

**SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION IN
A SOUTH AFRICAN RURAL CONTEXT: POSSIBILITIES
FOR AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH**

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Declaration

I Phumlani Erasmus Myende declare that this dissertation is my own work. This work has not been submitted for degree purposes at any other University. I have indicated and acknowledged all the sources that I have used in completing this dissertation.

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Student's signature

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Date

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Supervisor's signature

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Date

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents ‘Badingile Pauline Myende’ and my father ‘Bonani Patrick Myende’ who worked tirelessly trying to take me to the level of education that I have reached today. Your hard work in nurturing me keeps me motivated and working towards excellence. *‘Ngiyanibonga bazali bami, lapho senihamba engathi uNkulunkulu anganibeka kwesakhe isandla niqhethe namaqhawe eZulu’*

I would also like to dedicate this work to my son ‘Esihle Siphile Myende’. ‘Son this is the least you dad could contribute to this world. Please expand on it’.

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ABSTRACT

This case study sought to investigate the possibilities of asset-based approach in school-community partnership. A specific partnership between a secondary school from Vulindlela District, some academic staff members and student teachers from the University of KwaZulu-Natal was studied. To fulfil the purpose of this study, the critical questions such as what assets do partners in the '*Nothing for us without us*' project regard as central in their partnership and to what extent do these partners utilised these assets were used as the basis for data collection in this study. The responses to these critical questions were then used to provide answers to the major inquiry of this study, which was to investigate whether and asset-based approach can be utilised in school-community partnership. The study was conducted within the confines of interpretive paradigm and qualitative case study was adopted as a research approach. To abide by some hallmarks of the case study, multiple data collection methods were utilised. Data were collected using semi-structured individual interviews and documentary analysis. Five teachers (Principal, Deputy Principal, HoD and two post level one teachers) from the case school and two project leaders from the University team participated in the individuals' interviews. The proposal document for the current project '*Nothing for us without*', 2007; 2009 and 2010 reports on the previous projects were analysed. The findings of the study revealed that teachers, the school principal, community individuals, organisations and learners, the experience of the school in partnership were regarded as crucial assets in the current partnership. The findings further indicated that physical resources such as the computers available in the school and the buildings were among the assets that were available but they were not regarded as crucial for the partnership. While the assets are identified, the findings also revealed that their utilisation was to a minimum extent. Teachers were reported to be overwhelmed by academic work and also reluctant to participate because of unclear communication of goals of the partnership. The findings further revealed that community assets are not mapped because of the failure to invite community members in the activities of the partnership. I conclude in the study that asset-based approach can be utilised in school-community partnership. However, to enhance the level of asset utilisation, there is a need to re-evaluate the role of the school principal in the partnership. I further recommend coordinated efforts to invite community members in the activities of the partnership.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This thesis presents the results of a study that investigated the possibilities for an asset-based approach in school-community partnership in education in a South African rural context. Focusing on a particular partnership between some staff members from the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the one hand, and a rural secondary school in Vulindlela district in KwaZulu-Natal on the other hand, the study examined whether an asset-based model as advocated by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) can be utilised in school-community partnerships. Central to this approach is that schools have assets at their disposal which schools can possibly use for their benefits. Therefore, this chapter presents a background to the study, problem statement and key research questions for the study. This is followed by the significance and the limitation of the study as well as brief definitions of key terms used in the thesis. Then towards the end of the chapter, I present the structure of the thesis and a conclusion.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Generally, society regards education as a major instrument for correcting the injustices of the past apartheid system of government that manifested itself, among other things, through unequal employment opportunities resulting from unequal education opportunities (Du Toit, Erasmus, & Strydom, 2010) that was aligned to different racial groups in South Africa. As a result, in the new democratic South Africa, there has been a strong demand from government to improve the quality of education offered to learners in schools. Government's response to this societal demand has been positive. Since 1996, the National Department of Education in South Africa has introduced a number of changes in the education sector with an aim of accelerating the transformation process. For example, the Department of Education introduced the South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996, which resulted in a number of changes in the education system. In addition, the Department of Education implemented the

Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in schools to improve the quality of education received by learners (Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge, & Ngcobo, 2008).

Similarly, more pressure has been put on the schools' personnel to improve their practice as a way of improving the quality of education. For example, to ensure improved practice that results to quality education, the Department of Education introduced Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) which was aimed at appraising teachers and also ensuring that teachers were performing their duties (Naidu, et al., 2008; Weber, 2005). However, improving the quality of education has been hindered by a number of factors. For example, Kamper (2009) asserts that social ills, such as poverty are great threats in achieving quality education. Furthermore, researchers such as Bojuwoye (2009), Khanare (2009) and Sanders (2007) have noted issues such as HIV and AIDS, alcohol and drug abuse, violence and gangsterism as some of the barriers to quality education in South African schools. For the creation of effective schools, which are able to provide quality education, the above authors suggest that schools will need to develop strategies to manage, if not to curb these factors. This has to be done while ensuring that the academic roles are also given priority. There is no doubt that such demands on schools require additional material and human resources. Different researchers such as Anderson-Butcher, Stetler, & Midle, (2006) and Sanders, (2001) also support this argument and argue that challenges facing schools today require additional resources which may not be found within the school boundaries. However, harnessing additional external resources may not be a solution to the needs of a school. Schools will need to assess their existing assets and mobilise them before they seek external supplementary resources or assets. School-community partnerships have been seen as one of the means schools may use to harness additional external resources.

In South Africa, school-community partnerships idea has also gained support from the introduction of the South African School Act (no. 84 of 1996) (Republic of South Africa, 1996). This Act has prescribed that all decisions regarding education of a child should be a joint responsibility of the school, parents, individual members of the community and different community structures. According to the South African Schools Act school management teams should distribute their power across different stakeholders such as teachers, learners, parents, non-teaching staff and other community individuals and organisations members to

ensure democratic school leadership and management. The distribution of power suggests that leadership and decision making on matters affecting schools can no longer be held by the principal alone, but they need to be dispersed to different stakeholders (Spillane, 2005). This is one of the factors that have resulted in collaborations between different school stakeholders. The Act further indicates that schools should supplement resources provided by the State (Republic of South Africa, 1996). In countries like Australia and the United States of America partnerships between schools and external communities have existed since the 1970s (Bosma et al., 2010). Parents, community leaders, community organisations, government institutions, research institutions, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and businesses are stakeholders that have forged collaborations with schools in the above countries. Similarly, in South Africa, parents, community leaders and organisations, government institutions, universities and businesses are continuously forging partnerships with schools (Naidu, et al., 2008). The main aim in these collaborations has always been that of improving learner achievement (Anderson-Butcher, Stetler, & Midle, 2006; Bojuwoye, 2009; Melaville, 1998; Naidu, et al., 2008).

Although highly supported for improving the quality of education both locally and internationally, school-community partnerships have failed due to the deficiency approach (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001). Such model promotes a situation whereby one partner believes and is believed by another partner as needy and with no assets to utilise for survival. In a rural context in particular, teachers, learners and parents normally perceive their schools as under-resourced and unable to solve their challenges without external support (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Moreover, there is a tendency from external partners, especially universities to look at people within schools as people with no assets at their disposal to use in order to deal with challenges they face (Brady, 2002; Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2010). The above model creates partnerships that are difficult to sustain and it also creates communities that believe that overcoming their challenges is dependent upon an external partner bringing assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Alternatively, the asset-based approach suggests that assets within communities can be harnessed to help communities solve their own challenges and may be ideal to create sustainable partnerships (Khanare, 2009). This approach is also relevant in ensuring that communities perceive themselves as resourceful and empowered to look after themselves (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007). Therefore, this study investigates whether an asset-based approach can be utilised in school-community

partnership. As I stated earlier the study focuses on a specific school-university partnership between some academic staff members from UKZN Faculty of Education and one secondary school from the Vulindlela District (KZN).

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The above discussion has shown that advocacy on school-community partnerships is based on its impact on improving the quality of education. However, of major concern is that in such partnerships, partners external to the schools masquerade as ‘experts’ on the issues facing the schools involved. As ‘experts’ such partners impose answers to the problems faced by schools and communities. As a result such approaches create a dependency syndrome where the community concerned starts to believe in its deficiency and thinks of itself as lacking means (knowledge, skills and other material assets) to solve their problems. Earlier on, I defined this approach as a deficiency approach. Then local people look for help from external partners. The major concern is that even if external partners provide assets, the needs-based approach (deficiency model) creates a situation whereby local people will often fail to identify their assets and also to sustain what has been provided by external partners. Eventually, local people take a back seat and become passive recipients of services (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the possibilities of an asset-based model as an alternative to deficiency model or needs-based approach. In other words this study sought to investigate if the asset-based model can be applied in school-community partnerships.

1.4. KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following key research questions:

- What resources or assets do partners in the “*Nothing for us without us*” project regard as central in the partnership?
- To what extent do partners utilise these assets in their partnership?
- What are the possibilities for the asset-based approach to school-community partnership?

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The school-community partnerships or school-university partnerships in particular, are significant and thus needs to be developed and sustained. An asset-based approach is proposed in this study to be an ideal approach in sustaining school-community partnerships. An in-depth understanding of the possibilities for an asset-based approach from this study will contribute to the possibility of future partnerships being established under the assumptions or principles of this approach. Having identified the strength of an asset-based approach as an ideal model in school-community partnerships, this study identifies challenges of utilising this approach. The study further identifies factors that strengthen the implementation of this approach and those that hinder its application. It further suggests strategies of addressing such factors. In particular, this study recommends strategies for harnessing more available assets within the community in the studied partnership.

1.6. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.6.1. Partnerships

In business, the concept ‘partnership’ is defined as contractual relationship between two or more people with shared goals but not more than 20. These people are called partners (Du Toit, et al., 2010). However, the contributions each partner make determines the power that the partner has in the business. This means that a member who contributed more in terms of shares or capital investment can be seen as a superior member in the partnership and might have more gains as compared to other partners. In this study, a similar understanding of this concept is used in that partnership is used to refer to the relationship between teachers, learners, parents and other community members of a selected school on the one hand, and some academic staff members from the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the other hand. Slightly different from the business meaning of the concept partnership, the partnership defined here is characterised by shared goals and strengths for all partners regardless of the level of their contribution.

1.6.2. School-community partnerships

Naidu et al (2008) defines the concept ‘school-community partnership’ as a relationship between the community and the school that is characterised by reciprocal and mutual provision of services. The ‘mutual provision’ of services suggests that the school will provide service to the community and vice-versa. Sanders (2006) contends that the school-community can include different interested bodies such as universities, government agencies, local profit and non-profit organisations (NPOs), research based organisations, political organisations and faith-based organisations (FBOs). Despite the local boundaries, the above institutions may form a school community based on the understanding that in one way or the other they are interested in what schools are doing. School communities are sub-divided into two. Firstly, is the internal community which may include teachers, learners, non-teaching staff, parents (SGB) and other stakeholders that may be found within the school premises. The second sub-division is the external community that includes community organisations, government organisations, research organisations, families of learners, universities and businesses (Naidu, et al., 2008; Sanders, 2006). Importantly, the above stakeholders may be located within or far away from the school location, but because of their interest in the school they become the school community. Sometimes the term school-community relations or collaborations have been used interchangeably with school-community partnerships (Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2010; Naidu, et al., 2008). In this study, school-community partnerships are defined as reciprocal relationships between the school and its community. This relationship is characterised by collective work of the school internal community and that of external community that is aimed at achieving the shared goals. The partnership is further characterised by mutual benefits. School community, according to this study is not constrained by the geographic boundaries (Sanders, 2006), but it considers other organisation or individuals who continuously interact with schools and who display sustained interest in the school.

1.6.3. School-university partnerships

Universities may form partnerships with schools and for the purposes of this study, I refer to this kind of partnership as school-university partnership. Generally, this concept can be defined as a reciprocal and mutual relationship between a school and a university where both

parties (university and the school) provide services to each other. This research project is therefore investigating this kind of partnership where a partnership project exists between some staff members from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a rural secondary school in the Vulindlela district in KwaZulu-Natal province. However, in the thesis I chose to use the term school-community partnership when referring to this partnership project because as discussed under the definition of school-community partnership above, universities are part of stakeholders or community of the schools.

1.6.4. Assets/resources

Strydom (2008) defines assets or resources as tangible and intangible belongings of an organisation or individual. In the thesis, the concept is used to refer to people as tangible resources and their knowledge and skills as intangible assets. It is also used to mean the organisation where those people are working. Other than people, assets may also refer to other physical, non-living things such as land and buildings, vehicles and equipment of an organisation (Du Toit, et al., 2010). Strydom (2008) provides different forms of resources namely, human resources (labour in business terms), monetary or financial resources and other physical resources such as land and other community infrastructure that I previously explained as tangible assets. In this study the concepts ‘assets and resources’ are used interchangeably. Assets are therefore resources that an organisation can utilise to transform itself in an effort to achieve its goals.

1.7.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The activities of the partnership under study involved the training of pre-service educators and learners from the school. Including learners and pre-service educators would have added more depth to the study. However, the study only focussed on the SMT members, educators and project leaders. This leaves out other views that might be important. Secondly, due to problems of participants’ inaccessibility, I also change my initial plans in terms of data collection techniques. Initially, I planned to use semi-structured individual and focus group

interviews. I tried to set a focus group interview with the members of the SMT and it did not materialise as they were not available at once. The teachers were also busy with different activities which made it difficult to set a meeting for a focus group interview with them. Therefore I decided to cancel the focus group interviews and I relied on individual interviews and document analysis. The aspect of having those collective views and accessing other views that could not have been accessed in the individual interviews was forfeited as focus group interviews were cancelled. Other interviews were too short as participants had other commitments to attend to. However, they agreed to be phoned in the case where I identify the gaps in whatever they have provided. The data analysis stage revealed that data generated through interviews and document analysis was sufficient to fulfil the aims of this study. I only managed to access two project leaders out of the total of seven. The views of these project leaders cannot be guaranteed to be the general views of other project leaders in the same partnership as they lead different aspect of the partnership. However, they provided valuable insights into the study phenomenon which is on the advantage of qualitative research.

1.8. ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

This thesis is arranged into five chapters as follows:

Chapter one introduces the thesis. Here I discuss the background to the study, problem statement and key research questions for the study. This is followed by the significance and the limitation of the study as well as brief definitions of key terms used in the thesis. Then towards the end of the chapter, I present the structure of the thesis and a conclusion.

Chapter two discusses school-community partnerships and the asset-based approach. Firstly, I discuss the background of school-community partnerships and key concepts used in this thesis, such as community, partnership and school-community partnership. Secondly, I discuss the rationale behind school-community partnerships and factors strengthening school-community partnerships. Lastly, I develop a theoretical framework underpinning the study. Here, I discuss an asset-based approach (model) that was developed by Kretzmann and MacKnight (1993) as an ideal approach to community development.

Chapter three discusses the research design and methodology that I employed in this study in order to achieve the research aims. I then discuss the selection of the participants, the data collection and analysis methods that I used in the study. I also explain how I considered the concept of trustworthiness in my study. Towards the end of the chapter, I discuss ethical considerations that I also embraced in my study.

Chapter four presents findings of this study and the analysis thereof. Generally, the findings discuss assets available in school contexts and surrounding communities, the utilisation of such assets and the possibilities of an asset-based approach in school-community partnerships. In line with the study main aim, the findings of the study are presented and discussed according to the three main themes. I discuss in detail each of the themes that emerged from data. I draw conclusions relating to possibilities of an asset-based approach to school-community partnerships.

Chapter five discusses a summary of the thesis, conclusions drawn from the study and a set of recommendations generated from the findings of this study.

1.9. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed the background to the study and the aims and significance of the study. I have also presented key research questions, the limitation of the study as well as brief definitions of key terms used in the thesis. Then towards the end of the chapter, I present the structure of the thesis. As indicated in the organisation of the report, chapter two discusses school-community partnerships and the asset-based approach.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses school-community partnerships and the asset-based approach. Firstly, I discuss the background of school-community partnerships and key concepts used in this thesis, such as community, partnership and school-community partnerships. Secondly, I discuss the rationale behind school-community partnerships and factors strengthening school-community partnerships. Lastly, I develop a theoretical framework underpinning the study. Here, I discuss an asset-based approach (model) that was developed by Kretzmann and MacKnight (1993) as an ideal approach to community development.

2.2 BACKGROUND OF SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The debates on educational policy in South Africa emphasise the democratising of educational governance (Sayed, 1997a). A democratic nature of education has called for decentralised educational governance which has suggested that internal and external school stakeholders have to mutually govern their schools (Sayed, 1997b). Several authors argue that a democratic and decentralised educational governance involves external stakeholders such as community leaders, government agencies, non-profit-organisations, faith-based organisation, higher education institutions, research institutes and businesses as well as ordinary community members (Mbokazi & Bhengu, 2008; Mncube & Harber, 2010; Sayed, 1997b). Furthermore, some authors argue that schools become more successful when teachers, pupils, parents and the communities work collaboratively towards common goals (Bojuwoye, 2009; Sanders, 2006). Kamper (2008) states that currently, schools are faced with numerous challenges that affect teaching and learning. Therefore, schools need support from their communities to deal with such challenges (Sanders, 2006). While external support is advocated, there is also a strong consensus that this support will be strengthened if external stakeholders consider and build their support on assets that are available within a school

(Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001; Khanare, 2009; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). In other words, school-community partnerships should be guided by the asset-based approach (model). This model emphasises that external communities should build their support on resources available within schools that they plan to support (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001). This means that external stakeholders should develop a process to identify a school's assets and thereafter provide additional support to strengthen the school's resources.

2.3. COMMUNITY, PARTNERSHIP AND SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP CONCEPTS

2.3.1 Community

The term 'community' can be defined in two ways. Firstly, it refers to the location where people live. This perspective suggests that people separated by a particular boundary are not one community (Molloy et al., 1995). Secondly, the concept 'community' means a common cultural heritage, language, social interactions and shared interests and vision by individuals or organisations within or transcending local boundaries (Molloy, et al., 1995; Sanders, 2006). The second meaning shows that a community in terms of people and organisation is not constrained by geographical boundaries. This suggests that the common heritage, shared interests, language and social interactions of individuals or organisations from different geographical areas bind such individuals or organisations to one community. In relation to this study, I argue that defining school-community under the confines of local boundaries may negatively affect the success of school-community partnerships. This may result in schools' failure to identify potential contributors in school-community partnerships as they will only consider the communities as constrained by their local boundaries. This will further exclude stakeholders who may have interests in a school located in a particular area if they are outside the geographical area where the school is situated. Therefore, I argue that members of a school community should be determined by their interests in the affairs of that particular school rather than their geographical location in relation to that of a school.

A body of knowledge generated on school-community partnerships by authors such as Bosma, et al. (2010), Carroll, LaPoint, & Tyler (2001), Johns (2003), Naidu et al. (2008) and Sanders (1996) suggest that businesses, higher education institutions, research institutes,

government departments or agencies, faith-based organisations and other non-profit organisations may be interested in a schools' work and they usually interact with schools. Such stakeholders may not necessarily be located in the same geographical area as that of the school they are interested in. However, their interest in the school and their continuous interaction with the school qualifies them to be automatically regarded as a school-community in this study.

Although school community is comprised of the aforementioned stakeholders, the focus of this study is on a specific partnership between one secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and some academic staff members from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, hereafter referred to as UKZN. The two partners are regarded as the community because they share the same interest and vision on the different aspects of their partnership. I also opted to use the concept 'school-community' instead of 'school-university' because universities are part of a community that could have partnership with schools.

2.3.2 Partnership

The concept 'partnership' is borrowed from business (Du Toit, et al., 2010). Within the business discipline partnership is described as a contractual relationship between two or more (but not more than twenty) individuals or organisations who commit themselves in sharing profits and losses incurred by an undertaking (Du Toit, et al., 2010). The business perspective seems greatly influence the understanding and meaning of this concept within education. For example, Naidu et al. (2008) use a similar meaning of the concept and assert that "partnership refers to an association of two or more people in an undertaking, sharing risks and profits" (p. 131). Other authors such as Adams & Smith (2003) and Patton (2002) have used the concept 'partnership' interchangeably with the concept 'collaboration'. These authors maintain that 'collaboration' is rooted in an understanding of interdependence among different people or organisations. They further contend that collaboration is characterised by mutual and reciprocal provision of services between the two groups or individuals. Such features of partnership are in line with an asset-based model where the relationship between partners is non-exploitative but mutually beneficial. For example, Swaffield (2005, p. 46) states:

Partnerships do not entail an exploitative relationship (typical of a customer-provider model) in which the head teacher purchases information and expertise from a “critical friend”, who works according to the agenda of the principal, has little influence on what happens and gains very little out of the relationship

This argument indicates that all partners in a partnership must have a sound influence and must be recognised as important participants rather than ‘tokens’. Similarly, an asset-based model that I discuss later, emphasises that partnership should be underpinned by respect, mutual understanding and recognition of skills and capacities of individuals. This means that everyone “counts” and everyone can contribute in any community initiative (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). In collaboration or partnership partners work together and share responsibilities and results and there is a strong belief that both partners can contribute in collaborative initiatives (Adams & Smith, 2003). Similarly, an asset-based approach or model is based on the assumption that people or organisations are not devoid of skills and capacities that could be utilised in collaborative efforts between schools and their communities. Like an asset-based model partnerships are grounded on the understanding that each partner has valuable potential for the achievement of collective goals. Therefore, I extend my definition of partnership in this study to include a process of combining intangible and tangible capacities of individuals or groups with an aim to achieve collective goals of all partners. The concept of school-community partnerships is embedded from the concept ‘partnership’, thus below I provide a critical perspective on the concept ‘school-community partnerships’.

2.3.3. School-community partnerships

The concept ‘school-community partnership’ is a blend of the concepts ‘community’ and ‘partnership’. According to Sanders (2007, p. 39) “school-community partnerships are the connections between schools and individuals, organisations and businesses that are forged to directly or indirectly promote students, social, emotional, physical and intellectual development. Some of the South African-based researchers such as Bojuwoye (2009), Lemmer (2007), Mncube & Harber (2010) and Naidu et al. (2008), have associated school-community partnership with parental involvement. For example, in their discussions of limitations to school-community partnership, Naidu et al. (2008) identified the unwillingness of parents to get involved in school activities as one of the limitations in school-community partnership. These authors identify a number of limitations which suggests that they relate

school-community partnership to parental involvement. This further suggests that school-community partnership is multifaceted and parental involvement is one of the facets of school-community partnerships. The list of possible school community members provided in chapter one provides a clear picture of the stakeholders that could have partnership with schools. School-community partnership in this study may be conceptualised as a process whereby one or all of the stakeholders mentioned in the previous chapter (Universities, Government organisations, local non-profit and faith-based organisations and families) jointly or collaboratively work with school to achieve collective goals.

Scholars such as Naidu et al. (2008) use the phrase ‘school-community relationship’ interchangeably with school-community partnership. Although the concept is used interchangeably with other concepts and sometimes used differently by different researchers, the common idea presented in this study is that school-community partnership refers to joint or collaborative initiatives between schools and communities which are aimed to benefit both the schools and communities involved. To reiterate, community transcends the local boundaries of the school. Several factors drive the partnerships between schools and communities. In the following paragraphs I discuss the rationale behind the formation of these partnerships.

2.4. RATIONALE FOR SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

In South Africa, a broad and growing body of literature exists on the rationale behind school-community partnership. Factors such as the need for additional resources, improved learner academic achievement and social development, strengthening of school programmes, support for community development and joint initiatives to deal with social ills such as poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, violence and HIV and AIDS have been identified as some of driving forces for the establishment of school-community partnerships (Lemmer, 2007;). Literature, especially from the United State of America also highlights educator preparation and professional development, curriculum development and research that promote educational renewal as other factors that drive school-community partnership (Carroll, et al., 2001;

Melaville, 1998). I briefly discuss some of the factors that drive school-community partnerships in the following paragraphs.

2.4.1. The Need for Extra Resources

Resources may be defined as supporting aids that schools or communities utilise in order to perform their activities. Such resources can be divided into human resources, financial and natural resources (Du Toit, et al., 2010) and the schools' success depends on the availability of resources. Sanders (2007) argues that the need for extra resources is one of the key factors that necessitate school-community partnerships. Section 34 of SASA gives a directive to the State to equitably fund public schools to enable learners to access education and also to redress past injustices regarding education provision (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Sanders (2007) contends that schools may not possess all the resources they need to meet the demands of their constituency; however, school communities may have such resources.

It is also clear from the South African schools Act no 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1996), that the South African State may not fully provide the schools with unlimited resources. While section 34 gives the directive to the State to fund schools, Section 36 of the Act further states that in order to improve the quality of education provided, a governing body of a public school must take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the State. Supplementing resources may entail fundraising activities to purchase other resources. Then business may play a role in this instance. Many businesses have long contributed direct donations to supplement schools' budgets (; Naidu, et al., 2008). Apart from their willingness to contribute to schools, Ford (2004) claims that businesses' involvement in schools is also influenced by their need for skilled workforce from schools.

2.4.2. Improved learner academic achievement and learner social development

School-community partnerships have gained support in South Africa because it promises learner academic success or improvement (Naidu et al., 2008). It is not only in South Africa where advocacy for school-community partnership is based on its relations with learner academic success. A case study conducted by Sanders and Lewis (2005) in three K-12 schools in the United States of America (USA) on factors that led to partnerships between

universities and K-12 schools, reports that principals, administrators and programme chairs of different partnership initiatives agreed that central to their partnership was the goal to improve students' academic and personal success.

Improving students' academic achievement may only be possible with effective, highly trained and empowered workforce. Therefore, teacher training and development becomes a pre-requisite for improved learner academic achievement (Coleman & Earley, 2005). HEIs or universities are key partners in ensuring teacher training and development. Basically, universities are important with regard to teacher preparation and professional development which strengthens pedagogical knowledge, attitudes and skills. Furthermore, they conduct research that helps in developing curriculum that seeks to improve education and school experience for all learners (Carroll, et al., 2001).

To improve academic achievement, school-community partnership promotes students intellectual and social development, educational advancement. It also offers optimal opportunities for children and youth to become productive members of the labour market (Ford, 2004; Sanders & Lewis, 2005). Such development also enables students to deal with other social challenges existing outside schools (Anderson-Butcher, et al., 2006). This shows that partnerships are not only beneficial to schools but also to communities.

2.4.3. School-community as critical for community development

Although schools benefit from school-community partnership, proponents of school-community partnerships such as Anderson-Butcher et al. (2006), Bojuwoye (2009), Mbokazi & Bhengu (2008) and Sanders (2006), further state that in their communities, other schools are sole institutions responsible for generating strategies for poverty eradication. Therefore, as discussed previously, if communities form partnership with schools they grow stronger and this strengthens their capacities in dealing with social ills (Bojuwoye, 2009). Mncube (2010) conducted a quantitative study on the extent to which parents participated in joint activities between schools and communities and their attitude towards participation. Although the study was focussed on parental involvement, it reports that through their involvement, parents were empowered and their understanding of different policies was enhanced. I argue here that such empowerment is critical in developing communities and it might help in

finding other strategies to deal with challenges experienced by learners within and outside the school boundaries. Likewise, when schools develop learners/students they become productive citizens of that particular community. These learners/students will in turn contribute to the well-being of their communities by providing their skills in activities designed for community development.

2.4.4. School-community partnership strengthens school programmes

I have argued earlier that school-community partnerships help to generate extra resources for the school. Other possible partners such as businesses can also provide supplementary resources. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004) contend that supplementary resources contributed by external stakeholders may be used to strengthen school programmes. In addition, joint initiatives between schools and their communities allow for collective leadership processes which can translate into improved school programmes (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel, & Schurink, 2002). When external partners are involved they apply their expertise in certain areas and this allows educators to focus more on teaching and learning (Bojuwoye, 2009). This does not only improve academic work, but also ensures that other school programmes are effectively implemented without sacrificing academic excellence (To, 2007). Partnerships allow schools and communities to avoid duplication of programmes. For instance, schools may offer programmes that are already existing in the community and this might be the waste of funds and time (Naidu, et al., 2008; Sanders, 2006). Implementation of school programmes is largely dependent on the support from communities surrounding the schools thus the partnership mobilises this support. The support helps create social networks for individuals in schools and communities to improve their practice (Thompson & Walker, 2002).

2.5. DIFFERENT PARTNERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- **Parents and families**

Partnerships between schools, parents and families has supported schools' activities and ensured that learners are assisted in their after-school tasks (homework activities) (Adams &

Smith, 2003;). This is the most common partnership taking place in South Africa today because of the advocacy from the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Bridging the gap that exists between home and schools is also achievable through parental and family involvement in education (Lemmer, 2007). To date, parents have been used to provide additional supervision especially in after school classes and also during learners' field trips. This does not only serve as additional support to schools, but it is furthering parents and families' understanding of what is happening in schools which is important for quality education.

- **Formal and informal businesses**

One of the serious challenges facing South African rural and township schools in particular, is the scarcity of resources (Landsberg, Kruger, & Nel, 2005; Molloy, et al., 1995; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). A large scale study conducted by the Human Social Research Council (HSRC) for Nelson Mandela Foundation in 2005 on rural communities' knowledge, experiences and their understanding about relationship between schooling, rural life and poverty reports that teachers from Eastern Cape province reported that the lack of resources makes their work harder as compared to the work of their counterparts from affluent schools that are located in suburban areas (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Furthermore, the study reports that local, formal and informal businesses contribute resources to local schools. This concurs with the argument made by Sanders (2006), which posits that businesses close the gap between schools and the important resources. In return, businesses form partnerships with schools from which they draw their skilled workforce.

- **Government departments, non-profit and faith-based organisations**

As discussed earlier, globally and in South Africa, most schools face challenges such as poverty, crime, violence, HIV and AIDS and unemployment of parents (Babbie, 2007; Kamper, 2008; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). These critical challenges directly or indirectly negatively impact on education in schools and thus in one way or the other schools need to create mechanisms to overcome such challenges. Much information has been documented on State's Departments' involvement in schools initiatives to deal with these challenges. For example Naidu et al. (2008) contends that the South African Police Services

department (SAPS) has kept a close contact with schools in programmes such as Safe Schools. In addition, NGOs and FBOs have also largely contributed to schools' initiatives to deal with these challenges. Other departments such as the Department of Education and the Department of Social Development have worked with schools and contributed to policy development regarding issues of HIV and AIDS (Khanare, 2009).

- **Universities and Research Institutes**

Research institutes and universities may present research reports on other schools' and communities' experiences of dealing with issues like poverty and schooling as well as violence in schools (Carroll, et al., 2001; Corrigan, 2000). A practical example of a research institute that is contributing to research based knowledge is the HSRC. Such knowledge may be used to bridge the gap between theory and practice in schools. HEIs on the other hand provide specialised knowledge for school teachers to work in environments where these challenges are escalating (Carroll, et al., 2001). There is also a consensus that teacher professional development is a critical issue to attend to if schools have to produce better results (Melaville, 1998). The contribution of HEIs in the professional development of both in-service and pre-service teachers through university-school partnership has been recorded (Brady, 2004). Brady (2004) argues that universities play a crucial role in ensuring that teachers are able to integrate theory and practice in their work. On the other hand it is asserted that teachers from schools have also assisted universities in providing mentoring of students teachers from universities and also in ensuring that university courses reflect on the contextual issues (Brady, 2002). This emphasises the point made earlier that partnerships are characterised by shared and reciprocal benefits.

The focus of this study is on the partnership between the University and the school. Although different partners can contribute to school-community partnerships, a concern is that can we utilise an asset-based approach in these partnerships? It is also important that we review what has made or what can make partnerships to be successful. Thus in the next section, I critically examine factors that bolster partnerships between school and their communities.

2.6. FACTORS BOLSTERING SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNESHIP

A number of factors bolstering school-community partnerships have been identified in several studies. In her study conducted in United States of America, Sanders (2007) identified leadership as one of those factors. Another study conducted in South Africa (KwaZulu-Natal province) by Bojuwoye (2009) which was aimed at finding parents' opinions on the nature of school-community partnership in their schools, reports that the relationship between partners also influenced the success or failure of school-community partnership. Furthermore, the reciprocal communication between partners strengthens family-school-community partnerships (Swick, 2003). In addition, the availability of resources such as funding and adequate guiding tools are also crucial for the implementation of sustainable school-community partnerships (Sanders & Lewis, 2005). These factors are broadly discussed in the section.

2.6.1. Leadership

The concept of leadership has long been defined in literature. Different authors such as Coleman & Earley (2005), Naidu et al. (2008) and Spillane (2005), present different broader perspectives which highlight the role of leadership in ensuring strong school-community partnerships. Fullan (2007, p. 17) defines leadership as a “process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers”. Several authors confirm that leadership is key to organisational success (Coleman & Earley, 2005; Fullan, 2007). Coleman (2005, p. 17) states that leadership is an aspect of management, “with ‘real leaders’ often characterised as charismatic individuals with a visionary flair and with the ability to motivate and enthuse others”. Leadership is often seen as a notion of influence (Calitz, Fuglestad, & Lillejord, 2002). Coleman (2005) and Calitz et al. (2002) further state that leadership in schools no longer lies on the hands of the principal, but teachers also apply their leadership abilities in their classrooms and other different school contexts. Spillane (2005) regards this stlye of leadership as distributed leadership. Both instructional leadership as well as distributed leadership are regarded as important for strengthening partnerships between schools and their communities (Battilana, Gilmartinb, Sengul, Pache, & Alexander, 2010;

Spillane, 2005). This is because these leadership styles are directly linked to improved teaching and learning as well as collective responsibility towards the achievement of school goals (Coleman & Earley, 2005).

2.6.1.1. Distributed leadership

Coleman and Earley (2005) associate distributed leadership with the collective leadership of teachers working together to improve classroom practice and therefore pupil outcomes. In other words, improved learner achievement is also central to distributed leadership. In school-community partnership more than one stakeholders are involved and for the partnership to succeed leadership should be devolved across different individuals (Spillane, 2005). Educational partnerships require the communication of goals to all school levels (Battilana, et al., 2010) and the school principal may not be able to exercise leadership at all levels. Distributing leadership to all stakeholders in the partnership will make it easier to implement schools activities and other partnership initiatives. This distributed leadership allows interaction between different school members including the principal (Spillane, 2005), thus promoting shared responsibility and accountability. When people feel they are part of the initiatives, they will dedicate the skills to that initiative and distributed leadership is ideal in creating such conditions.

Although distributed leadership is the ideal leadership style for school-community partnerships “principal leadership has been linked either directly or indirectly to a number of favourable school outcomes, including high student achievement, teacher commitment and efficacy, family and community involvement” (Sanders, 2007, p. 41). As such, broader involvement of individuals and institutions beyond the school requires strong principal leadership. Miller, (2007) further supports this argument and states that partnerships need skilled boundary-spanning leaders, who are able to translate vision into achievable goals. In a study conducted by Miller (2007), in Mountain City (USA), participants noted that a welcoming organisational culture was central to the success of school-community partnership. Sanders (2007) also concurs with Miller (2007), as she states that school principals can create school cultures that support collaborations. She said:

Teachers and parents are focused on students' academic success; modelling genuine openness to parent and community involvement; establishing an expectation for dialogue and communication among school personnel, families, communities and students; networking with individuals in the community to inform them of the schools' needs and goals; and supporting others in developing leadership in the area of family and community involvement (p. 41).

A study by Miller (2007) alluded to earlier also revealed that participants viewed leadership of the principal and team members as a driving factor towards positive and welcoming organisational culture. For leaders to create such a culture, they need to develop and articulate new visions, and also create trust and “...help members of the group to survive the anxieties that accompany transitions” (Miller, 2007, p. 238). The broader definition of leadership emphasised the power of influence as a critical aspect of leadership. When principals distribute leadership to other members of a school-community partnership, principals need to influence other members to view the school-community partnerships goals as important. Within an asset-based approach, principal's ability to acknowledge the leadership skills of other stakeholders may be seen as an asset itself.

Kamper (2008) asserts that partnership requires school leaders to attend to both the structure and the culture. The democratisation of school governance in South Africa requires flatter organisational structures that will ensure a school culture which promotes a maximum involvement of all stakeholders (Kamper, 2008; Naidu, et al., 2008; Republic of South Africa, 1996). Strong leadership will allow schools to identify possible partners and also establish linkages with such partners (Fullan, 2001; Naidu, et al., 2008; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

Not all leaders are capable of creating flatter and welcoming organisational structures and Miller (2007) suggests that only boundary-spanning leaders who are familiar with individuals and groups involved in school-community partnerships. Naidu, et al. (2008) state that school leaders, especially principals must ‘speak and understand the language’ of the potential partners and according Miller (2007) this will enable leaders to foster greater social cohesion that will strengthen school-community partnerships. Principals' leadership here is not only emphasised as a direct factor. The principal's indirect involvement is also acknowledged in a

number of ways. For example, in her study Sanders (2007) argue that rather than being central in partnership, the principal can do the following: (1) Identify school personnel who have skills, expertise and experience to serve in school-community action teams. (2) Be supportive of the teams' effort, provide resources, attend community partnership events, arrange class coverage for teachers attending action team meetings and acknowledge and praise partnership efforts and success. (3) Support their action teams in making connections with possible funders. (4) Acknowledge that administrators, other educators, action team leaders, parents and students have creative solutions to school challenges. Although this may be associated with asset-based approach, there is a need to determine whether this ideal style of leadership, as an asset, exists in school-community partnership or not.

2.6.1.2. Instructional leadership

I have argued earlier that the main aim of school-community partnerships is to improve the quality of education for all students. Proponents of instructional leadership (Coleman & Earley, 2005; Fullan, 2007), have regarded this style of leadership as that which focusses more on improved teaching and learning, which are the "core activities of the school or college" Coleman & Earley, 2005, p. 15). In school-community partnerships senior instructional leaders become mentors and they provide space for other teachers to develop as leaders in their classrooms and in other school activities (Coleman & Earley, 2005). In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, instructional leaders identify the school needs (Calitz, et al., 2002) with an aim of addressing such needs. This in line with an asset-based approach where identification of the needs is one of the crucial aspects (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001). In school-community partnerships school needs are identified and addressed in order to strengthen the school's ability to attain its goals. When external partners collaborate with schools their main focus is on how schools are committed in improving the quality of education. The school's commitment spells out the success of partnerships to external partners. Thus, a leadership style that its aim is to improve teaching and learning appeals to external partners.

2.6.2 The nature of relationship in partnership

The kind of relationship between individuals or organisation contributes to the success of school-community partnerships. In a study conducted by Bojuwoye (2009) in KwaZulu-Natal teachers stated that partnership with external stakeholders, especially parents was an interference in their work; and they then suggested that home and school should be separate. Bojuwoye (2009) further reports that some parents still hold an opinion that educating a child is the work of the school. I argue here that such attitudes towards school-community partnerships develop as a result of the relationship that external stakeholders build with teachers in joint initiatives between schools and communities (parents). A lack of communication, results in a loss of interdependence and mutual interest among different partners (MacPherson, Brooker, & Ainsworth, 2000). These losses further contribute to tensions and they create difficulties in ensuring cooperation from different partners. Positive relationship is also negatively affected by the deficient approach to partnership; whereby one partner holds a philosophical view that the other partners in partnership are not capable. This approach is contrary to an asset-based approach which contends that all people have capacities and skills (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993 ; Ledoux & McHenry, 2008). A study conducted in Mexican secondary schools by Dobson-Blake (2010) which examined behaviours, expectations and ways of engagement concerning school-community partnerships, reports that participating parents and other community members stated that they had a good relationship resulting in successful school-community partnership. This suggests that positive and strong relationship between different stakeholders may bolster school-community partnerships and if does not exist, partnership initiatives fail. Naidu, et al. (2008) reiterates that positive attitude is crucial for the success of school-community partnerships. Central to establishing sustained positive relationship is continuous communication between schools and external partners (Cresswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Dobson-Blake, 2010; MacPherson, et al., 2000).

2.6.3. Communication

(Siedman (1998) defines communication as a two-way process by which certain information is conveyed or transmitted from a communication source (sender) to a recipient. Not only in school-community partnerships, communication is crucial in many aspects of a school to ensure the schools' success, Swick (2003) states that communication is a major tool of

empowering each partner. Battilana, et al. (2010) recommend communication in ensuring that all school stakeholders support and adopt school. Swick (2003) further argues that lack of communication may degrade partnership between schools and communities and recommend trust building as a tool to ensure good communication. He also states that “trust-building is essential to having authentic, meaningful, and growth-promoting communication” (p.275). According to Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004) schools need to design a variety of communication strategies to keep every stakeholder abreast with the school programmes and the thus determine the role external stakeholders can play in a schools. The definition of the concept ‘communication’ suggests that it is a two-way process which means that external stakeholders also need to convey communiqués to schools. In this way school-community partnerships will be strengthened.

The importance of this two-way communication has been documented in literature. A quantitative study conducted by Mncube (2010) in ten schools from KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) on the extent to which parents participate in school activities as well as the extent to which home-school communication and relations occur reports that parents regard communication as an important aspect of home-school relations. The majority of the participants who completed the questionnaire agreed that schools were able to communicate with them. I argue here that adequate communication ensures that external community develops interests and ownership of the school and its activities and as Mncube (2010) states it also promotes empowerment of all stakeholders involved. Mncube (2010) further states that due to their involvement in school activities, parents became knowledgeable about the clauses of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act no 84 of 1996). This knowledge will help in strengthening their participation.

Battilana, et al (2010) state that communication should also influence all stakeholders to buy into the idea of school-community partnerships and become committed in achieving partnership goals. Communication may be written or verbal. Written communication ensures a sense of permanence and authority, while verbal communication is recommended for building strong relationships between individuals (Neuman, 2006). Lemmer (2007) argues that leadership is important in ensuring effective communication between schools and external stakeholders. In an asset-based approach all individuals and organisations have skills

and capacities and communication is one of such skills (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). In other words, leadership should acknowledge communication as one of the assets. However, the remaining question is that: are these skills identified and build on when external partners engage in partnerships? The possibilities of an asset-based approach seeks to find answers to questions such as the one mentioned above.

2.6.4. Availability of resources

Several authors have argued that strong community partnerships are achievable when partners identify and utilise available resources. This is in line with the aspects of an asset-based approach. A study conducted by Bojuwoye (2009) in KwaZulu-Natal reports that the availability of resources was crucial for establishing a ground-breaking school-community partnership. The participants in the same study noted that school-community partnership is mostly hindered by the ‘lack of resources in community for schools’ use and lack of resources in schools’ for community use” (p.471). Kilpatrick and Johns (2003) claim that it is not always the lack of resources, but the dearth of in-depth knowledge of resources available that determines the success of school-community partnerships. This study determines whether in school-community partnerships partners are able to identify their potential resources. Although resources are classified into human, natural and financial resources, the financial resources are usually scarce (Kolodny, 2002). Financial resources are important in establishing and also sustaining school-community initiatives. Partnerships with universities or HEIs assist schools in this regard because universities may attract other partners who may bring in funding into schools (Carroll, et al., 2001).

2.7. Asset-based approach

Kretzmann and MacKnight (1993) developed an asset-based approach as an ideal approach to community development. At the core of this approach is the belief that every person and community has capacities, abilities, gifts, skills and social resources (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The theory asserts that support for communities is possible and feasible only if it begins from within. According to this approach “beginning from within” means determining available assets (capacities, abilities, gifts, skills and social resources) to be utilised within the community. This process of identifying available assets is conceptualised

as the mapping of assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Kretzmann and MacKnight (1993) further regard an asset-based approach as a process of building communities from inside-out or as a process of building communities from bottom-up. Ebersohn and Eloff (2006) regard this approach as an “internally focussed” approach to community development, while on the other hand its proponents (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) also regard it as a “capacity focussed alternative”. The approach compares the community with a half-full glass of water (Khanare, 2009). The half water represents already existing assets in the community and it is basically suggesting that for external partners to make the glass full they will rely on the existing half water contained in the glass.

An asset-based approach is a second path to community development which challenges the first path which focuses on the needs, deficiencies and problems of the society (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). According to Ebersohn and Eloff (2006) a needs-driven approach has been the dominant approach to development initiatives in Southern Africa. Kretzmann and MacKnight (1993) assert that the needs-based approach as contrary to asset-based creates a mental map of communities who denigrate their own capacities and strengths. Under this needs-based approach, the above researchers further maintain that providing resources based on needs map creates a perception that only the outside experts can provide help or solutions to community problems. The problem with this perception or with reliance on outsiders is that outside help is bleak while the asset-based approach provides an opportunity for both outsiders and insiders to walk as partners which bolster the strengths of the insiders to remain independent in future (Khanare, 2009). This approach creates empowered communities who can face their future challenges.

An asset-based approach is coherent with factors on strengthening school-community partnerships that I discussed earlier; that is, leadership, availability of resource, communication and relationship between people or organisations that bolster school-community partnerships. The availability of strong leadership is one of the assets that could be utilised in school-community partnership. Spillane (2005) contends that leadership is no longer residing on the hands of the principal only, but distributed to all stakeholders within and outside the school. I argue here that the principals’ ability to recognise that leadership needs to be dispersed is an asset on its own. Furthermore, the stakeholders’ ability to utilise leadership vested by the principal to them is also an assets on its own. I have also pointed out

that communication is also crucial in school-community partnership and the ability of members to communicate effectively is also an asset. The claim that effective leadership and effective communication are assets is driven by part of the asset-based model's description of assets. Skills and abilities such as leadership, communication skills, ability to attract extra funding and relationship that is built on trust and respect are regarded as assets (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Khanare (2009) contends that asset-based approach values collaboration. However, if all these assets are not identified and used effectively those forming partnerships might not be able to reap the benefits and such partnerships are not guaranteed sustainability.

As a result this study explores the possibilities for an asset-based approach to school-community partnership in education in South Africa within the rural context. It means the study seeks to establish whether utilising capacities, abilities, skills, social resources and assets of individuals and organisations is possible in school-community partnership. The study firstly established whether existing assets are identified in the partnership. This is followed by investigating how assets are utilised. If they are utilised, how they can contribute in school-community partnerships. Schools are important in ensuring that stakeholders such as teachers, families, businesses, HEIs and other local institutions contribute cultural and physical resources, capacities, skills and assets to joint initiatives between the school and their communities (Khanare, 2009).

Several authors such as Eloff & Ebersohn (2001), Khanare (2009) and Thompson & Walker (2002) advocate for an asset-based approach because this approach sustains school programmes and creates social networks and social capital. Social networks and social capital become crucial in ensuring that members of communities have sources of support when experiencing challenges (Thompson & Walker, 2002). These social networks may help in generating relevant ideas to sustain programmes developed together with external partners. This is contrary to a needs-based approach that later presents challenges because it does not empower people but focuses on fixing problems and providing services. Thus, as argued earlier, it results in unbalanced relationships where local communities view themselves as deficient and lacking knowledge and skills to solve their own problems (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). An asset-based approach proposes that each partner must be regarded as a

change agent and possessor of important skills and knowledge required for the development of community (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001). This creates a balanced relationship between partners. Recognising the skills of educators, learners, non-educator staff and other stakeholders around the school vicinity is a crucial element in ensuring the school's success in dealing with different challenges (Kamper, 2008; Khanare, 2009). Therefore, it is crucial that asset-based approach is utilised in school-community partnerships if sustainability and reciprocal benefits are to be achieved.

The literature reviewed in this chapter confirms that school-community partnerships are necessary for boosting the schools' ability to attend their challenges. There is evidence from international and local studies that school-community partnerships have worked as tool for holistic school development which results to both academic improvement of learners and community development. However while partnerships have been advocated and initiated in different settings, their sustainability appears to be a challenge as partners hardly acknowledge assets available in rural communities they work with. This overlooking of resources has created difficulties in making sure that when external partners leave, the partnerships activities continue. The starting argument of this study is that rural communities have resources or assets and for success of partnerships, both external and internal school stakeholders need to identify these resources and build their external support from them. From this argument the study therefore aims to firstly find out if partners identify available assets within the community and if they do what these assets are? The issue is not about knowing the assets, what is important is utilising those assets effectively, thus this study moves on to investigate the extent to which available assets are used. The end point is to use answers from the above questions to make a final argument on whether asset-based approach can be utilised in school-community partnerships or not.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed school-community partnership drawing from both local and international literature. I have discussed the concepts of 'community', 'partnership' and 'school-community partnership'. The chapter has further identified possible partners in school-community partnerships and their contributions in school-community partnership.

Furthermore, I have discussed the rationale behind school community partnership. I have also identified the need for improved academic achievement of learners, learner's social and intellectual development and community development as the main issue driving school-community partnerships. I have also explored literature on the factors strengthening school-community partnership and both the local and international literature places more emphasis on the availability of resources, leadership, relationship between individuals and organisations and communication as central factors in strengthening school-community partnership. Towards the end of the chapter, I have discussed an asset-based approach which is a theoretical framework underpinning this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The research methodology aims to describe approaches and paradigms that are used in the research. Through the methodology, readers are able to understand the process of the research project. Therefore, this chapter discusses the research design and methodology that I employed in this study in order to achieve the research aims that I highlighted in chapter one. I then discuss the selection of the participants, the data collection and analysis methods that I used in the study. I also explain how I considered the concept of trustworthiness in my study. Towards the end of the chapter, I discuss ethical considerations that I also embraced in my study.

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1. Interpretive paradigm

This study is located within the interpretive paradigm. Interpretivist theorists' idea is that knowledge is socially constructed and it is bounded by time, culture and the context in which it is found (Cohen, et al., 2007; Cresswell, 2008). Furthermore, they posit that there is no one truth, but multiple realities exist and people's actions are underpinned by their experiences. Within the interpretivists, paradigm the researcher therefore achieves to understand these experiences through understanding the interpretation and meanings given by the actors (that is, participants) to their actions and not what the researcher assumes to be the meaning (Neuman, 2006). In studying the partnership between some academic staff members from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the selected secondary school I argue that only the participants have meaning and their own reality about their partnership. In the study, the meaning participants gave to their partnership was recorded and the assumption was that their meaning making was influenced by individual experiences as they were involved in the partnership.

In this study, as I discuss later in this chapter, I interviewed different participants in order to find multiple realities as constructed by participants who are part of the partnership under study. The meaning as to what resources are central to their partnership and how such

resources are utilised was generated from the voices of the people involved in the partnership. Adopting a qualitative research approach in this study is in line with the interpretive paradigm and the main aims of the study.

3.2.2 Qualitative approach

This is a qualitative study of a partnership between the University of KwaZulu-Natal and one secondary school from Vulindlela district. To elicit data on what assets are seen as central to this partnership and to what extent they are used, the study used a qualitative case study approach. According to Patton (2001) qualitative research involves the collection of textual or verbal data and it is used when in-depth views about the phenomena are required. Qualitative studies are naturalistic since they study the real-world situations as they naturally unfold. Moreover, qualitative studies examine the meanings, perceptions, experiences and understandings of those involved in the activity or event being studied (Adams & Smith, 2003; Patton, 2001). Participants in this study were drawn amongst the University project leaders and the school participating in the partnership. It is the meanings participants construct from their experiences that this study sought to elicit.

A qualitative approach is also important in this study because it is in line with the asset-based approach that is used in this study. In qualitative research meaning is interpreted as embedded in the social context and in the people who live in that context. Participants in qualitative research are valued and regarded as people who are informed about their context (insiders) (Babbie, 2007). In this way, in qualitative research the researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon from the insiders' perspective. On the other hand the asset-based approach assumes that communities can be built from inside out, which means the focus is on what exists in communities rather than what is needed by communities. The view is that communities fully understand their own context and they have skills and knowledge to address challenging issues they face (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Therefore, the link between a qualitative study and the asset-based approach is that participants, whom in this case are the partners, are important in two ways; firstly, they possess resources to use in their partnership. Secondly, they provide concrete meaning of their own partnership regarding resources central to the partnership and the way they use such resources. A case study is one

of the approaches that are used in qualitative research (Patton, 2001), and was therefore used in this study.

3.2.3. Case study approach

A common definition of a case study is that it is an intensive exploration or investigation that portrays ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation and provides a close up reality and thick description of the participants’ views about the phenomenon under investigation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Cohen, et al., 2007). Case study approaches are used in qualitative inquiries where the researcher has little control over events being studied and the object of inquiry is a contemporary phenomenon in a real life context (MacPherson, et al., 2000). A case study has the following features as discussed by Babbie and Mouton (2001), Cohen, et al. (2007) and MacPherson, et al. (2000):

- It produces thick contextual description of events or phenomenon under study.
- Case studies might utilise multiple methods and sources of data in order to generate more descriptive data.
- Case studies are set in temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case. This suggests that a case study may be defined with reference to characteristics defined by individuals and groups involved in the case. The definition of the case is bounded by the geographical parameters.

A case study approach as described above is relevant in this research project because the real life context in this study is the partnership between the University and one secondary school; and the study explores the in-depth meanings given by people within this context in relation to the available assets central to the partnership. Furthermore, the study explores the extent to which available resources are utilised in the partnership. The meanings that participants gave as well as available resources referred to in the study are bound by the context of this partnership. In order to ensure that this study qualifies as a case study, I also used multiple methods of data collection and multiple data sources. For instance, document analysis and individual interviews were data sources used in the study. In addition, educators, the SMT, the school principal and the University project leaders participated in this case study. The

participants are from the two institutions forming the partnership and thus have the experience of the partnership. The case study approach is also in line with the interpretive paradigm under which this study used as explained earlier. Case studies are normally conducted within the naturalistic, interpretive paradigm (De Vos, et al., 2002) and this study limits itself with the interpretive paradigm. One of the features of case studies as highlighted above is that the researcher has no control over the context and the phenomenon that is studied. In this study I had no influence over the partnership under study and only its participants have a strong influence on what is happening within it. In addition, this partnership is also bounded by the concept of rural school which may not be similar to a township or urban school. Furthermore, case studies are advocated for their flexibility (De Vos, et al., 2002) that allow participants to shape the interview process (Cresswell, 2008). My role as a researcher was to introduce the broader interview questions and the informants' views had a strong influence on the follow-up questions that I asked. This process resulted in the participants' voices being central in the findings of this study. This flexibility also motivated the decision to use a case study approach.

As argued earlier qualitative case studies produce 'thick' descriptive findings which are drawn from the informants' perspective of the phenomenon. It therefore becomes crucial that a researcher's final report is trusted by ensuring that it contains what the informants regard as truth within their context. The concepts 'reliability' and 'validity' are mostly used by quantitative researchers to describe the truthfulness of the research findings (Neuman, 2006). Qualitative researchers use the concept trustworthiness as an alternative to reliability because of the fact that in qualitative research truth is multifaceted and is dependent on a number of factors such as time, culture, context, age of participants etc (Patton, 2001). Quantitative studies are usually conducted within the positivism paradigm and this paradigm asserts that the world is stable or fixed. Truth from the positivism perspective is subjective and it is available through one repeated measurement. In this qualitative study trustworthiness was ensured. From a qualitative researchers perspective the concept 'trustworthiness' is linked to concepts such as authenticity, dependability or consistency, neutrality, credibility and fairness in the process of reporting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The section below provides a detailed account of trustworthiness as ensured in this study.

3.3. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness as alternative for reliability may be regarded as a “fit between what the researcher records as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched” (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 149). To ensure trustworthiness, Cohen, et al., (2007) argues that the following must be ensured within qualitative research:

- **Dependability:** This involves member checks or respondent validation, triangulation of methods, negative case analysis and independent audits. To attend to issues of dependability in this study triangulation of methods (multiple data collection methods) were employed. I also prolonged engagement with participants during interviews. The plan was also to go back to the respondents to confirm whether the transcripts were representative of what they were conveying but due to time constraints this was not possible.
- **Neutrality:** During data collection and during data analysis I maintained a neutral position as a researcher in order to ensure that analysis and interpretation was not disrupted by my own opinions. One of the ways to ensure neutrality is to be aware of your biases and pre-assumptions as the researcher. Although I fully support the asset-based approach, to ensure that neutrality was applied I had to focus more on the context and the phenomena (partnership) which I had no control over and I had a limited understanding of its actual happenings. The paradigmatic perspective that this study used also contributed to my understanding that I should absolve myself from being part of the context under which the partnership is conducted. Whatever biases I had, I understood that the views of the participants were bound by their context but not my pre-determined views on school-university partnerships. This ensured that the findings are generated from the participants’ point of view not my views.
- **Management of biases during interviewing:** Cohen et al. (2007) assert that poor rapport between the researchers and the researched, biased sampling, use of attitudinal and factual questions, alterations in the sequence of questions, selective or interpreted recording of data may decrease the extent of trustworthiness in qualitative research. In this study I recorded all interviews (as opposed to selected parts of interviews), the probing of questions was informed by the participants’ responses and not by what I, as researcher thought will transpire in the interview process. I interpreted data during transcription, however, I thoroughly engage with the data to grasp the meaning made by the participants.

3.4 THE LOCATION OF THE STUDY

This case study is located in one secondary school situated in rural Vulindlela district. The Vulindlela district is located 150 kilometers west of Durban. Since 2004 three secondary schools from this community have been participating in a range of projects conducted by some researchers from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The case school in this study is one of those three secondary schools. The school is funded by the State and it has buildings that are in good condition. The school has a small library. Currently, the school is involved in a three-year research project titled “*Nothing about us without us*”. This is a joint research project between thirty-eight (38) secondary schools from Vulindlela district and some of the academic staff members (researchers) from UKZN Faculty of Education. Although the case school is located within a rural setting, it has secured few computers that could be used by approximately twenty-five (25) learners at a given time. The total number of learners in the school is 1158 and there are thirty-seven (37) qualified educators who are employed and paid by the State. The school has seven school management team (SMT) members, (the principal, two deputy principals, and four heads of departments).

In my study, I chose this school because it is the focal point for the partnership for the larger project (that is, UKZN researchers and Vulindlela district schools) and it is among the two schools that the researchers selected as sites for qualitative data collection for the project. In addition, this is the only school that has participated in partnership projects for more years when compared to other schools. This school’s long-standing involvement in partnership projects has led to the principal becoming one of the project leaders within the mentorship strand of in-service and pre-service teachers. The co-option of the principal as one of the project leaders is evidence of the school’s commitment to the partnership. Furthermore, in 2011 the school accommodated pre-service teachers for their practice teaching. I also met with the deputy principal before I finally decided to choose this school. Although this did not have an influence on my choice of the school, our meeting largely contributed to my good working relationship with the school. During my study I had easy access to the school and the school effectively organised meeting sessions with the participants.

The historical involvement of the school in partnership projects enriched data that I collected. I therefore argue that in-depth descriptive data that was generated from the school was sufficient for analysis relating to school-community partnerships. It is important for me to state here that although the study focuses on the current project (*Nothing for us without us*),

data collection also involved analysis of documents from previous projects. This was important because issues that emerged from the previous projects determined the current project's focus areas. Thus, information from previous activities added more depth in this study as far as the use of asset-based approach is concerned.

3.5 THE PROJECT “*NOTHING FOR US WITHOUT US*”

The project '*nothing for us without us*' (pseudonym) was initiated by some academic staff members from UKZN. The project was a new project found after a series of projects the UKZN staff members have initiated in Vulindlela District since 2004. The time frame for this project was scheduled to be three years starting from 2011 and ending in 2013 and thirty-eight schools were targeted. The central aim of the project was to use participatory approaches to teacher development and community wellness to enhance teaching and learning in rural schools. The project aims were twofold; it was aimed at intervention and also in generating niche research areas on the identified issues. In addition to teacher development and community wellness the project's aim was also to deal with challenges faced by schools such as HIV and AIDS, gender based violence etc. Project leaders in the partnership were drawn from UKZN and one project leader was a principal in the researched secondary school. Within the aim of the project was not only to work with schools, but other community representatives formed part of the participants in the projects. The consideration of previous projects was necessary as the current project builds from the past projects. Thus document analysis included documents from the previous projects. Not all documents were analysed, but I analysed only those I accessed as discussed later in this chapter.

3.6. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study included the school principal, the SMT members (deputy principal and one head of department), two post level one teachers on the one hand, and two project leaders from the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the other hand. As discussed below, the school principal, members of the SMT, teachers and the project leaders were purposively selected because of the leadership roles in the school.

The school principal and the SMT: The principal was selected because he is one of the three project leaders within the mentorship strand of in-service and pre-service teachers. As one of the project leaders, the principal thus has more information on issues of partnership that is being studied. Furthermore, research reports that principals, especially in rural schools are faced with a challenge to improve the quality of education while working under adverse conditions (Kamper, 2008). This requires that principals form part of all initiatives aimed at improving academic development of learners (Battilana, et al., 2010; Coleman & Earley, 2005). I argued in chapter two that the instructional leadership role of the principal is key to the success of school-community partnerships. The principal who effectively plays his/her instructional leadership role supports all activities aimed at improving teaching and learning. I also think that the principal would support the partnership as he is one of the gate keepers who without their permission, the University researchers would not be able to access the school. In South African schools, participative management of schools is favoured, and as a result each principal manages the school together with a deputy principal and heads of departments who together form the school management team (SMT). Therefore, in this study the SMT members (one deputy principal and one head of department) were selected to participate because of their role in managing the school.

Two project leaders from the University team: The two project leaders were part of the UKZN Faculty of Education staff members who initiated the *“Nothing for us without us”* project. I selected them to participate in my study because as initiators of the joint project, they provide thick and descriptive data about the partnership under study. The meaning they give to this joint initiative regarding possibilities of an asset-based approach is crucial as the initiators and leaders of the partnership. I have argued earlier in this chapter that qualitative case studies are interested on the deeper meaning given by insiders who have a lived experience of the phenomenon (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The project leaders’ participation in my study was also critical because they lead different strands of the project which would make them have rich data relevant to my study. Initially the plan was to include three project leaders as the partnership is divided into three broader project strands, but inaccessibility of project leader of the community wellness strand forced me to remain with only two project leaders. This did not affect the findings of this study as questions were not specific to individuals’ strands.

Two teachers: According to the proposal document for the “*Nothing for us without us*” project teachers in this partnership are involved as mentors of pre-service teachers. This document indicates that researchers were to train teachers as mentors and those teachers were also going to be involved in other project strands. Reports about previous activities of the partnership also indicate that teachers were involved in the partnership since the beginning of the partnership project. Besides, teachers are part of the school’s internal stakeholders and therefore should know about the partnership. Two teachers participated through self-selection. A call to participate in the study was open to all educators in the school, and the two educators volunteered to be interviewed. Due to the fact that data was collected at the time when teachers were also busy with other duties, only two were able to participate. This also sacrifice the quality of data in this study as it was later discovered that the teachers who volunteered to participate were very committed to the partnership activities. These teachers also formed a team which was addressing different needs of learners and this was a result of being part of the partnership. Therefore, the number of teachers did not have a negative impact on the results of this study.

According to Neuman (2006) purposive sampling is used in exploratory research where the researcher intends to generate in-depth data. Patton (2002) reiterates and argues that purposive sampling is based on the pretext that selected participants are “information-rich” and they will offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon. This sampling strategy is further used to gain insights about the phenomenon, rather than empirical generalisation from a sample to a population (De Vos, et al., 2002; Maree, 2007; Patton, 2001). The aim of this study was to elicit data that will provide a deeper picture regarding the partnership under study. The in-depth meaning that the participants provided in this study could only be generated from the selected participants.

3.7. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In order to explore the possibilities for an asset-based approach to school-community partnership, document analysis and semi-structured interviews were used as methods to collect data in this study. The main purpose was to generate thick and descriptive data that would establish the possibilities of an asset-based approach in school-community partnership. Multiple data collection methods were employed to generate this thick data. This allowed for similar and different views to be recorded. Results from different data sources were

triangulated to increase the extent of trustworthiness and confirmability of the findings of this study.

3.7.1. Document analysis

Different researchers such as Neuman (2006) and Cohen, et al. (2007) have supported document analysis method as ideal in collecting textual in-depth data in qualitative studies. Mostly, content analysis is used to analyse relevant documents. “Content analysis refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes or any message that can be communicated” (Neuman, 2006, p. 322). Thus, content analysis was used in this study to analyse the meaning that were obtained from the document analysed. Neuman (2006) further asserts that documents that could be analysed may include books, magazines, newspapers and official documents. This study’s main aim was to determine the possibilities of using an asset-based approach in school-community partnership. Thus, documents that were analysed were: a detailed proposal for the joint research project (that is, “*Nothing for us without us*” project) that outlines all the aspects of the project; the 2007; 2009; and 2010 reports of the same partnership; and agendas and letters that were sent to the school for communication purposes. Furthermore, I also analysed the teams’ questionnaire that was sent out to participating schools to find the information about the schools.

Features of an asset-based approach guided such analysis. For example one of the features of an asset-based approach is that external partners should travel the journey with the internal partners (Khanare, 2009). This simply means that local communities should be part of all intervention projects and they need not be treated as consumers of service but partners in service delivery (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001). In analysing the documents mentioned above, I was interested in finding out whether the university project leaders did acknowledge available resources within the community or not and if so, how were they planning to use such resources. The document analysis process provided a clear picture of the initial planning of the partnership regarding, among other things, human and material needs for the partnership.

3.7.2. Semi-structured individual interviews

In generating data from the school principal, two SMT members, two teachers and two project leaders I used semi-structured individual interviews. The interviews took an average

duration of 45 minutes. The duration of the interview depended largely on how the participant understood the questions and the depth that the researcher probed for after the respondent's initial responses. I chose the semi-structured interviews because this method would elicit data that is in line with the study objective, that is, to generate descriptive meanings from the participants' views. As Cohen, et al., 2007, Maree, 2007, Neuman, 2006 and Thompson & Walker, 2002 state, semi-structured interviews enable the qualitative researcher to generate more descriptive data from few participants. It was therefore crucial for me to use data collection method that would generate in-depth data while using few participants from the case.

Patton (2002) recommends short interviews because very long interviews may decrease the quality of the responses. Siedman (1998) considers an hour to be the normal duration for individual interviews. As stated earlier, interviews in this study were conducted for an average of 45 minutes. I conducted interviews with the principal, deputy principal, head of department and two project leaders in the participants' offices during scheduled times that were agreed upon by the researcher and participants. I interviewed two teachers in my car as there was no other convenient venue for their interviews. Neuman (2006) argues that the quality of interviews depends on the researchers' ability and competence in asking questions. During interviews, I took notes that helped me to probe for further clarity on the participants' initial responses. To ensure that the interview schedule was appropriate, I sent the questions to my supervisor to double-check if the schedule had possibilities to generate answers for the research questions.

3.8. DATA ANALYSIS

Henning (2004) states that data analysis incorporates personal control and responsibility as well as thorough transcription of text, taking words apart, sentences and paragraphs in order to make sense of, interpret and theorise that data. In data analysis a researcher attempts to make sense of data generated from the participants' perspectives (Cohen, et al., 2007). Bearing this idea in mind I employed a descriptive analysis technique outlined by Neuman (2002) to generate themes and similarities. The use of descriptive data analysis has been largely used within a positivism paradigm. However this analysis technique has been recommended by different researchers such Patton (2001) as a possible technique within an

interpretive paradigm and in-depth case studies. In analysing data in this study, I listened to interviews, wrote down word for word what was said by participants. I repeatedly did the listening and the reading process in order to understand the participant's perspective and to generate themes. Creswell (2007) and Maree (2007) state that "analysis means a close or systematic study or separation of a whole unit [into] parts for study." To generate these separate units, data from different sources was read and compared. Using inductive process of organising data, I identified patterns and grouped data into categories and themes. For document analysis, content analysis as indicated earlier was used to generate meaning that was conveyed by each document analysed. I discuss the findings in chapter four of this thesis.

3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Conducting research, especially from a social science context has an ethical-moral dimension that researchers are obliged to follow (Maree, 2007; Neuman, 2006). Neuman (2006) states that the need for ethical behaviour arose as from researchers' concern for others and the researchers' efforts to strive for fairness. Maree (2007) asserts that the participants' confidentiality and anonymity is one of the most crucial ethical aspects in social science research.

To adhere to the ethical issues in this study, I firstly obtained ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee to conduct this study. I also obtained permission to conduct the study from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education as well as from the school. Secondly, it is stated that a fundamental principle of social science research is: "Never coerce anyone into participating, participation must be voluntary" (Neuman, 2006). Informed consent was given and explained to all participants before the interviewed. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that there were no monetary benefits they would get from the researcher. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, I informed the participants that I will use pseudonyms in all reports that would be generated from the information they gave during data collection. I also informed the participants that information they gave was solely for the purpose of this study and that all tapes and documents would be kept for five years in a secured place, where no other person except the researcher and the supervisor will gain access to and thereafter will be destroyed.

3.10. CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the research design and the process undertaken to accomplish the study. I firstly discussed the qualitative approach and the interpretive paradigm that I used in the study. I provided the context in which I conducted the study, and also motivated for the choice of the context, participants and the data collection methods that I employed. The next chapter (chapter four) of this report is aimed at providing an in-depth presentation and discussion of the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents findings of this study and the analysis thereof. Generally, the findings discuss assets available in school contexts and surrounding communities, the utilisation of such assets and the possibilities of an asset-based approach in school-community partnerships. In discussing the findings, firstly, I highlight themes that emerged from data. Thereafter, I discuss in detail each theme separately. Towards the end of the chapter, I discuss key issues that have been discussed in the chapter relating to the possibility of an asset-based approach in school-community partnerships. In line with the study main aim, the findings of the study are presented and discussed according to the following main themes:

- Assets available inside and outside the school regarded as central in the partnership.
- The extent to which the available assets are used in the partnership.
- The possibilities for asset-based approach in school-community partnership.

4.2. ASSETS AVAILABLE IN BOTH THE SCHOOL AND ITS CONTEXT

The findings of this study indicated that all partners involved in the partnership were aware that the school and its surroundings might have plenty of assets/resources that could possibly be used for the benefit of the partnership. The University staff's awareness that the school might have resources is manifested in the process they followed before the beginning of the current project. The project team developed a proposal before hand where goals and targeted participants in the partnership have been indicated. In addition, the project team also developed a needs and assets identification questionnaire to determine available resources in the community. Both the proposal and the questionnaire indicated that the project team regards people from different organisations as important resources in the partnership. In the proposal developed for the project the University partners clearly outlined the list of organisations they anticipated to work with, such as the Mafakatini Clinic. Although the list is not explicit in terms of identifying individual people, but I argue here that an organisation

is comprised of people and thus assume these organisations to have people working in them. Therefore the participatory planning process that refers to organisations is basically suggesting that people from these organisations are taken as important resources in the planning of the partnership.

The proposal document states the following:

A participatory planning process involving all stakeholders will be instituted involving all major stakeholders from the partner universities/institutions, the provincial Department, Directorate of Rural Education, selected schools and community representatives in Vulindlela District.

The questionnaire that the project team sent out for asset-mapping and needs identification also indicated that the individuals in schools (including the case school) involved in the partnership are not taken as deficient but they are regarded as important participants in the partnership.

The questionnaire states the following:

The project aims is to use participatory methods to involve teachers and rural communities in understanding and harnessing the potential reciprocal relationships for the professional development of teachers and community wellness generally...

I argue here that by involving school stakeholders and community representatives in the planning process and also in generating solutions to their needs, the project team was acknowledging that both school stakeholders and community representatives are important assets or resources in the partnership. According to Kretzmann & McKnight (1993), as indicated in chapter two, an asset-based model emphasis is that communities targeted for intervention should become part of the planning process and this allows them to see themselves as important contributors to the solution of their own problems. Anderson-Butcher, et al., (2006) argues that internal stakeholders must not be passive consumers of service whereas external stakeholders pose as expert providers of the service. This suggests that internal partners should play a more active role than just being involved as inactive participants. In the partnership project, the school principal and teachers regarded themselves and the school as important assets in the partnership and not just recipients of service. While people in general are regarded as important resources, document analysis and interviews

indicated that teachers, the school principal and other community workers or representatives (parents and other members) are crucial resources or assets in the partnership.

4.2.1. Teachers as assets

Findings from both the interviews conducted and documents analysed suggested that both teachers and the school are regarded as important assets in the partnership. As stated earlier the partnership started in 2004, and documents suggested that from the beginning of the partnership project teachers were made part of the activities of the partnership. Teachers played a role in suggesting possible dates for workshops and in those workshops teachers actively participated. Evidence from the interviews as well some documents indicates that teachers played an important role in the partnership by making decisions and also by performing their mentoring role, as the following excerpts from data suggest:

Project leader 1: *Teachers decide where and when they would like the workshops to take place... We also use their suggestions in making solutions in future activities of the partnership.*

Teacher 1: *During workshops if there is problem at school the university people also allow us to say what we think must be done and at the end our suggestions are taken. Although not all teachers get involved but those that are involved they play an active role.*

Dear Mr Kubheka...she would like it moved to Friday 30th ...as educators would like it during the week and not during weekend

Project leader 1: *...they have decisions, they contribute in decision making in terms of what we should do, how we should do it, when we should do it.*

An agenda programme for the workshop of the earlier project, “*Every Voice Counts*” that was conducted in 2010, which focussed on combating gender-based violence revealed that partners from the University do believe that teachers can be good assets. One of the prompts in the workshop documents was this phrase “*what can teachers do?*” From an asset-based

perspective, external partners should first identify what is available or what local people can do for themselves before intervening (de Lange & Combrinck, 2011; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007). Finding out what teachers can do basically suggests that, as assets, teachers can do something within the school. In addition, an interview with one educator also revealed that teachers played an active role in the workshop since they generated ideas regarding solutions towards gender-based violence in their school. One teacher stated that they made suggestions and they were asked by the university team to formulate the school policy on gender-based violence.

Teacher 1: *...recently we went to a workshop on gender-based violence so we had a task we had to develop the school policy on sexual harassment and things on gender-based violence.*

In chapter one of this thesis I argued that teachers are central in improving the quality of education and they should thus be made accountable for their activities. The findings of this study revealed the acknowledgement of the importance of teachers regarding the partnership concerned. Two interviews (one with the principal and one with project leader responsible for mentoring of pre-service and in-service teachers) also suggested the importance of teachers as human resources because of their mentoring skills. When asked about the skills and knowledge that teachers in the school possess, the project leader responsible for mentoring affirmed the teachers potential to be good mentors to pre-service teachers. She also regarded the educators as major role players in ensuring the success of the mentoring aspect in the partnership project. The principal also agreed that teachers are important resources in the partnership. It is clear from the view point of the principal that pre-service teachers cannot be properly mentored without the involvement of in-service teachers in the mentoring process. The principal further explained that teachers do not only become involved in mentoring, but also in other aspects of the project. Since sometimes he becomes less involved in a number of issues but he allows teachers more space to participate.

Project leader 1: *I think they [teachers] can be good mentors to our students if they are properly supported in their learning because being a mentor is a specific responsibility. I think every one of them has the potential to be a good mentor for the new teacher who wants to learn in the context.*

Principal: ... *teachers' involvement, student teachers would not be mentored if teachers are not part of the partnership. So they become part, also they have other programmes other than the student teacher programme, they have programmes like the video, those are the programmes that are mainly dealt with by teachers, I become less involved in those...*

In an interview with one teacher it also came out that teachers were always involved in a workshop and they generated ideas that could be used to deal with challenges that the workshops were trying to address. According to one teacher interviewed, teachers who were part of the workshops contributed in these workshops. An asset-based model also emphasises that in order to create strong communities that will be able to solve their own problems, interventions need to build from within. Building from within means relying more on the existing knowledge and skills of the local people (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001; Khanare, 2009). The teachers' contributions on the ideas to deal with gender-based violence in the school are coherent with an asset-based approach where local people participate in generating solutions to their challenges.

The results of the study are also in line with the 'partnership' concept. The broader understanding of this concept indicates that in a partnership, partners proportionally or equally shares risks and benefits of the partnership. The partners also become equally involved in the decision making regarding the activities of the partnership (Du Toit, et al., 2010). An interview with one teacher revealed that teachers benefited from achievements of the partnership. A book co-authored by the teachers, community workers and university partners has been published from the partnership project.

Teacher 2: ...*yes but there was a time when there was a lady here, I think she was doing her thesis, we spoke to her about the gender issues and eventually there was a book that was launched... yes it was launched here and we were a part of that book, even our names were mentioned, my name is there*

The above suggests that teachers were not only regarded as part of the partnership but also as assets in knowledge production. According to the teacher interviewed the appearance of their names on the book is because of the ideas and information they contributed in the

partnership. This also suggests that partners from the University side acknowledged the intangible asset (Strydom, 2008) which is the teachers' ability to contribute to knowledge.

Teachers are also much recognised in the school. Where the school faces challenges an asset-based approach of building from existing skills and knowledge is being followed. For instance, when the project identified gender-based violence as one of the challenges facing the school, teachers were requested to formulate the sexual harassment policy themselves. The second project leader responsible for the area of leadership also indicated that through the knowledge teachers have regarding the school and the community where the school is located, teachers are an important asset in ensuring the realisation of the partnership objectives. The project leader further stated that people (teachers and learners) and the school itself are the gate keepers for the University partners to tap into resources outside the school premises.

Project leader 2: *Of course the school has resources! It has got teachers, the school, learners and the knowledge of the school community where the school is located, those are huge resources which we don't have and we can only tap into resources of the community if the school is functioning well.*

The above phrase further acknowledges that the school is a great asset in ensuring that the partnership can access other community resources outside the school premises. The project leader indicated that through learners, because they come from the community, the project leaders hoped to access other community assets. The project leader stated that in the communications they had with the principal they also invited members from the community (local organisations, parents and the Department of Education) whenever necessary. In her view, the project leaders did not have information about the community, only the school had the information. She therefore believes that through the school they can access the community. This is in line with what is available in literature. A study conducted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) indicates that in many rural communities, schools remain the only organisations through which individuals and organisations can access resources.

Interviewer: Regarding the use of computers that you subsidise, would you say the decision that they will be used by the school and the community was reached through consensus as there are changes in their use?

Project leader 2: *Of course yes! It was reached in consensus between us and the school but was surprised to find out that the computer room is locked and only used by computer teachers and learners only*

Teachers also influenced changes that have taken place in the partnership. According to the 2009 report in one of the projects of the same partnership, it is stated that teachers wanted more extensive workshops on mentoring.

Report (2009 p.20) *...teachers felt that more workshops should be provided to them. The workshop helped them understand their roles and responsibilities, but fell short in preparing them fully to mentor student teachers*

The report reveals that it was the teachers' voices that suggested at least "a day-long workshop to be provided to all interested teachers" It is crucial to note that the suggestion from the report resulted from the teachers need for an intensive workshop and the suggestion can indicate the influence they have in the partnership. Although teachers are regarded as crucial assets, findings reveal minimal utilisation of teachers in the partnership as discussed in 4.2.1.1 below

4.2.1.1 Utilising teachers' knowledge and skills as assets in the partnership.

In most school-university partnerships teachers have mainly contributed their mentoring skills (Day, 1998). However, in addition to mentoring of pre-service educators, the partnership under study focuses on a number of other different project strands and teachers participated across these project strands. However, the findings of the study present two perspectives relating to the utilisation of teachers' knowledge and skills as assets that are discussed below.

The University partners felt that they were not utilising teachers' knowledge and skills as much as they wanted. Contrary to this view, and as discussed in the previous section most of the school stakeholders indicated that teachers' knowledge and skills were utilised in the partnership. The previous 2007 and 2009 reports relating to the Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP) indirectly indicated a minimum contribution to the project by teachers. This minimum contribution is also evident in the mentoring area where the teachers are expected to be actively involved. In the partnership, in-service teachers are expected to mentor pre-

service teachers assisting them to overcome challenges. Although the project leader responsible for the mentoring aspect of the project highly acknowledges teachers' contributions, teachers seemed to have only contributed their skills up to a minimum level. The 2007 report indicates that pre-service teachers did not receive effective support to face challenges during their practical teaching in schools.

Likewise, when student teachers were practising in schools, they felt that they did not receive enough support regarding issues and challenges they were facing in schools and in their teaching from mentors.

Besides, teachers' contributions to the project did not meet the objectives of the partnership regarding the utilisation of teachers' knowledge and skills. The 2009 report requires for the involvement of the in-service teachers in after-school activities and this requirement indirectly indicates that in-service teachers do not get involved in after-school activities as another aspect of the partnership. The report would have not included this requirement if teachers were already fully participating in the partnership project. The 2009 report states the following:

The after-school activities initiative yielded very promising results on the learners. However, there is a need to involve in-service teachers in these activities so that the activities could continue once the project is over and student teachers are gone back to UKZN.

In addition, the interviews conducted also indicated that the utilisation of teachers' knowledge and skills was very minimal since there was no mutual benefit as expected in an asset-based approach (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001) between in-service and pre-service teachers. For example, the project leader had this to say:

...the feedback from the students was that they had a very tough time during teaching practice...generally students in the project felt that the mentors were not very kind to them...students complained that they were receiving limited support from their mentor teachers”

Although not all teachers participated in the project, “some” teachers were willing to participate. The second project leader stated:

Ya people were actively involved, a few people not all teachers were involved. At least there was a group of teachers we could count on. We would invite everybody but only those three or few teachers will be involved...even the two teachers that have been constant, their participation this year was very low.

The above discussion indicates that willingness to sustain partnership through participation was lacking on the part of teachers. Literature suggests that to sustain partnerships between the school and communities there should be willingness of the people to contribute their expertise (Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2010). When the majority of teachers do not participate in the partnership, aspects of “ownership, shared responsibility, immediacy, relevancy and practicality of solutions, mutual support, caring environment, and individual capacity building” (de Lange & Combrinck, 2011, p. 234), are compromised in the partnership. On the one hand, the project leaders know that teachers’ knowledge and skills are assets in the partnership and they believe that the partnership will succeed if teachers in the school effectively participate in the partnership. On the other hand, in addition to the knowledge and skills teachers have, we can assume that teachers also have capacity to participate in the partnership because evidence discussed earlier on in this thesis show that the teachers were trained for their roles in the partnership. However, despite this knowledge and skills teachers have as well as the willingness of the project leaders to have teachers participate in the partnership, teachers’ participation in the project was minimal. Therefore, in the following sub-section I discuss the reasons for teachers’ minimal involvement in the partnership.

4.2.1.2. Reasons for teachers minimal participation in the partnership

Findings of the study show that several factors including communication breakdown between the school principal and teachers, teachers’ lack of understanding of the project and time constraints led to teachers’ minimal participation in the partnership project. The interviews indicated the following:

Teacher 1: *The problem would be on the communication breakdown between the principal and the staff” ...I think people don’t know about it [project] because when we started there were not a lot of us.*

Project leader 1: *Well one thing that came out quite clear is that there is a breakdown [of communication] between teachers and the principal because the teachers said they didn't know I was coming...they were very upset... I think the principal is a male, dominant; he played a very oppressive role to me, not communicating with me and the teachers. The teachers were feeling very powerless in this whole thing but they did say that they have rights and they will not listen to anything that I would say because they were not told about it.*

Project leader 2: *...actually they [teachers] have told us that they don't want to participate especially if the project is seen coming through the principal, which it did".*

(Deputy Principal): *I joined the school from the beginning of this year and have seen the student teachers from the University in our school but the principal and other teachers did not clearly communicate to me in terms of the whole activities of the partnership although I have noticed the relationship...Ya what I can say is that the information is not enough... ya it is not enough.*

Apparently while communication seemed to have been broken down between the principal and teachers in the school, documentary analysis showed that the principal received all communication from project leaders. The role of communication in school-community partnership cannot be underestimated. In a beneficial partnership communication is key in ensuring that each partner is updated and empowered to play his or her role in the partnership (Battilana, et al., 2010). As discussed in chapter two of this thesis, partnerships may be degraded by lack of continuous communication (Sanders, 2006; Swick, 2003). In addition, strong principal leadership is a major factor in ensuring that both internal and external stakeholders are kept abreast of the school activities (Lemmer, 2007). I further discussed in chapter two that the commitment of school leaders is vital to school-community connections (Sanders, 2001). The findings reveal that poor communication of goals was the major factor that contributed to limited teacher participation in the partnership project as well as dissatisfaction from external partners' side (University partners). In the partnership project, lack of communication was from the side of the school principal. Communication has been further acknowledged as one of the important skills that local people may possess (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Therefore there is no doubt that if this aspect is missing there will be some challenges the partnership.

Teachers' lack of understanding of the partnership project also contributed to their limited participation in the partnership. One teacher during the interview stated that sometimes it was not clear whether the partnership was a research-focused partnership or it was an intervention-type of partnership that is planned to assist them as teachers in the school. According to the teacher interviewed, to most teachers the whole partnership was a research project that teachers felt it was not aimed at helping the school. The teacher indicated that most of teachers were tired of participating in research projects by external people who come to the school and that is the reason they were not keen to be active in the partnership. This assumption is further evidenced by a statement found in the 2007 annual report. The report states that:

The University identified key research niche areas and provided the student teachers with the rural practicum which helped to develop them as passionate, caring and loving teacher.

Although the goals of the partnership might have been clear, the fact that the partnership was used to identify key research niche areas confused teachers. As stated earlier one project leader noticed that few teachers participated in the workshops that were organised to train teachers. This might have also contributed in the lack of communication from the principal's side. It is therefore possible that the lack of understanding of the partnership on the part of teachers resulted from none participation in the workshops as these workshops were used to provide information about the project and the role of teachers in the partnership. Arguments from literature show that lack of participation may lead to lack of understanding. Sanders (2006) argues that participants need to form part of the partnership meetings when invited and this makes them to be abreast with the plans and the goals of the partnership. There is also a misunderstanding from the teachers in the school about the focus of the partnership. While project leaders invited all teachers to participate in workshops where they were trained, most of the teachers thought the focus area of workshops was HIV and AIDS and for them this area is for Biology and Life Orientation teachers. One project leader stated that teachers teaching these subjects were more active than other teachers in the school.

Time constraint was one other factor that contributed to teachers' minimal participation in the partnership project. Two teachers interviewed (HoD and one post level one teacher) stated that they are willing to contribute their knowledge and skills they have gained through the

partnership to implement the programmes of the partnership in the school. However, these educators stated that lack of time to do this work was a major problem. One organisation proposed to open an automobile counselling centre in the school and use its own people to provide counselling. When I asked one of the teachers why they were not using their counselling skills to assist in the automobile service since they have attended a workshop on counselling the teacher said:

I think it is better for them [people belonging to the organisation providing automobile service] because we also have to deal with classes, and the workload piles up because we have a lot of classes then we end up being pressured.

The same teacher also confirmed that their teaching workload contribute to their lack of participation in the partnership project. Similarly, the interview with the HoD also revealed that teachers do have skills but they do not have time.

We do have people who are skilled most of educators have skills the thing is with us educators we do have skills but we don't have time [to participate in the partnership project].

Lack of time for teachers to participate in community projects is not unique to the school participating in the partnership project. Naidu, et al. (2008) indicated that teacher burn-out due to their huge teaching workloads makes it difficult for them to be involved in other community communities. Other studies conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal province, such as that conducted by Combrinck & Van Wyk, (2011) and Naidu, et al., (2008) also reported the following issues relating to the time teachers have for partnership activities:

1. Teachers feel overwhelmed: teachers indicated that the activities of the partnership, especially mentoring new students added to their school obligations.
2. Teachers find themselves stressed: they have to attend to student needs while they also get frustrated by learners who are not performing well academically and others with social challenges.

3. Teachers feel inadequate for the task: sometimes teachers indicated that they were not properly trained for the mentoring task.

The teachers' views were that they want to do the teaching activity and then have an external organisation to deal with other issues affecting the school. Knowledge of organisations existing outside the school and the support they can provide in schools can be necessary if teachers need to solve school challenges. Therefore, teachers understanding of available organisations and their ability to attract them are strengths that we can relate to assets in this study. However, it is recommended that school's available assets are recognised and used by any external organisation entering the school. This can be the best solution in solving the time factor and indicated by teachers and in literature.

4.2.2. The school principal and his leadership as assets

In chapter two of this thesis I have argued that the principal's leadership is very crucial for the success or failure of partnerships. Gretz (2003, p. 34) also argues that "it takes strong leaders to initiate a collaborative partnership and maintain control". The South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996), has made it compulsory that school governance should be a joint responsibility of teachers, learners and parents. As a result of this Act, there has been a quest for more distributed or dispersed form of leadership in schools (Spillane, 2005). A distributed form of leadership is argued to be an ideal leadership style in ensuring that activities or decisions taken are executed by all school stakeholders (Bush, 2005). In document analysis and from all interview transcripts it transpired that the school principal is recognised for the crucial role he can and he sometimes plays in the whole partnership. Firstly, the proposal document lists the principal as one of the project leaders in the mentoring stream of in-service and pre-service teachers. Secondly, the 2009 report indicates the principal's role as crucial in the growth of the relationship. The report contains important suggestions that were considered, which were made by the principal. For example, the report indicates that in the original mentoring workshops, only teachers who were allocated mentees (pre-service teachers) attended the workshops. However, in later workshops the principal suggested such workshops should be attended by all teachers. This was implemented in the 2010 and 2011 mentoring workshops. The

interviews with project leaders (from the University), the school principal himself and two teachers also indicated that the principal played a crucial role in the partnership.

Proposal document: *Focus area one: mentorship of in-service and pre-service teachers (Leaders: Merry Pretorius, Mr Wood and Mr Kubheka (school principal)).*

Principal: *[hums] I think the role that I try to play is to harmonise (sic) the relationship between the parties that are involved, understanding what is happening at school and trying to understand what expectations of the University are? I don't confine that to the school, I also expand... we also try to extend the service of the University to other schools*

Report 2009: *School principal suggested that mentorship training be provided to all teachers in the school rather than only to those teachers who are invited to mentor*

Project leader 1: *oh! Yes he possesses (principal) different kind of skills and resources that we don't have... well [I] am working with the principal thus far"*

Project leader 2: *The principal has been very proactive, involved and participative in the partnership...*

Teacher 1: *the principal supports us and our team has two members from management*

Teacher 3 (HoD): *What can I say our principal is very supportive, he likes helping people and he is that kind of a person... most of the things in the community are led by him. So when we say we need this he knows where to get it...He believes in us, the SMT, members of different committees and teachers. He believes that we can do something.*

Several authors also state that the principal should give support to educators involved in teams; and she or he should ensure there is mutual understanding between school internal stakeholders and external partners (Gretz, 2003; Kamper, 2008; Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2010). Gretz (2003, p. 34) asserts that:

Managing partnerships in which students, parents, business leaders and community members are involved requires a delicate balance of delegation and control that enables stakeholders to participate and share responsibility and yet clearly define and understand different roles that are involved in a successful partnership

The principal sometimes becomes less involved and he delegates responsibilities to ensure that things are done even when he is not physically participating. He stated that he encourages participation of teachers:

Principal: *...they have other programs other than the student teacher program, they have programs like the video, those are the programs that are mainly dealt with by teachers, I become less involved in those, but teachers who have interest and are delegated to go, and they participate on my behalf.*

In chapter two of this thesis I stated that school principals need to understand the expectations of both the internal and the external partners and be able to communicate these to each stakeholder. However, there is no way that the principal will make every one understand the expectations if these expectations are also not clear to him or her. Miller (2007) refers to such principals as boundary-spanning leaders and he argues that they are familiar with the individuals and groups involved in school-community partnerships. In Miller's (2007) view, boundary-spanning leaders refer to leaders who are able to go beyond known partners but further identify other possible partners in the partnership. I highlighted earlier that the principal stated that his role was also to identify other schools that may benefit from the University services. Through delegation of work to different teachers, the school principal could be seen spanning boundaries of leadership through acknowledging all other stakeholders in the school. In the interview, the principal also highlighted that he has created a platform for the University to work collaboratively with the school and local organisations to further the services provided by the University to the school. When asked about other people or organisations involved in the partnership, the principal said:

You don't do things in isolation...we believe you don't succeed if you do things all by yourself you have to form partnership with other people with the same purpose. Lately we have an organisation by the name of Youth for Christ which is also based on the school on the very same issues. They have their peer educators and they are assisting learners in peer education skills.

Other than relying on teachers, who are sometimes overwhelmed by work (Naidu, et al., 2008), the principal was able to extend participation to local organisation. Local youth organisations formed part of the assets identified that could be utilised by school (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001). I therefore argue that before the principal draws from the University resources, he is able to map possible assets within the community.

Naidu, et al. (2008) argues that school leaders, especially principals must 'speak and understand the language' of the potential partners and according to Miller (2007) this will enable the leaders to foster greater social cohesion that will strengthen school-community partnerships. Principals' leadership here is not only emphasised as a direct factor. Their indirect involvement is also acknowledged in a number of ways. For example, Sanders (2007) notes that rather than being central in partnership, the principal can do the following: (1) Identify school personnel who have skills, expertise and experience to serve in school-community action teams. (2) Be supportive of the teams' effort; provide resources, attend community partnership events, arrange class coverage for teachers attending action team meetings and acknowledge and praise partnership efforts and success. (3) Support their action teams in making connections with possible funders. (4) Acknowledge that administrators, other educators, action team leaders, parents and students have creative solutions to school challenges. The interviews with one teacher and the head of department revealed that the principal was supportive to the action teams. However, one project leader complained that the principal was unable to bring social cohesion between the University partners and educators. Although there were complaints about the principal (which I discuss later), the principal seems to play a crucial role in the partnership. It is apparent because of his leadership skills, all partners acknowledge him as a crucial local asset in the partnership. Moreover, school principals are gatekeepers in accessing the school. Furthermore, several authors argue from a collegial leadership perspective that the principals' support for initiatives determines the effectiveness and the success of the activities (Bush, 2005; Coleman & Earley, 2005). Among the factors that contribute to the success of school activities, Fullan (2001) highly rates the strong support that principals give in school activities. As a result, there was a strong acknowledgement of the principal as resource in the partnership. Chikoko (2011) argues that school improvement can only occur where the principal is a good leader. The principal may be acknowledged in the partnership, but what is most important is his or her contribution to the partnership because the asset-based approach supports both acknowledgement and active

involvement. Therefore, in section 4.2.2.1 below I discuss the utilisation of the school principal as an important asset in the partnership.

4.2.2.1 Utilising the school principal's knowledge and skills as an asset in the partnership

In their case study conducted in one of the schools in the United States of America (USA) Sanders and Harvey (2002) report that the principal's leadership and support for partnerships helped the case school to develop a meaningful community connections (Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Other researchers such as Battilana et al. (2010), Fullan (2001), Landsberg et al. (2005) and Van Wyk & Lemmer (2007) also have the same view. Evidence from all participants and documents analysed indicated that in the partnership project under study project leaders greatly acknowledge and utilise the principal's leadership skills as a crucial asset for the success of the partnership. The principal in the partnership is one of the project leaders, he acts as the intermediary between teachers, community representatives and the University partners (all communiqués are mostly sent via him).

Although the principal is greatly acknowledged, the findings of the study indicate that he also contributes to the disintegration of the partnership. The discussion in the previous section on the *Reasons for teachers' minimal participation in the partnership* pointed to the principal's failure to communicate messages to relevant stakeholders and his poor commitment on the matters of the partnership. Both the project leaders and one of the teachers identified the principal as contributing to the failure of the partnership.

Project leader 1: *Well I am working with the principal...when he attended the workshop that I had for the teachers for a while, he got a sense of what was happening and he left, but it didn't work too well. After that when I followed up with a second visit basically when I got into the school I found that he didn't give information to the teachers about the second workshop...Yes especially because the principal being the person representing the school and he seems to be the one making decisions and not involving the teachers.*

Project leader 2: *so he [principal] is the missing wheel in the partnership may be the point will be to invite those people [teachers] directly... actually they (teachers) told us that they don't want to participate, especially if the partnership comes through the*

principal...there is a huge change...in this past year I find him to be very obstructive and disengaged for some unknown reasons. His relationships with teachers, the community and with us, I think they have been damaged and it will take a long time for those relationships to be fixed.

While the project leaders saw the principal as barrier in the partnership, the principal was not satisfied with the project and how it was run. He stated that there was no clarity on his role in the project and this makes him work like in a 'vacuum'. According to the principal this affected the way he did things. He also stated that sometimes the partnership idea became foreign to him and other teachers and it was unclear what was expected from him and teachers. When asked about his allocated duties as the leader in the project, the principal said:

In fact there is no definite role that I have been given as a project leader so I do what needs to be done ...Maybe [it is] because the [partnership] idea is foreign.

The whole idea of the principal being not proactive in the matters of the partnership and the association of him with the failure of the partnership may indicate the important role that the principal should be playing in the partnership. This may further indicate the importance of the leadership skills in the success of the partnership. The literature review made emphasis to a boundary-spanning principal as the one who is able to keep everyone involved and clear about the goals of the school and of the partnership (Battilana, et al., 2010). It has been further argued that the principal should be able to create an organisational culture that supports collaborations and a welcoming climate that makes everyone feel part of the school (Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2010; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). In the findings of this study, it is indicated that the principal is acknowledged but the principal was not performing the roles that were supposed to be performed by him. While the principal is blamed for the failure of the partnership, the view that sometimes both the principal and the teachers were unclear about the goals of the partnership may suggest challenges within the partnership itself than the principal only. Research has pointed out that conflicting interest between research and intervention from universities has hindered the success of the partnership. Thus, it might be argued here that unclear partnerships objectives result in the failure and not inactive principal and other factors indicated by teachers. The principal also indicate that the partnerships is sometimes foreign to him and to teachers, this may further suggests that project leaders have their own agenda on how they would like the partnership to be run which is not communicated clearly to the principal or which is not what the school is interested in

resulting to the noted challenges. Therefore, I argue that communication, as indicated earlier in chapter two, should be reciprocal and continuous. This will help in creating a common understanding and in dealing with challenges before they put a strain in the partnership.

4.2.3. Community workers, learners and local organisations as assets

The findings also reveal that community workers and local organisations are crucial resources in the partnership. This is evident from the current project's proposal developed, the previous workshop agendas as well as in the interviews I conducted.

Communiqué from the University partners: *The community health care workers previously took part in the “Learning Together” project and are invited to view and comment on the photos they took.*

Proposal document: *This study will therefore continue working with the Mafakathini clinic and will draw on existing health (and technology) resources of the clinic...A participatory planning process will be instituted involving major stakeholders ...selected schools and community representatives.*

Teacher 1: *when we [are] having some problems we also refer to SANCA and other issues we refer them to Lifeline and Child line.*

Project leader 2: *[hums]... ya... they are, you should speak to a person who went for teaching practice, and actually learners are the saving grace of that school.*

The school principal also identified learners as a crucial resource in the partnership. He stated that their willingness to remain after school to attend programmes contributes to the success of the programmes and thus partnership goals are achieved. The principal said:

Principal *They [learners] play the roles that they are tasked or asked to perform... they voluntarily avail themselves for after-school activities....*

The above phrases acknowledge local people and existing organisations outside the school. The University partners also acknowledge these people and organisations indicating that the University partners were always willing to strengthen the support they get from these existing people and organisation. The interview with the Project leader 2 indicated that the community

where the school is located has plenty of assets and the school is the gatekeeper towards accessing those resources. The asset-based model advocates for building from existing assets (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001; Khanare, 2009). Even when University partners are gone, there is evidence that teachers in the school feel empowered to deal with learners' problems and they are able to identify these problems and make contact with the organisation concerned. One of the teachers mentioned that they have created a list of learners who need further support and they continuously find ways of helping these learners. The teacher also indicated that the partnership has empowered other teachers as well to identify learners with problems.

HoD: *I have other learners with problems and at the end of the day I have information about learners with problems identified by other teachers.*

The asset-based model is supported because it empowers individuals to become central in dealing with their own challenges even in the absence of the external partners (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). As a result I argue here that the utilisation of this approach to school-university partnership can yield more benefits.

Generally, the findings indicate a strong emphasis put on the school existing resources. However, while existing resources are identified in the partnership, the University partners also acknowledge that the school still has needs. This is in line with the asset-based approach that indicates that communities have needs but the approach to help them satisfy their needs is by firstly establishing their existing assets. Then the next step is to determine how available assets can be used to provide more resources (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007). It was evident from the interview with two project leaders that they do bring resources into the school to supplement the available resources in the school. For example both project leaders indicated that their bringing of computers and internet facilities in the school was for both in-service and pre-service teachers to search information which is important for their learning areas.

4.2.3.1 Utilising local community assets

In an asset-based approach a school should identify assets available in their communities when dealing with challenges facing the school. These assets might be individual community members and their skills as well as community organisations and agencies (Kretzmann &

McKnight, 1993). In the partnership project under study, as the principal stated during the interview, community people and organisations that might have the required skills have not been invited by the school. The principal said:

Ummh... I think in terms of other outside parties such as parents and other local people; their participation is minimal because we have not invited them to participate meaningfully.

One of the project leaders also confirmed that participation of community representatives was lacking because she believed the principal did not invite community representatives. She said:

We tried to invite the community members and that didn't materialise. For example we wanted to launch our book on school-community partnership and we asked the principal to invite the neighbouring school and other community members and the Department of Education. The principal and all other invited people did not attend. I think that he did not invite them.

de Lange and Combrinck (2011, p. 234) argue that “the community is made up of a diversity of people who not only have time on hand (due to unemployment) but who possess a range of assets and skills, which could be used for the collective good of the community”. While this is the case, in this partnership project under study, community members did not participate in the project because they were not invited. I therefore argue that teachers, who have huge teaching workloads and have limited time to attend to other issues that affect the school, should draw an asset map and skills list in order to enlist the help of community representatives who are willing to work with the school. This can only be achieved if these community members are invited and helped to gain an understanding of the partnership and the role they can play. I have argued earlier in chapter two that the school may not be self-sufficient regarding resources it needs and therefore, the notion of partnership is meant to enable the school to draw additional resources from the community. Time is one of the resources that can be drawn from unemployed or retired skilful people in the community. According to project leaders, the University partners were willing to work with people in the community but their concern was that the University partners could only tap in those community resources through the school. However, the project leaders complained about the relationship the principal had with them, the teachers in the school and the community members.

Project leader 2: *Well communities have resources but we can only tap into those resources through the school. Unfortunately, the relationship that the principal has with us, teachers and the community is not allowing the partnership to tap into community resources.*

The exclusion of community assets in this way also highlights the important role of the principal in bringing all possible assets together for the success of the partnership. I also argue here that community assets are difficult to utilise if communication between the school and its community is lacking. Proponents of asset-based approach such as Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) and Khanare (2009) talk of asset-mapping in a community. The process of asset-mapping in the community involves identifying possible people and organisations with knowledge and skills that could possibly be used in the partnership and also making means of attracting them to contribute their skills and knowledge in the school activities (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Where communication between the school and its surrounding community is lacking, the process of asset-mapping in the community becomes difficult. This was the case with the partnership project under study and this resulted in the underutilisation of the community assets. While this is only blamed to the principal, within the distribution of duties I do believe that I was going to be good if project leaders also identified other teachers to share duties with the principal as the principal's work may also be demanding more time. This would have made the asset-mapping task be done with no difficulties.

4.2.4 Experience in partnership as an intangible asset found in the school.

As discussed earlier in chapter one in the definition, assets may also refer to other intangible possessions of the school. The findings of the study also revealed that other than the resources available and those that the University partners provided, the school has some intangible assets. The school has formed several partnerships with other individuals and institutions. This was revealed mostly in the interview with the principal and it was also briefly indicated by the HoD when I was interviewing her. When the school principal was giving a brief history of the partnership this is what he said:

*Uhhh basically it started as a loose working relationship that is when we were approached by **organisation X**, we worked at Mafakatini clinic, and they requested teachers to be trained on HIV issues and the management of it with regards to the*

educators and the learners. So teachers were sent to the workshop...Lately we had an organisation by the name of Youth for Christ which is also based on the school on the very same issues...We are working closely with the CBOs, especially last year there were programs which were initiatives of the CBO named Thandokuhle...

The highlighted experience of the school in the partnership is a great resource especially in the sense that their previous partnerships have focussed on issues of HIV and AIDS, learners' social welfare and other social issues that affected the school. The aforementioned social issues are also addressed in the partnership under study. Two teachers (the HoD and one teacher) also stated that before the commencement of the partnership they had an established team which was looking at vulnerable learners. These teachers indicated that the team has been involved in the current partnership. These teachers indicated that the teachers from the team were the ones who were usually deployed to attend meetings called by the University partners.

HoD: *The first time they came, I am not sure whether it was the principal but the people who were invited in the first workshop were members of the team it was after the first workshop that other members who were interested joined*

It seems that the experience in partnership has resulted in the creation of this team in the school which is now used as an asset by the school. One may argue that building from this existing team may boost the partnership and it might make it easier to generate intervention strategies. However, on the other hand it is apparent in the HoD's words that the priority of the principal or whoever made a decision was on the existing team which did not represent the majority of teachers in the school. This basically indicates that while the experience can be an asset, it can also limit the utilisation of other assets (teachers not in the team). Secondly, the culture that the previous organisations that have worked with the school created may work positively as an intangible asset to the current partnership but at the same time it might hinder the utilisation of an asset-based model. For example if the organisations used to do everything without involving or expecting school stakeholders to be active, the stakeholders will expect the same in other relationships. If the previous organisations have ensured active involvement of all stakeholders and have used other existing assets within the school this may create positive culture which will make the current partnerships to work. Thus the experience is an asset but it can turn to be problematic if it was not underpinned by an asset-based model. In one of the interviews with the project leader it came out that there is another

organisation that has initiated the partnership with the same school but they are facing challenges in terms of drawing from the internal resource. However, their projects are continuing without actually drawing from the existing resources.

Project leader 2: *Well currently the school has also formed a relationship with organisation X but I have had one person from organisation X saying that they have a problem with the school. The person said that they don't get involved. Well their project is continuing and it doesn't require active participation of teachers*

This response from the project qualifies my argument that the kind of culture that is created in other partnerships may impact on the partnership with the University partners. If the aforementioned organisation was able to implement its projects without school stakeholders actively involved, the reflection from the school is likely to be that external partners can work in the absence of active involvement of educators. Thus, this indicates how the experience in partnership may both work as an asset or challenge for new partnerships

4.3 POSSIBILITIES OF AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH IN SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: EMERGING ISSUES

The findings of the study presented a number of issues as far as the possibilities for utilisation of the asset-based approach is concerned. According to Khanare (2009, p.71) an “asset-based approach recognises the importance of participation across all sectors and emphasises that every individual possesses a skill/capacity to respond to a situation in his or her context”. What is emerging in the findings of this study is that all participants believed that people in the school and its surrounding community possess assets in the form of time, skills and knowledge that are valuable and that can possibly be utilised to strengthen the partnership and enable partners to realise the partnership goals. However, the indication is that the identified capacities of both the school stakeholders (teachers, learners) and those of the surrounding community members have not been harnessed to a maximum level. The challenge of harnessing the local resources seemed not to be with the external partners (University team). The school leaders, the principal in particular has been failing to ensure that community members are brought on board to contribute their skills and capacities in the partnership. On the other hand the unclear goals of the partnership have also resulted in the withdrawal of participation by other teachers. Other than the understanding it is also

emerging that teachers find themselves overwhelmed by the academic activities in such a way that they are unable to perform other duties that they are supposed to perform as far as the partnership is concerned. The utilisation of assets is also challenged by the unclearly communicated information both to teachers in the school and to community individuals and organisations that have been identified by University members as important contributors in the partnership.

What is also emerging is that there is more emphasis that is made towards human resources as important assets for the partnership. However, from the asset-based approach we know that assets may also include the available land and buildings and other equipment the community may have (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The findings revealed that there are computers and internet connection that was provided by the University team but these assets were hardly referred to as important assets in the partnership. The findings also indicated a minimum use of these assets. The suggestions that were identified in the reports indicate that the minimum use of these resources is also limiting participants to gain information valuable to them. For example, the findings revealed that teachers were sometimes of less help to student teachers and on the other hand the principal reported that sometimes the duties were not clear to him and to other teachers regarding what they were supposed to be doing. I argue here that resources such as computers and the internet should have provided enough support especially to teachers if they were used to the maximum level.

Although assets are underutilised, one may argue that the asset-based approach can be utilised in school-community partnership. The first step in this approach is to believe that there are valuable resources in the community that is served. This belief must be held by those who are receiving services and those that are providing the service. This aspect is identified in the partnership that I studied. Therefore this indicates that utilising the asset-based approach is possible. However, a challenge to this was that there was no clear two-way communication and this hindered the utilisation of other assets, especially from the surrounding community of the school. The school principal seemed to be associated with the challenge of communication. However, from my analysis the principal's commitment shows more challenges within the partnership in general than the principal's communication. The aim of the partnership seems to be unclear whether it is research or intervention, thus making it hard to attract active participation from all teachers. Furthermore there seems to be greater

responsibility placed on the principal. While this may be appreciated, overloading the principal with a lot of responsibility may put challenges for the partnership. For example, due to this lack of communication, it has been hard to harness or to create a map of possibly assets for the partnership. I conclude therefore that there are possibilities of asset-based approach. However these possibilities require some changes in the way things are done in the partnership. It is important to note that one of the crucial aspects indirectly presented by data is that there seems to be goals and objectives held by project leaders which are not made explicit to the principal. An asset-based approach may not materialise in case where the receiver of services is told what works and what does not work. The partnership should be 'foreign' to participants.

4.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings that emerged from the study. The findings present available assets in the school and its surrounding community and then the extent to which these assets are being utilised in the partnership project. I also discuss the possibilities of asset-based approach in school-community partnerships. The conclusion drawn from the study is that the asset-based approach can be utilised in school-community partnerships.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses a summary of the thesis, conclusions drawn from the study and a set of implications for asset-based approach and school-community partnerships generated from the findings of this study.

5.2 SUMMARY

The study investigated whether an asset-based approach can be utilised in school-community partnership. To achieve its aim, the study determined assets partners in the *'Nothing for us without us project'* regarded as central to their partnership and the extent at which these partners utilised the identified assets. Responses from these key research questions were then used to argue for the possibilities of the asset-based approach in school-community partnership.

Chapter one provides the background to the study and introduction to the thesis. The Chapter indicates that schools are striving for improved quality of education while using scarce resources. The Chapter further argues that school-community partnerships have been forged to bridge the gap between schools and key resources needed to improve education quality and address challenges in schools. It was further indicated a deficiency approach forms a barrier to school-community partnerships. The chapter further discusses the study aim, which is to investigate possibilities of using an alternative approach to school-community partnership. It was then stated that asset-based approach is the alternative to the deficiency approach.

Chapter two provides a critical discussion of research conducted around the area of school-community partnerships. It was noted in the Chapter that partnerships are normally forged for the purpose of improving learners' academic performance and addressing other social challenges affecting learners in schools and in their communities. Factors such as leadership, communication, availability of resources, and the nature of relationship in partnerships are

discussed as contributory factors to the success of school-community partnerships. This chapter has also discussed the asset-based approach as a theoretical framework underpinning this study.

Chapter three of this thesis argues that qualitative, interpretive paradigm guides the way this study was conducted. The chapter further describes the study location and the phenomenon (partnership project) under investigation. The Chapter also discusses data collection methods, selection of participants and data analysis methods used in this study.

Chapter four presents the findings of this study in relation to the key research questions. The Chapter indicates that teachers, the school principal, learners, community individuals and organisations are important assets in the partnership. The assets or resources that these stakeholders may have towards this partnership are known, however, their utilisation in the partnership is identified as lacking aspect. Unclear communication of goals was identified as one of the factors contributing to the failure to utilise these assets. Secondly, other factors such as misunderstanding of the partnership and availability of time were identified as limiting factors in the harnessing of teachers' skills and knowledge as other aspects of assets possessed by these teachers. The misunderstanding on the other hand may dispute the views provided about the principal. Therefore it may be argued that communication from both sides should be strong in order to make sure that all participants are aware of why they should be involved in the partnership. This may also question whether other factors noted, such as time were hindering the partnership or it was the unclear goals and objectives of the partnership.

5.3. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE STUDY

I present below conclusions drawn from the study in line with the key research questions that were highlighted in Chapter one.

5.3.1. School-community partnerships can be built from principles of the asset-based approach. The findings revealed that both the school and the University partners are aware that assets are available inside the school and within the surrounding communities. Furthermore, University partners are of the view that the school has

needs and challenges. I therefore, identified possibilities of an asset-based approach in school-community partnerships because University partners were aware that the assets they introduced to the school could not be utilised without drawing from already existing school and community assets.

5.3.2. The role of school leadership, especially of the principal cannot be underestimated if the asset-based approach is to be utilised. The school principal can identify all possible assets that can be utilised in enhancing services provided by University partners. The failure or the success of the school principal to work as the intermediary between external stakeholders and internal stakeholders may contribute largely on how both external and internal assets are used for the benefits of the partnership. The findings suggested that communications were always sent through the principal and on the other hand teachers also indicated that they will only see University partners arriving at the school without actually knowing what was happening. This resulted in conflict and lack of interest from other teachers thus their contribution was minimal in the partnership. However, on the other hand teachers and the principal also indicated that they were also not clear of the partnership goals. This tells us that the problem may not be with the principal's communication but also from the project leaders' side there might be problems contributing to the failure of the partnership.

5.3.3. Teachers are aware of their skills and knowledge and they know what they can contribute in partnership but if the partnership is not clear as to whether it is a research or intervention, teachers become reluctant to be involved in the project. While they are reluctant, it should be noted that these are able to identify organisations they can work with, thus suggesting that if an asset-mapping is done properly teachers can be able to identify other resourceful entities for the school.

5.3.4. Despite their participation which has been endorsed in the South Africa education system of governing school (*see Chapter One*) and their known valuable assets, local community representatives are disregarded mostly by the school principal. This emanated from the findings that suggested that people from the community were never invited by the school principal although it also came out almost in all interviews and documents that they were regarded as important assets for the partnership. While the principal admitted that he did not invite community members, this pose a

challenge on the project leaders' in terms of how they can make sure that communication of goals and objectives is clear to ensure that the principal sees it as his responsibility to ensure broader community involvement. This indicated that while goals were clear, their communication was not clearly done. One may not turn a blind eye to the work of the principal in the partnership. The argument that the principal's activeness is crucial for the success of partnerships does not mean the principal should be the only one responsible for many issues in the partnership. Based on the findings of the study, it may be concluded that a lot of power is vested with the principal which might be the contributing factor in his struggles to do all what is expected from him.

5.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR PARTENRSHIPS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The following paragraphs present recommendations of this report, which are divided into two; that is, recommendations for the partnership and recommendations for further research.

5.4.1 Implications for partnership and asset-based approach

Regarding the school-community partnership, I recommend that:

- 5.4.1.1. There is a need for re-evaluating the role of principals in ensuring that possible assets available in the school and its community are harnessed. While the principal is the head and the gatekeeper of the school, external partners should also try and extend leadership of the partnership to other participants in the school in order to make sure that the principal is not overloaded with more work in such a way that he cannot effectively perform all his duties.
- 5.4.1.2. There should be a coordinated effort made by the University project leaders in order to ensure that all their targeted contributors in the partnership are invited. Without overpowering the principal, maybe through the principal, the University project leaders will need to ask the principal to arrange a meeting with community leaders where aspects of the partnership affecting the community will be discussed. After such a meeting community leaders can then work with the University project leaders to coordinate the community

aspects and the school Principal is left solely responsible for the school. In this way I assume assets available in the community can be mapped.

5.4.1.3. There is a need for the University project leaders to coordinate a collective meeting which will be brief where teachers will be informed by the same University team on the goals of the partnership and how the school and teachers in particular can benefit from the partnership. This will help in harnessing teachers' skills and teachers will better understand the partnership.

5.4.1.4. There is also a need to have structured workshops that will empower teachers on managing their time in such a way that they are able to attend to extra-curricular activities while also ensuring their continued academic work.

5.4.1.5. If partnerships are going to succeed research should be underpinned by an aim of intervening than just generating data which does not help the internal partners and the end.

The above will not only assist in strengthening partnerships, but it will also contribute largely on the attempts to harness skills and knowledge of the local participants.

5.4.2 Implications for further research

Regarding further research, I recommend that:

5.4.2.1. A further study is conducted to include more teachers in the school, the study should be quantitative in nature or use mixed research methods. I hope that such a study will be able to elicit the views of other teachers, learners, student teachers and community members that I could not include in this study. It is my belief that the views of more participants will add deeper views. Many teachers did not participate in the study and therefore, the views of the teachers included in the report may not predict the actual reasons for teachers' lack of participation in the partnership project. However, this does not mean that the views in this study cannot be trusted. Documents analysed and the views of project leaders provided the same results. What need further research are the personal views of the teachers who were not participating and I believe

that this can be elicited through a large scale sample which will involve all teachers.

5.4.2.2. I further suggest that there is need to conduct a study that its focus will be to empower the school on how assets can be identified. This will strengthen the school's understanding of available assets and also how such assets can be attracted to benefit the school.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate possibilities of an asset-based approach to school-community partnership. To achieve this broader aim, the study used questions such as what assets are regarded as central in the '*Nothing for us without us*' project? As guided by the principles of asset-based approach which suggest identification and effective use of available assets, the second question was on the extent at which partners in the project utilised available assets. These two questions were then used to argue for the utilisation of asset-based approach to school-community partnership. In answering the above questions several assets such as teachers, the school principal, learners and community representatives were identified as crucial assets for the partnership. While these assets are identified, it also appears in the study that there is more emphasis on human resources which is not the only assets we have taking from how assets are defined in this study. Similar assets may also have been identified in other studies the strength of this study lies in identifying contributing factors in the identification and effective use of assets. Lack of effective use of these assets has been identified in this study. Unclear communication of partnership and goals has been identified to be the major contributing factor in failure to use assets effectively. In addition to communication, there seems to be a greater emphasis given to the principal leadership, however this has left the principal with an overload in such a way that some of the responsibilities are left unattended resulting to the failure of the partnership. Distribution of roles is therefore recommended. The study has managed to introduce and to link the theory of asset-based approach to school-community partnership, especially in the area of education management and leadership as it was generally applied in educational psychology by researchers such as Khanare (2009) and Ellof & Ebersom (2001) and in community development by researchers such as (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). However, the study recommends further research on the application of this approach to school-community partnerships, especially the area of assets mapping by school internal stakeholders.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

P.O. Box 11222
Umzinto
4200
23 September 2011

The Principal

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently studying for a Master of Education degree with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Faculty of Education (Edgewood campus). As part of the requirements for this degree, I am conducting a research project in which I explore the possibilities for an asset-based approach in school-community partnership. This letter serves as request to conduct research in your school.

The study is titled "School-community partnership in education in a South African rural context: Possibilities for Asset-Based Approach. The first aim of the study is to establish what resources that are available in the community do partners see as central to their partnership. The study further seeks to establish the extent to which the partners in school-community partnership utilise the available resources. The third aim of the study is to establish what other resources, despite those that are available in the community, could be used in school-community partnership.

There will be two interviews with the principal of the school which are expected to take a maximum time of 45 minutes. Secondly interviews with two educators will be conducted on their available time in which they will be not supposed to perform any of the school duties. These interviews are also estimated to take a maximum time of 45 minutes. In addition to these interviews focus group interviews with the SMT and the SGB of your school will be conducted outside the school hours and are estimated to take a maximum time of 90 minutes. These interviews will be tape recorded on the condition that participants will be willing to give me a permission to do so. In addition to the interviews, some of the meetings and activities that normally take place in the partnership the school has with the selected university will be observed.

Participants' anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research project, as well as in the reporting of the findings is assured. Schools and individuals will not be identified in the dissertation as I will use fictitious names. Participation is purely voluntary therefore participants are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given stage and there are no negative consequences they will fill face for their withdrawal. For any further information, I have enclosed herein the contacts of my supervisors. It is also guaranteed that the information you provide will only be used for the research purposes and it will be stored safely in the University for five years and be destroyed after.

Please note that to participate in the study does not equal to any rewards and it is only on voluntary basis. Please note that date, time and venue for the discussions will be arranged in consultation with participants and the researcher will ensure that the participants are not supposed to be on duty during the time of the interviews.

Thank you in advance for a positive response to this request

Yours Sincerely
Phumlani Erasmus Myende (205521477)
(Med: Educational Management Leadership and Policy)
Cell no. 073 991 2392
Office: 031 260 3490
Email address: myendep@ukzn.ac.za
205521477@ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor: Professor Vitallis Chikoko
Tel no.: 031 260 2639
E-mail: chikokov@ukzn.ac.za

DECLARATION

(To be completed by participant)

I (**Full name of participant**) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

P.O. Box 11222
Umzinto
4200

23 September 2011

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

I am currently studying for a Master of Education degree with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Faculty of Education (Edgewood campus). As part of the requirements for this degree, I am conducting a research project in which I explore the possibilities for an asset-based approach in school-community partnership.

The study is titled “School-community partnership in education in a South African rural context: Possibilities for Asset-Based Approach. The first aim of the study is to establish what resources that are available in the community do partners see as central to their partnership. The study further seeks to establish the extent to which the partners in school-community partnership utilise the available resources. The third aim of the study is to establish what other resources, despite those that are available in the community, could be used in school-community partnership.

To achieve the aims of this study, I humbly request your participation. You are humbly requested to participate in the interview. The interview is expected to take a maximum time of 45 minutes. To ensure that all your views are captured during the interview, I will need to tape record the discussions, however this will only happen through your permission.

Throughout the study and in reporting you will remain anonymous and the information you provide will remain confidential to you and the researcher. It is also guaranteed that the information you provide will only be used for the research purposes and it will be stored safely in the University for five years and be destroyed after.

Please note that permission to participate in the study does not equal to any rewards and it is only on voluntary basis. While it does not bring any good to the study, you have a full right to withdraw your participation in the study at any stage and there will be no negative consequences you will face due to you withdrawal.

Please note that date, time and venue for the discussions will be arranged in consultation with you.

Yours Sincerely
Phumlani Erasmus Myende (205521477)
(Med: Educational Management Leadership and Policy)
Cell no. 073 991 2392
Office: 031 260 3490
Email address: myendep@ukzn.ac.za
205521477@ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor: Professor Vitallis Chikoko
Tel no.: 031 260 2639
E-mail: chikokov@ukzn.ac.za

DECLARATION

(To be completed by participant)

I **(Full name(s) of participant)** hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....
Participant’s signature Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PRINCIPAL

1. The nature of the partnership

- When the partnership started and what was the motivation behind it?
- What roles do you play as one of the project leaders and the school Principal in the partnership?
- Other than yourself, who else within the school and the community participates in the partnership?
- What they do in the partnership?

2. Available resources central to the partnership?

- What skills and knowledge are important among teachers for the success of this partnership?
- Do you see people in the school having these skills and knowledge?
- What are your achievements in the partnership as a project leader and the principal of the school?
- Do you think the school surrounding communities have assets? Are these assets important for the partnership?
- Have the community contributed their assets in the partnership?

3. Utilisation of resources

- How available skills and knowledge are used in the partnership?
- Is your contribution valued in the partnership? If it is valued, in what ways do other partners show this value?
- Do you see other stakeholders (teachers, learners and parents) playing an important role in the partnership?
- What role do you see the above stakeholders playing?
- What role do you see community members playing in the partnership?

4. What challenges do you face in the partnership as the principal of the school as well as one of the project leaders?

5. What suggestions would you have with regards to the use of available skills and knowledge and other resources in the partnership?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: TEACHERS

1. The nature of the partnership

- What is your understanding of this partnership?
- Do you participate in the partnership?
- What roles do you play as educators of the school in the partnership?
- What other people (principal, SMT, learners, community members, SGB) do in the partnership?

2. Available resources central to the partnership:

- What resources are available at and to the school (both human and material)?
- Could these resources be utilised in the partnership?
- Would you regard yourself as an asset in the partnership?
- What is your role in the partnership?
- Are your skills and knowledge used in the partnership?
- Are these skills, knowledge, and attributes important for the partnership? Explain?

3. Utilisation of available resources

- How available skills and knowledge are utilised in the partnership?
- Do you have any contribution in the partnership? Explain.
- Is your contribution valued in the partnership? If it is valued, what shows that value?
- What is your view on the use of available resources in the partnership?
- What role is played by local school community in the partnership?

4. What challenges, if any, do you see with regards to the use of school resources in the partnership?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PROJECT LEADERS

1. The nature of the partnership

- When was the partnership started and why?
- Who do you work with from the school and its surrounding community?
- Do you get full participation from the school stakeholders and other community members?
- Are the above stakeholders actively involved in the partnership?
- What are the benefits of this partnership for you and the school involved?

2. Available resources central to the partnership:

- What resources are available at and to the school (both human and material)?
- Are the people in the school aware of these resources?
- Could these resources be utilised in the partnership?
- Except the resources available within the school, do you find any contribution from the community surrounding the school? If yes, what contribution they make?

3. Utilisation of available resources

- How available skills and knowledge are utilised in the partnership?
- Would you say people (teachers, learners and the SMT) are utilising their skills for the benefit of the partnership?
- What is your view on the use of available resources in the partnership?
- What role is played by local school community in the partnership?

4. What challenges, if any, do you see with regards to the use of school resources in the partnership?



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.: 2/4/8/98

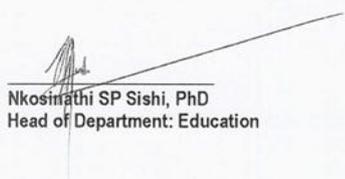
Mr Phumulani Erasmus Myende
P O Box 11222
Umzinto
4200

Dear Mr Myende

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **School-Community Partnership in Education is a South African Rural Context: Possibilities of Asset Based Approach**, 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 September 2011 to 31 September 2012.
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 Mr Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report or dissertation or thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following Schools and Institutions:


Nkosimathi SP Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education


Date

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G 25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, Pietermaritzburg, 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/11 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | email:sibusiso.alwar@kzndee.gov.za

13 September 2011

Mr PE Myende (205521477)
School of Education & Development
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Myende

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0852/011M
**PROJECT TITLE: School-community partnership in education in a rural South African context:
Possibilities for an asset-based approach**

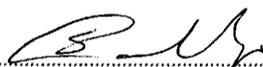
In response to your application dated 7 September 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor: Prof V Chikoko
cc: Mr N Memela/Mrs S Naicker, Faculty Research Office, Edgewood Campus