights too. We need to show them love, teach them who they are so that we can develop a positive attitude for the Deaf child.

A hard fight we face is homework. The school is different now. Before it was a happy place. Before there was co-operation between the teachers. Now we are expected to do the homework with the children in our hostel. This is the job of the teacher not the house-parent. It's a different world. There is an attitude now that everyone runs to report everything. We need to teach together. Through co-operation, the school will improve. I don't want the children to have to see the problems between the staff. We need to be professional; don't talk out of turn in front of the kids.

Don't shout at the child. You need to find an alternative to shouting. You need to find ways to motivate and encourage.