THE DYNAMICS OF CHILD VULNERABILITY IN A SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOL: FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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THESIS

SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT (ELMP)

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

SUPERVISOR: PROF VITALLIS CHIKOKO

DECEMBER 2021

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

(i) The research reported on in this thesis **The Dynamics of Child Vulnerability in a South African Primary School: Focus on Leadership and Management,** is my original work.

(ii) This thesis has not been submitted to any other university for any degree or examination.

(iii) This thesis does not contain data, pictures, graphs or information collated by other individuals, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other individuals.

(iv) This thesis does not contain other person's writing unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers where other written sources have been quoted

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SUPERVISOR STATEMENT

As the candidate's supervisor, I have approved this thesis for submission.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to those who have inspired and encouraged me throughout my life.

To those who have dedicated their lives to meaningful work and inspired commitment to a life of service and purposefulness.

To visionary leaders who offer unwavering support in the pursuit of excellence.

To those who have encouraged me as I navigated this journey.

To those who invoke a spirit of faith and belief in the unseen.

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Hebrews 1:11

My daughter, Dr Nadine Hoosen, as you have encouraged me to pursue this study and have affirmed my belief held that all things are indeed possible.

To you, I am exceedingly grateful.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to those who are committed to improving the plight of vulnerable children in our country and globally. These children rely on us to draw attention to their circumstances. May we continue to implore our leaders to improve the lives of these children by creating opportunities to unlock their immense potential.

May we always recognise and respect our interconnectedness, endeavouring to fulfil our inherent duty to uplift each other in every pursuit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God I am eternally grateful for grace, strength, direction and for the timing of all things. For my faith I am most grateful.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:"

Ecclesiastes 3:1

I express my sincere thanks to the following people:

1. Professor Vitallis Chikoko, I appreciate your invaluable guidance and unwavering support. Your commitment to advancing education is inspiring as is your professionalism, humility, patience, kindness, encouragement, calm demeanour and great power of discernment. Remarkable qualities indeed! You are a brilliant Academic, a great inspiration and mentor. Thank you Prof. From you I have learnt valuable lessons that extend beyond the realms of academia.

2. Professor T.T. Bhengu, the ELMP team and the administrative staff of the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research and Higher degrees at the School of Education (Sabelo Mthembu and Mbalenhle Ngcobo) for your efficiency and kind assistance always.

3. The Department of Education for granting permission for this study

4. The principal and staff of the school where my research was conducted, for your willingness, candour, co-operation, participation and contribution.

5. My parents for encouraging us to study and to my siblings for your interest.

6. My nieces who I am proud of for their roles in developing the next generation of leaders through their work in education.

7. My friends, colleagues, students and my own teachers who were part of my journey and made my experience in education incredibly fulfilling.

9. Special thanks to the following individuals:

    Buhle Nhlumayo

    Monica Nyachowe

    Sharmaine Moodley

    Sandre Warnasuriya and Gavin Warnasuriya

    Ebrahim Ansur and Malthee Ansur

    Sean Preston and Halima Hoosen-Preston

ABSTRACT

Educators and school managers provide key insights on child vulnerability which are derived from their experiences in the school setting. A more robust understanding of the phenomenon of child vulnerability is necessary to direct school-based intervention and to achieve quality education.

Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems' Theory (1979), Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation which outlines The Hierarchy of Human Needs (Maslow, 1943), and the Transformational Leadership Model (Burns, 1978) provided a lens to understand the nature and extent of child vulnerability, how it manifested in the school, why it is understood and experienced in the way that it is and what can be learnt from this.

The study employed a qualitative, interpretive approach, adopting a single case-study in its methodology. Ethical principles were observed throughout the data-generation process. Trustworthiness of findings was ensured since data was generated through semi-structured, individual face-to-face interviews and two focus-group discussions. Seventeen participants comprising Level one educators, School Based Support Team and School Management Team members were included. Research was conducted in one public primary school in KwaZulu-Natal. Data was analysed and arranged thematically.

Insights gained from this study reflect the complexity of the phenomenon of child vulnerability. The South African education system is undergirded by a strong legislative framework, yet fraught with systemic challenges reflecting deficiencies at multiple levels and a lack of collaboration between schools and communities. The quality of education remains poor despite improved access. Challenges that emerged were primarily attributed by educators to unfavourable circumstances within the home. Overwhelmed educators expressed frustration at the lack of support and the circumstances they face. School-based contributors to vulnerability are often overlooked yet are significant.

A transformational leadership approach to achieve quality education is required to improve educator role perception and facilitate capacitation of educators to address vulnerability in the school context. Universal staff capacitation for screening, identification, assessment and support of vulnerable learners is necessary to achieve inclusive education. Close school-

community collaboration to confront harrowing realities inflicted by poverty and deprivation facing children is needed. Finally, this study suggested that school-community collaboration at multiple levels is imperative to address child vulnerability for any intervention to be effective, transformative and sustainable.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASIDI	Accelerated School Infrastructure Development Initiative
CAPS	National Curriculum and Assessment Policy (South Africa)
CLPA	Child Labour Programme of Action
DBE	Department of Based Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management Programme
ISHP	Integrated School Health Programme
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
OVC	Orphaned and Vulnerable Child
PPCT	Person Process Context Time
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACE	South African Certificate Education
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMT	School Management Team
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TB	Tuberculosis
QLTC	Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: THE JOURNEY AHEAD

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 6: REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

APPENDICES

A: Ethical clearance certificate

B: Permission letter to the KZN Department of Education

C: Permission letter from KZN Department of Education

D: Permission letter to school principal: Request to conduct research

E: Permission letter from school principal: Granting permission to conduct research

F: Letter to participants inviting participation

G: Letter from participants- consent to participate

H: Turnitin certificate

I: Interview schedule of questions: Level one participants- Individual Interviews

J: Interview schedule of questions: SBST focus-group

K: Interview schedule of questions: SMT focus group

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:   Diagrammatic representation of The Bioecological systems theory

Figure 2:   Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

CHAPTER 1: THE JOURNEY AHEAD

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to elucidate the dynamics of child vulnerability in one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal, drawing on the understanding and experiences of Level one educators, School-Based Support Teams and School Management Teams with a focus on school leadership and management. Transformation began in South Africa when the country transitioned from governance of the apartheid regime to a democracy in 1994. Education was identified as a key area to address past injustices. Therefore, every dimension of the phenomenon of child vulnerability in the South African Education system must be fully understood to achieve transformation. Achieving quality education through responsive, inclusive school systems dedicated to quality teaching and learning may be accomplished only with a thorough understanding of vulnerability.

Democracy heralded gradual positive changes in education, but as the necessity to cater for diverse needs emerged, deficiencies in addressing child vulnerability (Statistics South Africa, 2015). In a democratic South Africa, improving access to education for previously disadvantaged groups and establishing strategies to address child vulnerability were prioritised, starkly contrasting previous inequalities engendered by the apartheid regime. Improved access formed an integral part of the transformation agenda (National Education Policy Act, 1996). Having taken strides to universalise access to basic education, improving the quality of education and learner outcomes in all learner groups became necessary (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Despite formal commitment to achieve these ideals, universal attainment of quality education and good learner outcomes remains elusive in the South African education system.

The phenomenon of child vulnerability within the school presents a challenge and must be prioritised to improve the quality of educational outcomes. The existence of child vulnerability preceded democratic transformation of the education system in South Africa. The need to create appropriate learning environments which are responsive to the needs of learners in an integrated system became more evident necessitating addressing the phenomenon systematically to achieve the ideals of democracy which advocate for equality and embrace diversity.

In this chapter I present the background to the study, statement of the problem, rationale and motivation for this study. The critical research questions, significance of the study and key-

concepts used in the study are presented. Thereafter I present a brief overview of the theoretical framework and methodology adopted. The chapter concludes with a brief outline of the organisation of this research report. I present the phenomenon of child vulnerability as part of the background to the study in the next section.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.2.1. Phenomenon of Child vulnerability

The apartheid regime and political circumstances in South Africa created inequality amongst different races. The disproportionately negative effects of inequality are noticeable in every aspect of society and particularly in education. The phenomenon of child vulnerability is a product of inequality and is a prominent issue in South African schools (Pillay, 2018). The concept of vulnerability generally refers to the potential for harm or risk for negative outcomes and poor educational outcomes (Arora, Shah, Chaturvedi & Gupta, 2015). In this study, child vulnerability refers to a multifaceted concept describing a potential or actual state where a high probability of negative outcomes exists across many aspects of a child's life (World Bank OVC Toolkit, 2005). Furthermore, the state of vulnerability represents an expected welfare loss above a socially accepted norm which results from risky or uncertain events with a lack of appropriate means and support systems to deal with the circumstances (World Bank OVC Toolkit, 2005).

Child vulnerability reflects limited transformation and development, ongoing social issues, poverty, deprivation and inequality in South Africa (Pillay, 2018). To promote the transformation and development agenda, the South African Government committed to a national and global plan of action aiming to reduce poverty and ensure development through implementation of eight Millennium Development Goals outlined in the Millennium Development Goals Country Report (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) formulated by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 serve to inform and direct initiatives to address global social and development issues (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). The global Sustainable Development Goals are in line with South Africa's efforts to achieve its National Developmental goals of reducing poverty and inequality by the year 2030 (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017).

Systematised approaches governed by plans and policies directed at the identification and quantification of the most vulnerable groups in society promote formulation of targeted

interventions which ought to be context responsive for them to be successfully implemented (Arora et. al, 2015). Literature reveals that the numbers of the children considered vulnerable in the South African schooling system continue to rise at an alarming rate despite efforts to achieve transformation through multiple interventions (Pillay, 2018). In deliberating on the effectiveness of transformation in education, considering the evolution and dynamics of this phenomenon would inform the manner in which the school manages its complexities. To better understand the complexities of this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider its contextual aspects closely. I present this in the next section.

1.2.2. Contextualising child vulnerability in South Africa
The dire situation facing children in South Africa was demonstrated using child-centred indicators based on the Sustainable Development Goals in The Vulnerable Groups Indicator Report (Statistics South Africa, 2016). Child vulnerability indicators reveal high percentages of extreme poverty, child hunger, malnutrition and resultant stunted growth and development (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). The Child Gauge Report published in 2017 asserts that if South Africa is to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, it is critical that the wellbeing of vulnerable children is prioritised (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). Furthermore, poor access to inclusive and equitable quality education with children from the poorest of households having no access to early learning programmes is an unfortunate and unacceptable reality in South Africa (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). It was revealed that highly racialised economic inequality continues to exist in South Africa with an alarming 43.5% of children living below the 50% median per capita income with 81% of the poorest households being where most African children reside (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). These statistics indicate a dire need for accelerated transformation in addressing child vulnerability.

Our education system is positioned as a point of contact with children, serving as one of the best opportunities to identify and address child vulnerability through restructuring approaches, provision for the needs of the child and transformational strategies, yet this has not yet been achieved (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). The Department of Basic Education's description of child vulnerability encompasses the phenomenon as one in which a child's survival, care, protection or development may be compromised due to circumstances that prevent the fulfilment of the rights of a child (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Policy frameworks and strategies to address child vulnerability ought to be adopted and implemented at school level in accordance with provisions made nationally. Expanding on some of the policies that

direct the governance of child vulnerability from the perspectives of educators, SBST and SMT is necessary to better understand aspects around their relevance and implementation by educators and school managers.

1.2.3. South African Policy frameworks and provisions for child vulnerability

South Africa recognises the attainment of education as one of its highest priorities, recognising its economic, legal and developmental value as highlighted in the Millennium Development Goals Country Report (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The South African Education system is characterised by key policy frameworks (see section 1.2.3.2.), protocols and strategies which underpin provision of education thereby issuing a direct mandate on education provision for the vulnerable child in schools (Department of Education, 2001). Literature suggests that there is little known about the level of awareness, adoption and implementation of policies by educators and school managers in dealing with child vulnerability (Masango, 2013). Departmental policies serve to uphold national legislation such as that promulgated in the South African Schools Act, which explicitly protect human rights of all citizens in general and children's rights specifically.

1.2.3.1. The South African School's Act

In line with the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights, the South African School's Act No 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) directs educational practice. The South African Schools Act clearly outlines procedures for organisation, governance and funding of schools centred around redressing past injustices in educational provision through providing education of a progressively high quality (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The act further serves to foster development and advance transformation in society by opposing discrimination and promoting poverty eradication, all of which are the schools' responsibility in educating the vulnerable child (Republic of South Africa, 1996). In line with the South African Constitution, the South African Schools Act aims to provide a legal framework to create a national system to improve quality of education and promote standardisation of norms and standards for the education of learners (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The South African Schools Act advocates that each school must be committed to providing the best quality of teaching and learning and establishing a human rights culture in the best interests of the child (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Marginalisation of the vulnerable child may then be considered as direct opposition to these legal provisions. Enabling children to realise their basic right to education is therefore a

legal imperative which necessitates achieving progressive improvement of strategies for quality education provision for all children and particularly the vulnerable child.

1.2.3.2. Other Frameworks and Policy

Frameworks and policy aim to guide the teaching and learning process. These are particularly important to provide direction for educators and school managers who are tasked with managing learners who experience social, emotional and behavioural challenges in their learning and development. The concept of a rights-based, socially inclusive and cohesive school is one promoted by the Department of Basic Education (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Being rights-based and governed by policy proposes that all school community members need to understand the rights of a child and endeavour to respect, protect and promote children's rights to education, equality, dignity and freedom from discrimination and violence (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

In 2001, the National Department of Education issued Framework Policy Document White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001). This was in response to two main findings namely an exceedingly small percentage of learners with disabilities received education and support, and further, that the education system failed to provide services that were appropriate for learners needs (Department of Education, 2001). It was apparent that if diverse learning needs that exist among the learner population are not met, learners may fail to learn effectively. Learners also face exclusion from the education system altogether. The Inclusive Education Policy outlined in Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) and the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (Department of Basic Education, 2014) protects the rights of all children who face barriers to learning as a result of their social, economic, health and other circumstances, to receive a quality education. These policies consider that impairment in physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental capacity, psycho-social disturbances, differences in intellectual ability, life experiences and circumstances as well as socio-economic deprivation contribute to unmet learning needs which require intervention at school level (Department of Education, 2001).

Due to the complexity of vulnerability, the need arose for developing frameworks which considered how the learning experience is impacted by educators, school managers, parents, communities and support services. The vision of transforming aspects of education that did not

meet the needs of learners, as well as the development of an integrated system of education were prioritised by the National Department of Education (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Legal and policy mandates govern development of frameworks, strategies and programmes which guarantee and give effect to the rights of children (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Policies protecting the rights of a child to food, basic healthcare, safety and protection, social welfare services, psychosocial support and promoting a safe enabling school environment which encourages social cohesion are prioritised in our current school system (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

Principles guiding strategies to achieve the vision of transformation and inclusivity in education particularly to meet the needs of marginalised, diverse and vulnerable groups, included the adoption and acceptance of legal statutes, policy and frameworks governing inclusive education; promoting human rights and social justice for all learners, encouraging social integration and creating an equitable, inclusive education system. This vision led to a district-based support team introducing strategies and interventions to assist educators to cope with a varied spectrum of teaching and learning needs. Furthermore, this framework advocates strategies to address marginalisation of vulnerable groups at school level, through forming a School-Based Support Team (SBST) as an integral part of fostering inclusivity in education.

1.2.3.3. School-Based Support Team (SBST)

Through framework development, systematic transformation of the education system to cater for diverse needs is envisioned. School-Based Support Teams were formed to fulfil a significant role in implementation of policy frameworks developed for a diverse education and attaining the ideal of an education system which is inclusive and responsive to the needs of learners. Whilst in theory these policies exist, some educators, members of School-Based Support Teams (SBST) and School Management Teams (SMT) experience challenges in effective policy implementation and achieving observable, desirable outcomes in educating the vulnerable child. These challenges may emanate from educator attitudes, lack of support, lack of training and development amongst other issues. It is therefore necessary to explore further the actual role, functionality and effectiveness of the SBST and school managers as they navigate managing child vulnerability.

1.2.3.4. School Management

Sound educational management and leadership is essential to promote excellence in education. Every educator should be capacitated to lead, particularly in the current educational climate so fraught with challenges. Educators and managers are best positioned to initiate practices which promote effective teaching and learning in schools. Guided by the South African Constitution, the highest law of the land, the Bill of Rights and other frameworks which are set out to direct teaching and learning in South Africa, educators and managers are tasked with ensuring that schools provide holistic education as centres of inclusivity and excellence in teaching and learning of vulnerable groups.

It is the task of the school manager to guide and enable educators to provide quality teaching (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Monitoring the progress of educators, their performance and promoting continuous professional development of educators is a key responsibility of school managers. Enforcement of policy falls within the ambit and responsibility of school management. Whilst policies clearly stipulate the role of school managers in manging the child in the school environment, a disconnect between the policies advocated and actual delivery of education in schools results in a strained education system.

1.2.3.5. The Educator

It is the role of the educator to ensure that the integrity of the teaching and learning process is preserved. As outlined by the Seven Roles of the Educator in the National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996 (Department of Education, 1996), educators have a critical function as custodians of all learners. They are custodians of the curriculum too, ensuring effective teaching and learning as their core function. Educators act "in loco-parentis" meaning acting in place of the parent in the school environment. Educators play a significant role in taking responsibility for the child and therefore this close association impacts the way in which this child may experience the school system. As a trained professional in the pastoral care role, the educator is therefore also responsible for offering support to the vulnerable child in school beyond the realms of the foundational elements of learning.

Educators can directly affect learning positively or negatively and may either cause, perpetuate or heighten child vulnerability within the school. The inherent roles and expectations of educators have in some cases proven to be overwhelming for educators to satisfy. Wood and Goba (2011) established that educators' training, particularly in life orientation, is critical in

equipping them to deal with the vulnerable child. Their study also highlighted that some educators who are supposed to provide support to the vulnerable child feel marginalised, overwhelmed and targeted in the school setting (Wood & Goba, 2011). This perceived marginalisation and overwhelm occurs in some schools despite educator training and the established norms and standards for educators in the National Education Policy Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Within each defined role of an educator or education manager, the opportunity exists to address the plight of the vulnerable child. Within each role, there also exists potential for educators to interact with children in a manner that may cause or perpetuate child vulnerability (Mohlakwana, 2013).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Whilst there is consensus that access to education for children of school-going age has been achieved, poor quality education and systemic inequalities pervade our school system with resultant learner underperformance and poor learner retention. Research has revealed that the system of education provision for vulnerable learners is both systemically challenged and inequitable (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). The challenges which face children, educators and school managers are reflected in a system which does not adequately cater for the needs of the learner despite some degree of transformation in education since achieving our democracy. Multiple contributory factors and the problems which exist in contexts that impact the child and cause vulnerability challenge educators and school managers. Vulnerability tends to be explored in association with the origins of its causation. Learners in South African schools continue to experience psychosocial, emotional, mental and socioeconomic issues including issues of poverty, abuse and neglect in the school environment and in their home environments. As children in the South African schooling system continue to face these challenges, child-headed households, conflict, orphan hood and abandonment, homelessness, deprivation and neglect continue to affect children negatively.

The disproportionate burden of low learner retention and poor educational outcomes amongst schools which cater for impoverished learners reflects social and economic marginalisation which is ongoing in South African society. Recognising vulnerability and potential vulnerability requires responsiveness to the changing needs of children (Department of Basic Education, 2014). The education system itself and all its constituents may prove to be contributors to child vulnerability if there is poor recognition and poor responsiveness to children's needs. Ineffective management of child vulnerability due to school-based factors

may contribute to poor teaching and learning outcomes such as poor learner retention and poor academic performance (UNESCO, 2011).

According to studies by Filmer and Pritchett (1999), dropping out signifies marginalisation from the schools' system and is related to a range of individual vulnerabilities. Poor school performance, absenteeism, bullying, school violence and anti-social behaviour may result in dropping out if persistently unaddressed. School dropout is a key indicator of vulnerability and educational failure and the rate of school drop-out remains considerable in South Africa (Gould & Huber, 2013). This is an indicator of primary schooling in crisis (Fleisch, 2008). Van Der Berg (2015) asserts that learning deficits are acquired in the early phases of education which contributes to higher level underperformance or eventual poor learner retention.

Learners may experience some form of vulnerability within or outside of the school which ultimately affects their development adversely. Focusing on the early development and education of vulnerable children may provide a foundation for their success in later education, and ultimately may be considered a determinant of their success in adulthood (Pillay, 2018). The consequence of poor-quality early development through education is that the opportunity to develop children to their full potential is diminished (Van Der Berg, 2015)

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) was designed as an independent institution appointed by the South African Ministry of Education tasked with evaluation and development of schools (Department of Basic Education 2014). The NEEDU reports analyse and represent the status of teaching and learning in South African schools following systemic evaluations. One report revealed that an overwhelming majority of educators in the cohort of schools visited had unsatisfactory methods of teaching foundation-level learners' basic literacy (NEEDU, 2014). Furthermore, if educators identified vulnerable or struggling learners, the educators did not demonstrate capacity to rectify their teaching methods or display that they are able to help these learners. It was also found that the SMT did not demonstrate implementation of systems of monitoring even where specific deficiencies exist in fundamental learning aspects in schools (NEEDU, 2014). It appears that perhaps the professionals in education may themselves be challenged by the phenomenon of child vulnerability. The recommendations from NEEDU (2014) to address the situation in schools therefore included promoting substantive instructional leadership practices, better use of human resources and educator professional development.

The need to prioritise understanding the capacities and the stance of educators and school management to manage an education system fraught with challenges is apparent. Furthermore, in order to truly make progress with South Africa's developmental agenda, complex issues around child vulnerability cannot be overlooked. I argue that there is lack of a deep understanding of child vulnerability, of the realities of the school environment and of circumstances within the school environment. It would follow that the experiences, perspectives and challenges faced by those tasked to formulate or lead the management of child vulnerability toward transformation are critical insights and ought to shape future strategies.

Transforming education through recognising and addressing the diverse range of learning needs of the vulnerable child would require that those who are mandated with educating and managing the vulnerable child execute their responsibilities in accordance with regulation, frameworks, structures and policies. The South African education system is underpinned by a strong legislative framework, policies and principles. Despite this there is an alarming prevalence and worsening of child vulnerability (Pillay, 2018). Against the backdrop of the established legislative framework, it is apparent that addressing child vulnerability in schools does not lie solely in the realm of policy provision. It becomes clear that legislation provision alone cannot be considered enough to influence educator, school management or SBST perspectives on child vulnerability, nor does the existence thereof ensure implementation by educators. For policies and teaching practices to be relevant and successful, they are to be contextually responsive (Dreyer, 2017). If this is ignored it places our education system in a precarious position.

The issue of whether policy is perceived by educators as relevant and contextually responsive and therefore implementable is debatable. To ascertain relevance and contextual responsiveness of policy would require evaluating the needs of children and capacitation of educators. It would also require evaluating the phenomenon within its context and establishment of the various challenges which undermine the quality of education at schools. The implications and consequences of allowing the dire situation facing children to progressively worsen has negative consequences for schooling particularly in areas of learner performance, learner retention and provision of quality education.

Thus, in this study I sought to uncover what the nature of child vulnerability. Furthermore, I sought to understand how educators and school managers recognised child vulnerability in the

school environment. I also sought to establish what educators and school managers believe about child vulnerability and what they are doing or not doing which is causing child vulnerability within the school. I also sought to understand the contributory factors to child vulnerability and what can be done about it.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research was guided by the following research questions.

1.4.1 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the dynamics of child vulnerability in a selected South African Primary School?

1.4.2 SUB QUESTIONS

1.4.2.1 What is the nature and extent of child vulnerability in the work experiences of Level - one educators, school management team (SMT) members and school-based support team (SMT) members?

1.4.2.2 How does the phenomenon of child vulnerability manifest in the school in the experiences of Level one educators, school-based support team members (SBST) and school management team members (SMT)?

1.4.2.3 Why do Level one educators, school- based support team members (SBST) and school management team members (SMT) understand and experience the phenomenon of child vulnerability within the school in the way that they do?

1.4.2.4 What can be learnt about the phenomenon of child vulnerability and how it can be addressed?

The purpose of these questions was to help elucidate the nature, extent, and manifestations of the phenomenon of child vulnerability as experienced by participants. They served to highlight the understanding and experiences of participants. Adopting these questions helped gain a better understanding of child vulnerability within the school and suggest possible strategies to improve the situation.

1.5 RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In my professional career in the South African Education system; as an educator, member of a school Senior Management Team, Deputy Principal, Chairperson of the SBST and Learner Welfare Team, with a career spanning thirty-eight years, I have had the opportunity to interact with vulnerable learners. I have observed issues emanating from underlying causes of child vulnerability. I have also experienced the way in which the school itself may contribute to child

vulnerability. Whilst working in each of these capacities I have sadly not experienced the transformation that we had envisioned for our democracy. We seem to rather experience ongoing challenges of an evolving phenomenon that seemingly exceeded the capacity of some educators and our school leadership to manage effectively. The challenges faced by educators were characterised by resultant frustration and disillusionment amongst some educators which I experienced in management capacity. I believe that inadequate understanding of the phenomenon has contributed to the diminished effectiveness of learning and teaching, reduced educator morale and compounding of issues facing learners. The inclination to further investigate this phenomenon is guided by personal observations of interactions between Level one educators, the School Management Team (SMT), the School-Based Support Team (SBST) and vulnerable learners in the school environment.

The complexity of the phenomenon and associated challenges compelled me to seek to elucidate the nature of child vulnerability. I sought to ascertain how the school and its educators, members of School-Based Support Teams and those who hold responsibilities as part of School Management, understand and experience this phenomenon. A deeper understanding of the dynamics of child vulnerability is necessary.

Efforts that advocate for transformation and advancement in addressing child vulnerability at school level are directed by and supported by policy. Policies exist but appear ineffectively applied, in my assessment. Understanding the specific challenges educators face and the needs of children which are not accounted for largely due to poor understanding of the nature of child vulnerability could contribute to deriving more appropriate representation of the phenomenon. These may prove beneficial by providing the basis to formulate responsive and relevant strategies. The rationale is that these may then be adopted to better provide for the vulnerable child specific to the South African primary school education context. This study may offer some explanation for the apparent disconnect between policy knowledge and implementation. This could improve educational standards, change mindsets of leaders and managers. and contribute to definitively and urgently resolving the failures of our educational and social systems to help children.

In my experience, the complex requirements of educating and supporting the child, particularly those who are vulnerable seem to challenge educators. Provision of quality education toward achieving good learner outcomes and reducing instances of child vulnerability would be an

ideal that all schools ought to be working toward. Instead, I have found that the challenges faced do not position the school favourably to achieve this ideal. Rather, it seems that schools struggle with the basic aspects of teaching and learning, governance and leadership. In addition, there exist complex and interwoven challenges which the school is faced with handling as a result of social circumstances of learners such as poverty, deprivation and the residual effects of inequality which still prevail in society. These directly influence the way children engage with the education system, yet there seems to be limited understanding of the true extent of these influences on the lives of children. Where there is no depth of understanding, intervention and management strategies are ineffective.

I believe that the dynamics of child vulnerability are often misinterpreted, not understood, or remain abstract amongst some educators. A more robust narrative on the dynamics of the phenomenon of child vulnerability is essential. I propose that the influence of educators on child vulnerability is underestimated. Since there is a strong legislative framework undergirding education provision, yet vulnerability within the schooling system remains identifiable and widespread, it is reasonable to consider that there are perhaps aspects of vulnerability that have been historically overlooked and would require further consideration. . This study is necessary since the phenomenon child vulnerability is complex, multi-faceted and highly elusive. Educators, SMT and SBST need to be capacitated to positively influence this phenomenon. This may yield improvements in learner performance, quality of life and may eventually better equip learners for the future. This study seeks to contribute to the knowledge base on the dynamics of the multi-faceted phenomenon of child vulnerability within the primary school.

Pillay (2018) asserts that if the psychological, educational and social experiences of the vulnerable child are not researched and supported this may have implications for large scale depletion of human resources, poor skills development and dire implications for economic development and communities. Although it is imperative to draw from international and national literature, perhaps there should be recognition of socio-economic, culture and, demographics that are perhaps unique to the South African context. Dlamini (2004) proposed that definitions of vulnerable children should be developed in different countries to appropriately manage these learners through effective programmes and argue that global indicators and estimates have limited value in different contexts. Educators and education managers in South African schools need to grasp the dynamics of child vulnerability to improve

the quality of schooling in South Africa. This will provide an opportunity for educators and education managers themselves to reflect on how they may be influencing the phenomenon negatively.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to provide a more robust characterisation of the nature, extent and impact of the phenomenon of child vulnerability in the school as experienced by Level one educators, members of the school management team (SMT) and members of the school-based support team (SBST). Its significance lies in representing the multifaceted nature and complexity of this phenomenon toward developing a true determination of the realities facing children through the lens of educators and school managers. There is potential in this approach to extract meaningful information from anecdotal experiences and translate findings to designing intervention strategies which promote inclusion, are truly transformative and leverage existing resources and expertise. The true significance of this study lies in its potential to impact the lives of vulnerable children by illuminating their plight and promoting understanding.

As child vulnerability plays out within the precinct of the school and within the context of teaching and learning despite comprehensive and necessary attempts to alleviate the burden of deprivation on children, it is necessary to look more closely at the reality of the systemic inequities that exist. Promoting greater understanding of the phenomenon may lead to constructive approaches and strategies to address child vulnerability. express the realities facing children and express the circumstances which impede transformation, achieving the aims of inclusive education and to develop early interventional strategies and co-ordinated approaches through collaboration.

The significance of delving deeper to characterise this phenomenon with greater accuracy and practicality is also closely linked with determining whether the transformation agenda is merely achieving its aims and if not, consider what would be necessary to indeed make this achievable. In this quagmire, this study attempts to highlight implications of a rise in child vulnerability for education in South Africa and to present strategies to deal with this highly elusive phenomenon. It highlights the role of school leaders and managers in addressing vulnerability.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following concepts will be referred to in this study.

1.7.1 Dynamics: In the context of this study 'dynamics' refers to how the phenomenon in question (child vulnerability) manifests, the understanding of it, how it is managed, the effects of it in specific contexts and strategies adopted to address it. It explores the problems, challenges and complexity of a specific phenomenon. Dynamics in the context of this study considers the capacity, structure, relationships and interplay between the school, learner and educator specifically considering the learner in and out of the school environment.

1.7.2 Vulnerability: Vulnerability is a multifaceted concept describing a potential or actual state. It is viewed as "a high probability of a negative outcome" and an expected welfare loss above a socially accepted norm which results from risky or uncertain events with a distinct lack of appropriate means and support systems to deal with circumstances (World Bank, 2005). Vulnerability may be described as potential vulnerability where individuals or groups are at risk of exposure to stressful situations and may be described as a state of being exposed to the possibility of being harmed either physically or mentally. Vulnerability may also be described as actual vulnerability where although the degree and type of vulnerability varies in context and over time, there is established limited access or no access to basic needs and actual exposure to particular environments and circumstances (Bialobrzeska, Randell, Hellmann & Winkler, 2012).

1.7.3 Vulnerable Child: includes the definition of any child who is felt to be compromised due to any threat or difficult circumstances including poverty, abuse, lack of attention, lack of access to services for health or education amongst others (Skinner et al, 2006). This definition includes an individual under the age of 18 years who fulfils the definition of potential or actual vulnerability. It refers to children who are at high risk of their basic needs being unmet and or lacking adequate access to education, protection, support and a multitude of other needs (Bright, 2017). Vulnerable children commonly have no reliable social safety networks to adequately manage their experiences and exposure. There is absence of household assets and financial resources needed for survival, limited access to education, shelter, health facilities or other basic services presents a challenge. The stigma due to HIV/AIDS and political and socio-economic crisis also influence child vulnerability. Smart (2003), asserts that children who are neglected or destitute have been subjected to human rights abuse.

1.7.4 Diversity: The term diversity refers to a multitude of differences in characteristics that exist between individuals and environments (Wellner, 2000). Gardenswartz and Rowe's (1994)

conceptualisation describes four layers of diversity namely organisational, external and internal dimensions as well as personality.

1.7.5 Inclusivity in education: Inclusivity as it suggests refers to ensuring inclusion of relevant learners in the education system whereby there is an intensive effort to ensure equal, fair, non-discriminatory access to education and good quality of education for all regardless of learner differences (Dreyer, 2017).

1.8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

A three-pronged theoretical framework guided this interpretive, qualitative study. This included the theoretical underpinnings of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological System's Theory (1979) and the associated Bio-ecological model of Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT), The Theory of Transformational Leadership (Burns, 1978) and Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation which presents the Hierarchy of Human Needs (Maslow, 1943). Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological System's Theory (1979) considers child development at the centre of the broader societal landscape. The complexity of reciprocal interactions between children and their multilevel socioecological milieus is best illustrated through the lens of this theory (Mulisa, 2019). This enables exploring aspects of educator experience, perceptions, beliefs as it pertains to child vulnerability (see section 3.2.). The Person-Process-Context-Time model places the child as the central figure in developmental studies and clarifies how various influences then permeate the child's life at various stages of development and within each system of influence.

The theory of Transformational Leadership (Burns, 1978) describes transformational leadership as complex and distinctly more potent than transactional leadership. Burns (1978) further described this type of leadership as recognising and seeking to satisfy higher needs of potential followers. Transformational leaders inspire various stakeholders to engage with them to achieve educational objectives through mutual stimulation and elevation which also converts followers to leaders. The significance of transformational leadership is that the vision, conviction, goals and motives of educators and managers exert direct influence on teaching and learning in the school environment. Recognising the importance of transformational leadership across each system and within each system of influence is necessary to appreciate how to meaningfully shift approaches to child vulnerability.

A theory of motivation was put forward by Abraham Maslow from which the Hierarchy of Human Needs was established (Maslow, 1943). This theory describes how needs underlie human motivation and that needs exist with a specific hierarchical order (Maslow, 1943). Considering the needs of both children and educators within this research was necessary to understand the dynamics of child vulnerability. Studies of vulnerability commonly articulate unmet needs of children, whilst aspects of the needs of educators derived from exploring their experiences of child vulnerability tend to be under investigated. According to this needs hierarchy (Maslow, 1943), the needs of educators ultimately influence their motivation which consequentially affects professional performance. Connecting the key aspects of these three theories allows robust evaluation of the phenomenon; aspects of the systems in which vulnerable children interact in, influences of the environmental contexts and systems of home and school are explored in accordance with aspects of leadership and needs.

1.9 METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This section is a presentation of the research design, selection of the site and participants, data-generation methods and data- analysis procedures adopted in this study. Congruent with the interpretive qualitative approach a case-study design was adopted. This study was a case of one school. The 'case' investigated is the dynamics of child vulnerability in a primary school with a focus on leadership and management. The school was purposively selected as a suitable research site for such an inquiry. Level-One educators, the School Management Team (SMT) and those who held portfolios in the School-Based Support Team (SBST) participated in this study. Data was generated through individual face-to-face interviews and focus-group discussions. Data-analysis was conducted by means of thematic analysis.

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The following overview of this study provides a brief idea to the reader of what the study entails. The study comprises of six chapters.

CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1 aims to pique the interest of the reader. Information related to the background of the study is provided. This enables readers to understand the context in which the study was undertaken. The statement of the problem, rationale and significance of the study, which are outlined, justify the need for such a study. Research questions which guide the study are articulated. These questions elucidate the objectives of the study. An explanation is provided

of concepts referred to in the study. A brief overview is presented on the methodology and theoretical framework adopted.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature relevant to the topic being explored. This Chapter ascertains what literature already exists on this topic and where the gaps are. The title is elaborated on. Forms of child vulnerability and factors affecting child vulnerability are extrapolated. Salient points of some relevant theories are discussed. Finally, I aim to locate this study within the context of current literature on leadership and management.

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter the theoretical framework is outlined. The theoretical framework provides a lens through which the study is informed. Systems theory is explained. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory and the Bio-ecological model of Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) are outlined. The Transformational leadership theory and the relevance thereof in leadership and management, in the context of this study is discussed. The supporting theory presented is Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation and Hierarchy of Needs. The relevance of the selected theoretical framework in relation to the Dynamics of child vulnerability, focussing on leadership and management, is highlighted.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4 is an exposition of the research design and methodology adopted in this study. I define and explain what a qualitative study is. I commented on the use of the interpretive paradigm. Philosophical assumptions which guide the research process are described. The choice of case- study is justified and characteristics of case- study outlined. Purposive sampling is explained as the sampling strategy adopted. The selection of the research site and participants in their individual, collective and dual roles are described. Methods chosen for data presentation and data-analysis are explained. A description of data-generation and data-analysis procedures follow. Issues of trustworthiness are highlighted. Ethical issues adopted in the study are outlined.

CHAPTER 5

Chapter 5 is a presentation and discussion of data generated and a discussion of findings emanating from analysis of the data. Themes and sub-themes are presented. Information obtained from interviews, based on research questions from specifically- designed question schedules, are presented in the form of verbatim quotes. Analysis of data generated follows. This includes reference to literature and aspects of the theoretical framework to endorse or refute explanations arising from analysis of findings.

CHAPTER 6

Chapter 6 provides a reflection of what the findings suggest regarding how to address the dynamics of child vulnerability within the primary school, focussing on leadership and management. A conclusion rounded up the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 presented the phenomenon of child vulnerability. This chapter examines perspectives on child vulnerability. Literature review in research refers to the critique of knowledge on a clearly defined topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) further assert that a literature review is useful in stating the significance of the study, promoting discussion and relating results to previous knowledge. A literature review enables contextualising the topic through placing it in an historical and associational perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Reviewing literature in this study enabled illuminating gaps in research about the dynamics of child vulnerability. It also enabled discovering what is known in research about the problem described in Chapter 1 (Cresswell, 2009). Reviewing literature allowed me to define the contextual determinants of vulnerability with greater acuity. Exploring the literature in this field revealed breadth and depth of the dynamics of this complex phenomenon. This chapter is divided into five sections to follow which include a description of forms of vulnerability, factors contributing to vulnerability, roles of educators, management and leadership theories and concludes with some relevant studies.

2.2. SOME FORMS OF VULNERABILITY

According to Brown (2013), the study of vulnerability reveals opposing views reflecting divergences of opinion and of the usage of the terminology. Grobbelaar and Jones (2020) suggest that the impreciseness of the definition of child vulnerability as it includes such a vast array of contributors, forms and factors, allows for a broader appreciation and reflection of the phenomenon. In order to appropriately explore the dynamics of child vulnerability, which is a complex concept, identifying some forms of vulnerability provides insight about the challenges confronting children and the conditions which render them vulnerable. Forms of vulnerability include those related to physical, mental and interpersonal characteristics and health related conditions. According to Arora et. al (2015), forms of vulnerability may be centred around three fundamental aspects namely material aspects, emotional aspects and social aspects. Forms of vulnerability vary in degree and levels of influence, depending on factors associated with their existence. Forms of vulnerability may be categorised in three broad areas namely the child who is deprived, the child who is neglected and the child who is exploited.

2.2.1. Deprivation

Forms of vulnerability which result from multiple deprivation are due to a confluence of factors which depress learning and where there is failure to meet basic needs (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015). Deprivation is conceptualised as the combination of individual domains of deprivation and is closely associated with poverty (Barnes, et.al., 2007). Townsend (1979) describes deprivation as the lack of fulfilment of needs and poverty, the lack of resources to meet these needs. According to Statistics South Africa (2020), 62.1% of South African children are multidimensionally poor. Studies by Chikoko and Makhasane (2016) reveal that poverty is one of the most significant challenges facing South Africans. A child subjected to poverty may be considered disadvantaged. Being placed at a disadvantage due to lack of provision of basic needs due to poverty results in a deprived child having to navigate social systems that have inadequately catered for their needs. Deprivation due to poverty impacts child development and educational outcomes (Lister, 2004). Mncube and Harber (2013) described South African society as amongst the most unequal in the world, with a large percentage of the population living in poverty. The multiple challenges facing schools and learners such as limited resources and poverty has left many of its children deprived and therefore vulnerable which unfortunately has overshadowed great strides in the provision of access to schooling in South Africa (Dreyer, 2017).

2.2.2. Neglect and child maltreatment

Omissions or negligence in meeting the needs of a child are termed neglect (Avdibegovic & Brkic, 2020). Child neglect as a form of vulnerability can be recognised as it manifests in many ways including physical, emotional, educational and environmental neglect (Avdibegovic & Brkic, 2020). Blumenthal (2015) describes three causal neglect models namely a model of parental deficit, an environmental deficit model and an ecological transactional model. The model of parental deficit considers inadequate parenting as a primary cause of neglect and attributes parental characteristics as causal factors for neglect (Blumenthal, 2015). Rather than attributing neglect, as a form of vulnerability, to individual factors, Blumenthal (2015) describes the environmental deficit model of neglect as one which is due to material deprivation such as intergenerational poverty. The ecological transactional model attributes neglect to the interaction between environmental and family characteristics (Blumenthal, 2015).

2.2.3. Exploitation

Forms of vulnerability resulting from poverty also include those where children are at risk for exploitation. Children encounter multiple forms of abuse including sexual abuse, involvement in child labour and child trafficking and child sexual exploitation (Dreyer, 2017). Children who live in conflict areas, experience violence or live in inaccessible remote areas are vulnerable and are at risk of exploitation (Pillay, 2018). According to ECPAT International (2019), whilst South Africa has ratified major international frameworks and has comprehensive national laws and plans in place to implement policy for the protection of children from abuse and exploitation, lack of practical implementation limits the effectiveness of the laws and policies in South Africa. Furthermore, funding gaps, weak audit and monitoring systems and poor coordination of intervention strategies compound an already dire situation (ECPAT International, 2019).

Identifying forms of vulnerability particularly deprivation, neglect, child maltreatment and exploitation is significant in educational research because where these forms of vulnerability exist, there is correlation with poor educational outcomes and ultimately poor quality of life into adulthood. Moreover, the South African schooling system continues to be marred by historical inequality with a direct association between poverty and subsequent deprivation and an increased likelihood of experiencing poor quality education by virtue of poor socioeconomic status. The cyclical nature of poverty causing poor educational outcomes and poor-quality education causing intergenerational poverty is detrimental and inhibits true transformation in education.

2.3. SOME FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILD VULNERABILITY

A vulnerable child is one whose survival, care, protection and development may be compromised due to a particular condition, situation or circumstance which prevents the fulfilment of his or her rights as defined in the Policy Framework for Orphans and Other Children Made Vulnerable by HIV/AIDS in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2005). A multitude of circumstances place children in a vulnerable position including children living in poverty, children exposed to neglect and exploitation. Children are rendered vulnerable by orphanhood, neglect, reduced access to schooling, illness, disability, socio-cultural factors, socio-economic factors and vulnerability that emanates from the school itself such as needs of learners remaining unmet in mainstream classrooms (Dreyer, 2017). Vulnerability may arise from home environments where there is a breakdown in family structures, violence and

instability. It may subsequently manifest in a child's behaviour and result in poor interpersonal relationships and ultimately poor development which impacts their education unfavourably.

Factors contributing to child vulnerability may be classified as intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Understanding the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on the development of vulnerability enables recognising and responding to the phenomenon appropriately at school level.

2.3.1. Intrinsic factors contributing to childhood vulnerability

Intrinsic factors include individual or personal factors which may influence vulnerability. These factors include physical illness, mental illness and disabilities, including physical disabilities and learning disabilities which may cause or worsen vulnerability. Children faced with illness and disability cannot be expected to be managed in the same way as other children in any environment or system and particularly not at an educational institution ill-equipped to do so. Whilst illness and disability are to be considered intrinsic factors, they are closely associated with extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors, therefore, cannot be dissociated from their extrinsic correlates in causing and perpetuating child vulnerability.

The financial and economic costs of illness were described as significant and is a stressor for families (Casale et. al., 2010). Due to financial constraints, children are often sent to school even whilst ill unless their symptoms are acutely severe or persistent. This often exacerbates poor health status (Casale et. al., 2010). Frequent illness amongst children is an indicator of vulnerability and a function of both the effects of HIV/AIDS and poor access to comprehensive healthcare (Casale et. al., 2010). Children with medical illnesses often have poor school attendance with resultant affectation of learning and diminished opportunity for good performance (Gil et al., 2000).

Ill-health and disability arising from difficulties in accessing adequate health care was identified as a component of vulnerability (Casale et. al., 2010). The failure of the public health system, societal systems and the educational system to identify and support at risk learners result in worsening the plight of the child as they fail to access healthcare which is holistic, quality education and social support which is responsive. Asymmetrical access to quality health care along racial lines continues in South Africa with nearly 86.5% of Black South Africans accessing care via the public health system further highlighting systemic inequities in

healthcare, social services and welfare for vulnerable populations (Statistics South Africa, 2019).

Childhood mental illness is a contributor to child vulnerability. Scientific research on childhood mental illness, including behavioural disorders and pervasive developmental disorders, has yielded improvements in diagnostics and treatment strategies (Hinshaw, 2005). Although diagnosis and intervention strategies have improved, instances of stigmatisation, prejudice and perpetuation of vulnerability due to childhood mental illness remain prevalent in the school environment and in some communities (Corrigan & Kleinhein, 2005).

Children with disabilities are a most vulnerable group. These children with disabilities are prone to abuse, violence, maltreatment, neglect, marginalisation and stigmatisation by those within and outside the schooling system (Children with Disabilities in South Africa: A Situational Analysis 2000-2011, 2012). Disability increases vulnerability and potential for violence and abuse due to impaired capacity to respond and defend the self (Sobsey, 2006). Children with developmental delays have displayed higher instances of behavioural problems and are more likely to experience the effects of this vulnerability in the school environment.

Children with intrinsic dysfunction may have their inherent difficulties due to illness or disability worsened by the environments or systems within which they exist. Non-recognition of vulnerability may have resultant perpetually negative education experiences for vulnerable learners who are not identified for appropriate intervention (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). The inability of teachers and school managers to identify learners within the school who require intervention worsens child vulnerability. Parental inability to identify and manage intrinsic factors are also major contributors to ongoing childhood vulnerability. Cohesive efforts by senior management teams, school-based support teams, educators and remedial educators may play a crucial role in recognition of intrinsic vulnerabilities in the early-foundation phase. Early recognition may assist in diminishing instances of discrimination within the school environment (Jamieson, Lake & Bell, 2017). A coordinated approach to an undivided education system for all learners, including those with disabilities is necessary (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

2.3.2. Extrinsic factors as contributors to child vulnerability

Extrinsic contributors to the dynamics of child vulnerability include social, economic and cultural factors namely fragmented family structures, poor home circumstances, unsafe

communities, poor school systems, low socio-economic status, basic service provision challenges and some other pervasive socio-cultural issues (Fleming, 2015). Extrinsic factors refer to those factors rendering children vulnerable that are not individually based or inherent in the individuals' health.

2.3.2.1. Social factors

Social factors which influence child vulnerability include fragmented family structures, orphanhood, household composition, reduced access to basic amenities and basic needs. The deterioration of South African family structures due to poverty, migration for employment and familial instability due has led to 66% of children not growing up with both their biological parents (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Children growing up amidst parental absence is seemingly a well-established feature of South African household composition (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Changing family dynamics may affect dimensions of children's psychosocial development including cognitive development, psychological adjustment, socialisation and behaviour (Engle et al., 1996). The causes of fragmented families have been well documented and closely associated with poor socio-economic conditions (Engle et al., 1996). Studies by Brotman, Gouley, O'Neal & Klein (2004) highlight financial constraint necessitating migration of one or more parent, strained social circumstances and overcrowding as contributors to family fragmentation and instability. Household structure is influenced by socioeconomic conditions. Access to healthcare, education and basic amenities and needs (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Living arrangements which include children exposed to the burdens of poverty and lack of protection leave children exposed to abuse. Abuse and poor interpersonal relationships which result from and may also cause family fragmentation are identifiable risk factors for child vulnerability (Mohlakwana, 2013).

Orphanhood in the era of HIV/AIDS has become a reality facing the child and is a cause of vulnerability amongst children in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2019). It is estimated that approximately 2.7million children in South Africa are orphaned (Statistics South Africa, 2019) These children face challenging life circumstances as they are cared for by a surviving family member, absorbed into existing households or rendered homeless (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Oleke et.al (2006) reported that orphans have varying degrees of psychological vulnerability.

Child-headed households leave children susceptible to emotional, physical and sexual exploitation and responsibility of being a caregiver often exceeds their developmental level (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). According to Statistics South Africa (2019), there were 55000 children living in child-only households in South Africa in 2018. Children in child-headed households are vulnerable to deprivation, poor living conditions, poor access to basic amenities and compromised care (Statistics South Africa, 2019).

Instability in the home and exposure to abusive environments are factors that may subsequently manifest in children's behaviour, affect interpersonal relationships and ultimately thwart development. A study by Holt, Buckley and Whelan (2008) revealed that children are negatively affected by exposure to domestic violence. Killian (2004) suggests that children exposed to violence or forms of abuse in their communities consider violence to be the basis of conflict resolution and the psychological effects of abuse may be long lasting. These children who are abused or exposed to abuse consciously or unconsciously use violent behaviour as a means of expressing self which often manifests in the school environment (Mohlakwana, 2013). Exposure to crime and violence on a background of socio-economic decay make it difficult to manage child vulnerability as the violence they are exposed to tends to cause psychological disruption (Flisher et al., 2006). Exposure to substance abuse and misuse contributes to child vulnerability and encourages similar behaviour in young children (Flisher et al., 2006).

2.3.2.2. Economic factors

Poor socio-economic status where there is poverty, and financial constraint negatively affect child development. Children from poorer backgrounds have poorer academic outcomes and subsequently enter an intergenerational cycle of reduced employment opportunities and health inequalities (Pillay, 2018). Zubrick, Silburn, Teoh, Carlton, Shepherd and Lawrence (1997) described a close relationship between poverty and juvenile delinquency and deficits in children and adolescents. According to Makunga et.al. (2018), poor socioeconomic conditions often result in children having little support from the home for their education. Often, due to circumstances within the home, children have to drop out of school to seek employment to contribute to the survival of the family (Hirsch, 2007).

Curley (2010) asserts that although education contributes to overcoming poor socio-economic conditions, the complexity of living in poverty, lacking resources and diminished access to

opportunities may not allow for some children to overcome these circumstances through education alone.

According to Meintjies, Hall, Marera and Boulle (2009), children in child-headed households often live in informal housing with little access to basic amenities compounding an already complex situation. Children experience challenges with basic service provision including lack of access to transportation and improper household services of sanitation, refuse disposal, water, electricity which affect children's ability to perform at school negatively and puts them at a disadvantage (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

2.3.2.3. Cultural factors

Formson and Forsythe (2010) note that vulnerable children are at higher risk of dropping out of school due to stigmatisation that may emanate from numerous socio-cultural beliefs. Socio-cultural beliefs such as that highlighted by Ainsworth et.al. (2002) consider general and specific barriers to education of the vulnerable child. These barriers to education include dismissive societal and cultural beliefs held about the value of education and gender-based bias. The perspective that education is a waste of limited resources is one belief held. Resilience studies reveal that despite socio-economic and socio-cultural perspectives, children have the capacity to overcome adverse circumstances displaying astounding resilience and capacity to overcome these circumstances minimises adverse developmental effects of damaging perspectives (Engle, 1996).

2.3.2.4. School-based factors

Inherent and situational vulnerabilities are interwoven by common threads of inequality, poverty, family instability and discrimination and often cannot be separated, making manging vulnerability complex generally and more especially in the school environment which presents its own unique challenges (Johnson & Johnson, 2013).

The school itself may also be considered an extrinsic contributor to child vulnerability. There are systemic factors that exist within the schooling system, that place children in a vulnerable position. These school-based factors include the community in which the school is located, the school organisational structure, availability of affordable transportation to and from school or its accessibility on foot. The physical size of the school, learner number and structure of the school may influence learner experiences of the school either negatively or positively.

The school being located in communities that are unsafe can pose a threat to children's security and cause vulnerability. Ensuring access to school in a convenient location is necessary to improve access. Cost-effective transportation and a safe and accessible environment. The cost of transportation is often beyond the resources of poor households and where children have to travel long distances to get to school there is a higher potential for school drop-out. Issues facing the school such as poor infrastructure including poor access to clean water sources, communal toilets, poor accessibility of buildings and poorly maintained buildings impact on the child negatively.

Classroom based factors including high learner-teacher ratio, classroom-overcrowding and resource constraints affect the child's capacity to learn adversely. Large numbers in classrooms result in inadequate individual learner attention and poor support services for learners. In a study by McKown and Weinstein (2002) it was hypothesised that children from academically stigmatised groups experience negative educator expectancies. Additionally, Formson and Forsythe's (2010) study noted that orphaned and vulnerable children are at a higher risk of non-completion of school due to stigmatisation by teachers and colleagues. Despite children showing commendable resilience, continuous negative experiences and breakdown in valued interpersonal relationships within the school environment may result in academic failure and eventual dropout, demotivation and long-term psychological effects (Pillay, 2018).

Non-completion of school due to stigmatisation due to disability, learning deficits and in some cases due to illness are unfortunate outcomes and reflect a system which is not inclusive and one which does not maintain foster good relationships between child and educator (Formson & Forsythe). One of the major priorities of vulnerable children was maintaining their relationships with other learners and educators (Pillay, 2018). It is, however, challenging for learners to develop good relationships within challenged school environments.

Inferior teaching competencies prevent a child from receiving a quality education. These factors render children vulnerable within the schooling system. There is an outcry over limited training with regard to protecting learners, and thus teachers exhibit lack of confidence in managing vulnerable children in schools (Kay, 2003). In a study by Mwoma and Pillay (2015) the challenges experienced by teachers in providing psychosocial support for the child and the possible intervention strategies that could be adopted to mitigate these challenges examined and

revealed that minimal psychosocial support is offered to learners. Furthermore, there was a lack of professionals to provide guidance and counselling services, few teachers trained in life orientation, and a lack of support from parents or guardians for vulnerable children.

2.4. EXAMINING THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

According to Murati (2015), the role of an educator is to organise, train and prepare to positively influence child development by enabling the development of skill, knowledge and provision of guidance. The educator is considered the leader of the educational process (Murati, 2015). The educator is ideally placed in the school environment to protect and provide for the educational needs of the learner. The Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000) outlines seven roles of educators which is outlined below.

2.4.1. Learning mediator

According to Nieman and Monyai (2006), educators play the role of a mediator in the school environment. This involves facilitating interactions and communication between the learner, the school environment and other learners (Nieman & Monyai, 2006). Mediation in the school setting in relation to child vulnerability extends beyond facilitating knowledge transfer, skills development and promoting good values and attitudes amongst educators and learners (Nieman & Monyai, 2006). The educator as a learning mediator would be expected to be attuned to the diverse needs of learners and to the barriers to quality education that children may experience in the school environment. This is particularly relevant in the setting of child vulnerability which requires recognition of a multitude of barriers to education by educators, including those barriers from within the school and those barriers which impact the child from the home environment. Where educators are able to recognise these barriers, the value of recognition of vulnerability is amplified when educators are able to translate that to intervening effectively.

The child's exposure to challenging circumstances and environments impacts their ability to engage with the curriculum. Vulnerable children are exposed to challenging circumstances and rely in the school environment to provide some sense of safety and belonging. Educators roles include constructing a conducive school environment which inspires learning and encourages engagement with the curriculum (Department of Education, 2000). The vulnerable child has unique needs and may require special consideration in implementing the curriculum. Remediation, support, individual attention and mediation is necessary to ensure appropriate delivery of the curriculum where children have particular needs. The educator, as a mediator,

must be equipped through training, skills development and through their experience of a specific context, to demonstrate knowledge of the curriculum and competence to deliver it in a way that is responsive to the needs of children in the classroom. Nieman and Monyai (2006) suggest that the educator's responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment are critical in the role as a mediator of learning. The educator must have effective communication skills to deliver the curriculum content with relevant support, resources and adaptability to adjust teaching approaches to suit the learner. The educator must also have the capacity to assess learners in a fair and appropriate way. The effectiveness of mediation by the educator is demonstrable in the quality of education provision, recognition of learners needs and learner performance.

2.4.2. Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials
Another role educators' ought to fulfil includes that of interpreting and understanding learning systems, interpreting existing learning programmes and designing original learning programmes (Department of Education, 2000). The role of educators, therefore, is not one of merely facilitating that which exists or is prescribed but rather extends to creating and shaping the learning process. This is achieved by developing context specific versions of core curriculum which are developed in accordance with educators' experiences of the needs of learners (Department of Education, 2000).

The immense value of using the perspectives and discernment of educators in designing learning programmes is reinforced when considering the impact that non-linear approaches to designing learning will have on the vulnerable child. The ability to identify special requirements of children is a key role of the educator in management of the vulnerable child and designing programmes and materials which are relevant and speak to the needs of these children is transformative. Educators who are able to identify requirements of the child in specific learning contexts and prepare appropriate resources to facilitate learning to accommodate the needs of children facing poverty, who are deprived, neglected and face resource constraints contribute positively to the teaching and learning process. Designing learning programmes which are paced in a manner which is suitable for differing needs of learners and multiple intelligences would also positively impact children who have difficulty in mainstream school, thereby promoting inclusive education (Department of Education, 2000).

2.4.3. Leader, administrator and manager

The educator is tasked with making leadership decisions to manage learning in the classroom. It is necessary for educators to take on leadership and management roles to ensure that the level of learning is appropriate for children to progress to the next phase, but also to ensure that it is of an appropriate standard for a child to thrive through the establishment of good foundations of learning (Department of Education, 2000). Sound leadership is necessary to lead the management of the vulnerable child as leaders are tasked with decision making, thought leadership and shaping the culture of the school. The performance of administrative duties is a core function of the educator. Administrative duties in the setting of child vulnerability are critical to assisting the child. School leaders need to document child vulnerability and formulate necessary strategies to address this. In dealing with children, particularly vulnerable children, record keeping is critical to ensure integrated care for the child and to create cohesive approaches to addressing the phenomenon. Sound decision-making and record-keeping ensure the safety of the child by providing appropriate documentation.

2.4.4. Scholar, researcher and life-long learner

Educators are expected to be life-long learners (Department of Education, 2000). In this role, educators are expected to strive towards ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth. This is achieved by pursuing reflective study and research in their learning-area and examining broader professional and educational matters. In the setting of child vulnerability, it is important that educators commit to ongoing professional development to keep abreast of new developments in managing vulnerability effectively. The need to recognise that a child changes over the course of their schooling career and the changing needs which correlate with this development would require different approaches from educators. This necessitates development of educators too which can only be achieved through commitment of educators to improving themselves.

2.4.5. Community, citizenship and pastoral care role

Educators are expected to manage changing educational, social and contextual realities of the school system (Ogina, 2010). Developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others amongst children is a crucial function of the educator, the benefits of which are experienced in broader society rather than in the school environment alone. The promotion of democratic values and practices in schools and society is influential in shaping the way children interact with each other within the school and outside of the school. Fostering respect for others and a

sense of duty to others encourages a sense of interconnectedness. In the setting of child vulnerability, encouraging children to recognise their part in the greater community is critical to fostering a sense of belonging. However, this can be challenging to achieve and complex to manage as often the communities from which children come from are themselves problematic. It becomes necessary then to ensure that within the school, educators need to develop a supportive and empowering environment for learners and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and other educators. Collaboration with parents and other key role-players based on a critical understanding of community and environmental development issues is beneficial to improving the quality of education and forms part of the educators' role to promote a sense of community.

According to Ogina (2010), pastoral care is a key component of teaching practice. A child's intellectual and social development is contingent on internal factors such as personality, character, and emotions and the optimisation of external factors such as the environments to which learners are exposed (Best, 2007). The basic competencies of the pastoral role include demonstrating holistic care of the child through identification and addressing material, social and emotional needs (Ogina, 2010). In managing child vulnerability, the pastoral care role is arguably the most important role that educators fulfil. It is also perhaps the most challenging role that educators have to fulfil considering the impracticality of fulfilment of multiple roles independently and without adequate support services. Redefining the roles of educators involves not just extension of their duties but creating appropriate synergistic systems and support systems within the school and between the school and community to encourage pastoral care (Ogina, 2010). Pastoral care requires supportive leadership that take a systematic approach to recognition of learner and educator needs. Pastoral care presents a departure from traditional roles of educators which were focused solely on curriculum delivery. For transformation to occur, pastoral care is necessary.

2.4.6. Assessor

In their roles as an assessor, the educator must understand the value of assessment and demonstrate a clear understanding of the purpose, methods and effects of assessment (Department of Education, 2000). The vulnerable child is often at risk for poor school performance. The way that assessments are handled may also place learners at risk for poor performance thereby causing vulnerability. Formative and summative assessments which are not appropriate to the level and purpose of learning can marginalise children from education,

affect their confidence and prevent their development. This may also be a source of vulnerability. Children who perform poorly are often excluded from education due to inability of the current education system to provide for learner needs and due to improper or unfair assessment techniques. The educator must understand how to interpret and use assessment results to improve the learning programme (Department of Education, 2000). Providing feedback to learners ensures that there is open communication and that learners are supported to improve their performance, which in fact is also a reflection of the efficacy of educators work. A system which does not support and engage learners yet implements assessments which do not reflect the teaching and learning process is detrimental to the progress of learners.

2.4.7. Learning area, subject, discipline and phase specialist

Educators must be well grounded in skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, principles, methods and procedures relevant to the learning area and phase (Department of Education, 2000). Learners rely on educators to impart valuable knowledge in the school setting. Responding to the needs of the vulnerable child requires a shift in approaches to teaching and learning from conventional approaches to inclusive approaches. A shift in educator attitudes toward considering learners circumstances more deliberately and developing a deeper understanding of their lives and experiences is necessary. Applying principles, methods and procedures to ensure that educational practice that is appropriate for the needs of the children in the education system must be prioritised. The educator must have a well-developed understanding of the realities facing children in order to apply their expertise in a way that has utility and relevance.

Whilst these roles clearly describe the expectations of an educator in their professional role, some educators do not fulfil these roles optimally. This stems from poor understanding of forms of vulnerability and the way in which a multitude of factors contribute to its existence. Within each role of the educator lies potential to improve the plight of the vulnerable child. As a learning mediator, the educator is tasked with recognising the unique (and diverse) needs of learners even when encountering manifestations of child vulnerability which tend to be disruptive to the learning and teaching process. Whilst educators are challenged, they are still tasked with constructing conducive environments which inspire learning, the practicality of doing so is challenging. Creating learning environments which are conducive to teaching and learning requires more than educator understanding and willingness. Instances of overwhelm and challenge faced educators in managing manifestations of vulnerability and therefore the added expectations of their responsibility inherent in their multiple roles is difficult to navigate

(Pillay, 2018). Some educators unfortunately do not fully understand their roles and do not understand the ideals of inclusive education, nor do they display the capacity to implement such in the school environment (Masango, 2013). This is often due to a lack of support and understanding of learner needs and contextual realities. Studies by Pillay and Nesengani (2006) further highlight learner experiences of educators not empathising with their socio-economic conditions.

Part of creating responsive learning environments involves understanding and interpreting the needs of learners and inputting these in designing learning programmes which are suitable for the vulnerable child. Anecdotal experience is invaluable in identifying requirements for specific learning contexts and facilitating learning in a contextually responsive way. The roles of educators are not solitary but overlap. In order to execute their roles effectively, educators would need to be versatile and work across many roles in tandem namely that of an educator, a manager, and as a member of decision-making structures in the school setting and a provider of pastoral care.

Developing a supportive and empowering environment for learners and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow-educators effectively places educators in a critical pastoral care role. Whilst educators are expected to fulfil the pastoral care role, some are challenged by the vastness of their responsibilities. A study by Masango (2013) focused on the role of principals, SBST members and phase representatives in inclusive education in primary schools and focused on educator, manager and SBST capacity to fulfil their roles in the school setting. Various challenges encountered by school management, SBST members and phase educators were identified in this research including educators not being capacitated, having inadequate training and expertise as well as inadequate support provided to both educator and learner (Masango, 2013). Some schools had no systems in place for implementing policies pertaining to the education of the vulnerable child (Masango, 2013). Masango (2013) further asserts that some educators tasked with overseeing education of vulnerable populations lack the skills required to teach these learners despite their multiple role expectations.

2.5. SOME RELEVANT THEORIES

Globally, education systems have been affected by radical changes and segments of the population facing considerable inequality, necessitating adaptive management approaches to attain good educational outcomes for vulnerable populations (Mestry, 2017). According to

Chereni and Mahati (2014), managing the vulnerable child in the school setting in South Africa is modelled on international provisions and commitments, as well as governmental policy provision and implementation. The term management here refers to the way in which key personnel fulfil their roles in the school to effectively supervise, teach and develop children whilst maintaining relationships with their colleagues. The institutional capacity of the school, learner factors as well as school leader factors including educators, school managers and the SBST and other stakeholders in society and local communities influence child vulnerability (Chereni & Mahati, 2014).

2.5.1 Some Management models

Management models serve to conceptualise organisational behaviour, organisational interests, culture and factors that influence managerial decision making. Knowledge of models of educational management can provide school managers the opportunity to reflect on their own behaviour, beliefs, roles and effectiveness of their management (Sykes, 2015). By reflecting on management models, managers can reassess the suitability of their management style for the context in which they work (Sykes, 2015). This also provides an opportunity to evaluate how well managers are fulfilling their responsibilities in the organisational setting, the efficiency and effectiveness of their approach to organisational management which includes the responsibility to train, update and support educators on matters of learning and teaching, administration, policy and implementation (Sykes, 2015).

Educational management models which direct school leadership are more effective when applied and considered in respect of their contextual influence (Wolhuter, van der Walt & Steyn, 2017). Contextual influences on educational management include understanding the contours of the education system in which school leadership, organisational change and development occur (Wolhuter, van der Walt and Steyn, 2017). Child vulnerability requires coordinated management approaches and sound leadership and failure to manage these children effectively may cause vulnerability.

Historically, research on school management was concerned with matters that pertain directly to the school being researched (Wolhuter, van der Walt and Steyn, 2017). Contextual forces which influence educational management were not prioritised resulting in a narrow conceptualisation of educational management (Wolhuter, van der Walt and Steyn, 2017) Understanding societal contexts has emerged as a key aspect of understanding management

approaches and models to suit the circumstances within education particularly those which have emerged in developing countries. These circumstances which require broad, inclusive management approaches include poor socioeconomic conditions, poor access to education, healthcare and basic services. Management approaches from a linear perspective even amidst all of these challenges teaches us that phenomena such as child vulnerability do not improve if suitable models are not implemented.

Bush (2010) describes six management models namely formal, political, collegial, subjective, cultural, and ambiguous which are closely associated with nine associated leadership models. The management models most apparently applicable to understanding the dynamics of child vulnerability and the management thereof in schools are the Collegial Model and the Cultural Model. The associated leadership styles are participative, distributive and transformational which are also further described.

2.5.1.1. Collegial model

The collegial models of educational management are based on decentralising authority and achieving consensus, compromise and collaboration amongst professionals who agree on the objectives of the organisation (Bush, 2010). The core feature of the collegial model is that decision-making power is shared following a process of discussion and collaboration (Bush, 2010). Shared decision-making applied to the school in the setting of child vulnerability through the collegial model (Bush, 2003) would improve relationships between educators and school management through promoting effective communication and creating a forum for engagement on a deeper level regarding challenges and barriers to achieving quality education. Fostering good professional relationships and promoting understanding between educators and school managers is necessary to achieve any organisational vision. When educators share common values and are afforded the opportunity to contribute to decision making, policies emerge by consensus and are based on the actual experiences, needs, ideas and opinions of individuals immersed in the environment for which these policies are formulated (Sykes, 2015).

This management model has relevance in exploring the dynamics of child vulnerability as it would be appropriate to deploy a management model that would enhance collaboration between educators, school managers and SBST members who are tasked with working collectively to accommodate and provide for vulnerable children. Collaboration amongst all

stakeholders in education is imperative for achieving quality education and is arguably one of the key limiting factors to improving the state of education in South Africa. Whilst many believe that the collegial model is an appropriate model in educational management (Bush, 2003), others have argued that it is idealistic, too flexible and may actually diminish organisational effectiveness. Whilst each model of management has its unique limitations, no single model can describe the complete nature of management and researchers discourage the notion that one model can permeate all levels of an educational organisation (Sykes, 2015). It is therefore more appropriate to consider that there may be applicability of different management models at each level within the school system which may be utilised by key role players in accordance with the needs of that context from a professional and social perspective.

2.5.1.2. Cultural model

Advocates of cultural models of management emphasise the importance of informal aspects of organisations in fostering good professional relationships that translate to improved organisational effectiveness (Bush, 2003). In educational management his would include ensuring that managers align with and understand the importance of aspects of societal and organisational culture, attitudes, rituals, beliefs and norms as they lead within the school setting (Bush, 2003). To create an effective school system, school managers need to understand fully the cultural context in which they work (Bush, 2003). This extends beyond understanding the school context but the greater societal system and culture within which the school exists. In the setting of child vulnerability, by understanding and influencing values within the school so that they align with cultural beliefs and organisational objectives, managers may leverage existing school culture or collaboratively construct a new school culture with educators, other school managers and the community at large.

2.5.2. Some Leadership theories

Leadership is described as an intentional process of influence aimed at achieving particular organisational goals (Makhasane & Chikoko, 2016). Leadership may be exercised by all individuals regardless of their position within a system or organisation (Bush, 2010). This correlates with the concept of distributed leadership where leading and managing schools requires dispersion of responsibility amongst multiple individuals within schools (Spillane, 2005). The value of distributed leadership is immense in addressing child vulnerability because it recognises that educators who have direct interaction with the child would need to be

considered as leaders and should be encouraged to exert influence as leaders in this way. The field of educational leadership, however, is also described as pluralist by Bush (2007) due to competing perspectives on the nature of leadership and a lack of consensus around the nature of leadership. Despite multiple perspectives, participative leadership styles have emerged as key leadership approaches.

2.5.2.1. Participative leadership

Participative leadership has emerged as a significant concept in contemporary leadership practice. This leadership style involves decentralisation of the school setting encourages collaboration and consensus thereby increasing personal investment and commitment to educational outcomes (Bush, 2010). Participative leadership strengthens decision making capabilities amongst individuals within the organisation, improves accountability and fosters a sense of responsibility. Increasing a sense of responsibility for the outcomes children experience in the context of child vulnerability has immense value as it is an extension of the pastoral care role of educators.

In participative leadership, responsibility is transferred amongst educators, school managers and key stakeholders in the school creating a sense of ownership. Creating environments conducive to free expression of educators and managers and sharing perspectives amongst colleagues are central to the goals of participative leadership. The participation of educators in decision making which was historically reserved for school management encourages active participation, ensures representation and increases consciousness amongst educators about the realities and barriers facing the school to achieving quality of education and their roles in achieving this. Participative management is appropriate in the setting of managing the dynamic phenomenon of child vulnerability. The complexities of planning, organising, reporting, supporting, supervising and resourcing to cater for the needs of the child cannot be achieved in isolation. The same concept of ensuring participative leadership is true in recognising and responding to the needs of the vulnerable child.

2.5.2.2. Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership focuses on the individual commitments that colleagues or subordinates make to the organisation and work toward developing and supporting these commitments through encouraging personal investment and purpose in the workplace (Leithwood, 1992). According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership involves a form of

influence that encourages followers to exceed ordinary expectations of accomplishment. Similarly, Bush (2018) suggests that transformational leadership entails exerting a powerful influence, where leaders who are often charismatic can persuade followers to adopt certain behaviours to achieve beneficial change. The shared vision of what is achievable and beneficial to the organisation and its constituents is a central construct in transformational leadership and followers are motivated and collectively seek the goals arising from the vision (Bush, 2018).

The complex nature of child vulnerability necessitates taking an approach that seeks to effect lasting change in the school systems (Burns, 1978). Radical transformation may only be achieved through driving transformational approaches which seek to institute exponential change in the school environment. The current state of education signifies necessity for a shift in historical approaches from linear mindsets and siloed interventions to more transformative, elevated, integrated leadership. This necessitates surpassing what is ordinarily considered adequate leadership in the school setting to achieve lasting change (Burns, 1978).

Leithwood (1994) describes transformational leadership along eight dimensions expanding on the ideologies of shared vision namely building school vision, establishing school goals, providing intellectual stimulation and offering individualised support. Furthermore, modelling best practice, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a productive school culture and developing structures to foster increased participation in school decisions complete the categorisation (Leithwood, 1994). Whilst these dimensions adequately represent what is necessary to achieve transformational leadership, the practical aspects of achieving this form of leadership are far more nuanced and demanding. Bush (2018) also argues that even though transformational leadership is a positive form of leadership, there is also potential for misuse of influence. Narrow pursuits of individually constructed visions that do not account for the needs of all children may lead to negative consequences and marginalisation in the school setting and may cause or worsen child vulnerability (Bush, 2018).

According to Bush (2003), the focus of transformational leadership is on the commitments and capacities of organisational members. In the case of the school system, these organisational members would include educators, school managers and members of the SBST. The degree of commitment of these individuals to organisational goals and vision ultimately leads to greater capacity to achievement of organisational ideals. The implication of this perspective is that the role of educators, SMT and the SBST in driving transformation in schools and overcoming

vulnerability is of critical importance. Leadership is context-bound, therefore, by virtue of their key roles in education and in the context of the school setting particularly, educators are considered key stakeholders in both instructional and leadership practices (Foley, 2013).

2.5.2.3. Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership aims to focus on leveraging expertise regardless of the hierarchical structure or position of the individual in the organisation (Harris, 2003). Distributed leadership conceptually presents challenges to schools with more systematised hierarchical structures in transitioning to shared leadership.

According to Harris (2014), the key features of distributed leadership are:

- A sense of community prevails with good quality relationships amongst those throughout the school
- There is interdependence between learners, educators and other stakeholders as they exist in particular contexts
- Every individual is valued and supported in their professional roles.
- There is recognition that every individual contributes to the overall upliftment of the school.
- Relevant expertise is recognised and acknowledged.
- Appropriate structures are formed to provide opportunities for collaborative and participative decision making.
- A climate of trust exists among educators.
- Leadership may be exercised through formal positions, as well as informal roles and actions.
- There is cooperation and participative leadership throughout the school organisation in a manner which enables educators and school management to work together to improve teaching and learning.
- There are high levels of interdependence among those providing leadership.
- All actions are focused on enhancing learners educational experiences.
- Leadership occurs through interaction and exerting influence over teaching practice.

The concept of distributed leadership does share similarities with other leadership models namely the collaborative, democratic and participative leadership models (Shava & Tlou,

2018). Exclusively hierarchical forms of leadership centralise decision making and insists that a single leader would be solely accountable for outcomes (Shava & Tlou, 2018). The distributed leadership approach increases opportunities for the school to benefit from the capacities of more of its educators and managers (Shava & Tlou, 2018).

According to Elmore (2000), where distributed leadership is effective, individuals are accountable and responsible for their leadership actions, new leadership, roles created and collaborative teamwork which is ultimately advantageous for the school. Whilst distributed leadership is a strategy which has garnered favour in management approaches due to the benefits of decentralised educational systems namely improved work distribution, shared decision making, increased collaboration and enhanced achievement of organisational goals (Shava & Tlou, 2018), some research represents uncertainties surrounding its true beneficence in the school system.

Harris (2009) concluded empirical evidence about distributed leadership and organisational development was encouraging yet it cannot be considered conclusive. Limitations of distributed leadership need to be considered before universalising its implementation (Harris, 2009). Ultimately, the choice of leadership strategy is not one that can be inherited, but ought to be adopted and created dynamically in response to the particular needs of the environment, system, needs, learners, educators, management and organisational culture. This approach will allow better understanding of the plight of vulnerable children and their home circumstances, their unmet needs and the way that management approaches can be adapted to better understand the phenomenon.

2.5.2.4. Ubuntu leadership

Ubuntu leadership is derived from traditional African concepts of leadership and life as a collective function and refers to encouraging humanness through community, solidarity sharing and offering care (Nzimakwe, 2014). Ubuntu-inspired leadership is substantial for responding to the needs of schools in the African context (Setlhodi, 2019). Setlhodi (2019) further asserts that with little extant research on the concept of Ubuntu leadership, research revealed unequivocal evidence of the value of integrating Ubuntu influences the practices of schools seeking to improve performance and cohesion. Research by Setlhodi (2019) revealed three aspects epitomising Ubuntu leadership, namely holistic Ubuntu deportment in leadership practice, cohesive oneness embodied by Ubuntu and voluntarism is essential to achieving

interconnectedness, shared vision and working toward achievement of aims which are beneficial to the collective rather than the individual.

According to this philosophy, we are social beings who are inextricably bound and interdependent. It emphasises wholeness, compassion, hospitality, warmth, generosity, resilience, openness, being available to others, being willing to learn, offering affirmation and being non-threatening. Embodiment of these principles resonates with the requirements of educators in their pastoral care roles as they play a crucial part in the socialisation of learners and creating conducive learning environments. All educational management models and leadership styles have importance in unique ways, with their effectiveness contingent on their application.

2.6. HIGHLIGHTS OF SOME RELEVANT STUDIES

2.6.1. Poverty

Provision of education in an unequal developing world continues to be riddled by the limitations imposed by a multitude of circumstances which leave a large majority of its people living in abject poverty (Chikoko & Mthembu, 2020). Representing the full extent and effects of vulnerability due to poverty in present day South African society is a nearly impossible task considering the complexity of the phenomenon and its origins that are deeply embedded in South Africa's history of apartheid. South African Education was profoundly influenced by inequality and segregation causing vulnerability and which affected the quality of education provision to non-white race groups adversely (Pillay, 2018). The key issue is that educational inequality presents a major barrier to implementation of strategic national and international development plans (Chikoko & Mthembu, 2020). Despite multiple challenges, education is considered a tool to reduce poverty in the country, the South African government has instituted policies to direct economic development through education (Agbor, 2012).

According to Hanushek and Wößmann (2010), education is described as a key determinant of a country's economic well-being increasing productivity and growth. Education has the potential to reduce poverty and increase economic growth and quality of life thereby reducing instances of vulnerability (Nortje, 2017). Another key issue is that growing up in poverty threatens educational achievement as it negatively impacts physical, mental and emotional development (Pretorius, 2016). Pretorius (2016) further states that children living in poverty are impacted well into later life which extends vulnerability beyond childhood. Whilst education is considered a tool to improve livelihoods and reduce vulnerability, according to

42

Nortje (2017), there is a direct link between levels of poverty and the standard of education. Economic exclusion, marginalisation and the double burden of historical disadvantage and poverty are a consequence of inequality in South Africa and affect the standard of education adversely (Nortje, 2017). The consequences of poor standard of education due to poverty do not just affect the child and worsen vulnerability, but also affect the educator, school manager and entire communities negatively. Poverty creates barriers to access to schooling and learner retention (Van der Berg, 2002). According to Epstein and Yutas (2012), learner retention in both primary and secondary schooling is significantly low in developing countries where children are subjected to living in abject poverty. Where children do not have the opportunity to access education or complete their education due to poverty, vulnerability is intensified and carried forward through the rest of their lives (Brende, 2015).

According to studies by Bolger, Patterson, Thompson and Kuper-Smidt (1995), children living in low socio-economic status families have higher predisposition to developing maladaptive behaviour and have subsequent deficiencies in social and emotional functioning. Zubrick et al. (1997) described a close relationship between poverty and juvenile delinquency and attention deficits in children and adolescents with subsequent amplification of vulnerability through marginalisation in the education system and healthcare system. The implications of poverty for the child therefore may be described as promoting lack, unmet needs and poor opportunity that extend into adulthood.

2.6.2. Marginalisation

Democratisation in South Africa heralded a need for transformation of the education system to provide for all children regardless of their race. Reform of the South African education systems saw South Africa move toward formulation of more appropriate learning strategies to optimise education particularly considering previously marginalised groups (Dreyer, 2017). Strategies for transformation in education included reform of admission policies and updating laws regarding access to education, revision of policies on school admission, promoting inclusivity and non-racialism, improving school governance, modifying the curriculum, and increasing funding and resource distribution amongst vulnerable populations (Dreyer, 2017). Whilst strides toward educational reform have been made, inequality remains highly racialised and adversely affects marginalised groups (Chikoko & Mthembu, 2020). The situation of marginalised groups, their communities, amenities and schools post democracy in South Africa has worsened to deeper levels of inequality and under resourcing (Holsinger & Jacob, 2009).

South Africa's deteriorating economic growth rate has led to poor socioeconomic conditions, poorer school conditions and perpetuation of marginalisation due to socially embedded exclusion (Holsinger & Jacob, 2009; Mogues & Carter, 2005). The implication of this for this research is that recognising the persistence of marginalisation in our communities and using the school environment to identify these instances is critical to understanding and addressing the dynamics of child vulnerability. It cannot be assumed that living in a democratic country post 1994 means that marginalisation does not exist. In fact, marginalisation is one of the key dynamics of child vulnerability.

2.6.3. Low quality education

The poor quality of education received by children living in poor socioeconomic conditions in South Africa is disadvantageous to their development (Van der Berg & Burger, 2002). Poor quality education can entrench exclusion and reinforce historic marginalisation, worsening the plight of the vulnerable child in the school setting (Van der Berg & Burger, 2002). Dirks (2013) identified five aspects that reflect the poor quality of education in South Africa. These include, firstly, that many school-going children lack the ability to read, write or do basic arithmetic. Secondly, educators who do not possess the necessary skills, competencies and knowledge to teach children are tasked with managing vulnerable groups (Dirks, 2013). Thirdly, the curriculum itself and its many iterations which despite the constant changes are not necessarily suited to the needs of learners impacts negatively on the quality of education. Learner apathy and amotivation toward the teaching and learning process negatively affect the ability to connect to and reach learners within the classroom adversely affecting educational quality. Lastly, lack of appropriate infrastructure and resources impair the quality of education (Dirks, 2013).

2.6.4. School performance

The South African educational landscape is complex, with variability in learner performance of well resourced, functional schools compared to dysfunctional schools (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2015). Only a small number of South African schools are classified as functional school (Wilkinson, 2015). Furthermore, Wilkinson (2015) found that 80% of South African schools cannot provide learners with the necessary skills they require to successfully navigate higher learning due to deficiency in even the most fundamental literacy and arithmetic.

Despite suggestions that poorly resourced schools have poor learner performance, some schools have demonstrated the ability to support learners and achieve good learner outcomes despite

constraints. This study by Chikoko, Naicker and Mthiyane (2015) also revealed that there are few schools in multiple deprived areas which display high degrees of resilience and commendable learner performance. Whilst substantial evidence behind a poverty-based theory of poor learner retention, literature supporting the alternative hypothesis that poor households regard their children's education as an important asset to defend (Bialobrezska et al, 2012),

2.6.5. Policy

Dreyer (2017) proposes that policies that address access to education and the vulnerability of children exist, but the greatest challenge in realising the vision of the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2011) is the appropriate implementation of policy by necessary individuals in a resource constrained economy. The inability by South African Education structures to attain the desired outcomes in Education continues despite some improvements in access to education (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). The ideals as set out in the Millennium Development Goals agreed upon by South Africa in Dakar in 2000, have yet to be wholly realised (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The necessity became apparent for the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals which illustrate adoption of 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDG) (Jamieson, Lake & Bell, 2017). SDG 4 which is Quality Education, features prominently amongst those given significant international attention (Jamieson, Lake & Bell, 2017).

At National Level, The National Development Plan shares similar goals as it aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 (National Development Plan, 2011). The plan cites its primary vision to accelerate progress, deepen democracy and build a more inclusive society in South Africa which directly aligns with the intentions of education of the vulnerable child. The plan recognises the need to improve access to early childhood education and promote development. The plan further asserts that this may be achieved by improving the school system, improving literacy and mathematics, increasing learner retention rates and consolidating educator training all of which are critical to holistic management of child vulnerability in the school environment (National Development Plan, 2011).

Policy implementation in vulnerable child education may be dependent on school leadership, school culture, resources, policy education and enforcement (Dreyer, 2017). The Constitution of South Africa together with the Bill of Rights and Education White Paper 6 of 2001 relate directly to the provision of education for all children guiding educators and managers in

education provision at schools. Furthermore, the South African Constitution describes education as a basic human right and provides directive on the necessity for education to reflect inclusivity. The policies exist to support implementation within schools and communities for management of child vulnerability. Frameworks governing child vulnerability include the following:

i.   National policy framework for Orphaned and Vulnerable children by HIV/AIDS

ii.   National action plan for Orphans made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS

iii.   National plan of Action for Children in South Africa: 2012 to 2017- UNICEF

iv.   The Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005)

v.   The Action Plan to 2014

vi.   The National Strategy for Learner Attainment (2015)

vii.   The Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)

viii.   Home Language and Multi-grade Teacher Training

ix.   The Continual Professional Teacher Development system

x.   The Framework for the Development of a National Policy on Gender Equity in Basic Education

xi.   The DBE's Integrated Strategy on HIV, STIs and TB 2012–2016

xii.   The Child Labour Programme of Action, Phase 3 (2013–2017)

xiii.   The National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance

xiv.   Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)

xv.   The Rights and Responsibilities Programme

xvi.   The Values in Action Programme

xvii.   The Department of Basic Education's Peer Education Programme

xviii. Social Assistance Act No 13 of 2004

xix.   National Child Labour Programme of Action (CLPA) for South Africa, Phase three: 2013–2017

xx.   Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI)

xxi.   Regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (2013)

xxii.   The Guidelines for the Implementation of Peer Education Programmes for Learners in South African Schools

xxiii. The South African Council of Educators (SACE) Code of Professional Ethics

xxiv. Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) Code of Conduct for Quality Education

xxv. The Safety in Education Programme

xxvi. The Alcohol and Drug Use Prevention and Management Programme

xxvii. The Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP)

xxviii. The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP)

The vast number of policies which exist could reflect the sheer extent of the issue of child vulnerability in South African Schools. Policies highlight the rights of children, stipulating the right to basic nutrition, shelter, healthcare, and social services. Additionally, these policies accentuate the necessity for children to be protected from maltreatment, abuse and neglect. Moreover, children are to experience promotion of equal treatment, non-discrimination, education and social security which are formally governed by policy provision. Policy and legislation in isolation, however, will not bring about change in perspective and practice (Dreyer, 2017).

The South African government is a signatory on the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (2012) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990). This means that South Africans have an international treaty obligation to upholding human rights. Educational institutions are compelled to make provision for teaching vulnerable children in the South African schooling system in accordance with policy provision which directs school activities. To achieve this, there has been establishment of policies and documents as well as entire units tasked with evaluating the realities of the South African Education system as it pertains to the achievement of quality of education.

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) was established in 2012 to assist in the creation of a quality education system for South Africa. The unit aims to evaluate the state of South African schools, with a focus on the quality of school leadership, teaching and learning and in an advisory capacity serves to improve educational practice. Developing and sustaining effective monitoring and evaluation of the success or shortcomings of educating vulnerable children, with constant intent to improve and adapt is a major responsibility of schools. This serves as a tool to measure quality of education, effectiveness, standards and make recommendations.

The National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is a single, comprehensive, concise policy document. Guidelines in respect of learning programmes, number of subjects to be offered and subject assessments are articulated for Grades R to 12. It also standardises recording and reporting processes. In addition to this the policy of progression and multiple examination opportunity aim to improve education standards. Policy consideration and implementation is dependent on educator, SBST and SMT appreciation and consideration of a holistic definition of education and addressing the phenomenon of child vulnerability. This means understanding and addressing factors which influence child vulnerability, especially in the school. Effective curriculum delivery is one of the core functions of school leaders and managers.

According to Bolam (1999), educational management may be defined as an executive function for implementing policy effectively. School leadership and management teams (which include principals, senior managers, SBST and educators) play a major role in recognition of the phenomenon of child vulnerability and dynamics thereof, in their supervision of implementation of relevant policies. In their capacities, Educators, Senior managers and School-Based Support Teams are positioned as school leaders. They are tasked with ensuring compliance with all prescribed policies, ensuring staff is appropriately trained to meet their functional requirements and are also largely responsible for implementation and sustainability of support programmes for vulnerable children (Chisholm et al., 2005). Although many school leaders take the initiative to improve education provision for vulnerable groups, child vulnerability remains statistically and functionally challenging in our schools.

Frank (1999) indicates that a paradigm shift is required to implement inclusivity in education to address this complex phenomenon of vulnerability. Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) was developed to advocate for inclusive education and training. The idea was to create a more representative, cohesive education and training framework, reflecting governmental obligation to all learners. According to Sayed and Jansen (2001), change has prompted a shift toward inclusive education, however, although prescriptive, these policies are not wholly implemented in our current schooling system.

According to Donohue and Bornman (2014), inclusive education necessitated transformation of the South African educational system by building an integrated system for all learners. Inclusive education is described as an ideal model for education, both in South Africa and

internationally (Maher, 2009). Intention to implement inclusive education through policy has not yet translated to achieving its ideals in the current South African schooling system. For inclusive education to be successful, key stakeholders need to be committed to and trained in recognising vulnerability and implementing necessary policy. Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) outlines six key strategies to achieve inclusive education namely the improvement of infrastructure of special schools, secondly the inclusion of children with disabilities in school and the conversion of some mainstream primary schools into inclusive schools catering for children with disabilities. The fourth aspect which is orientation and appropriate skills training of the staff and administration in mainstream schools to the practices of inclusive education is one of the most crucial aspects of achieving inclusive education and relies heavily on capacitation of educators. The establishment of district-based support teams to support educators with implementation of inclusive education and lastly the national advocacy campaign to educate the general public about the value of inclusive education are documented (Department of Education, 2001).

Various barriers to implementation of inclusive education exist including community-based, school-based and culturally based biases and limitations to implementation. Positioning the school and educator as drivers of legislation and policy governing child vulnerability and inclusive education, formulation and implementation of strategies that are contextually appropriate may prove beneficial for upholding the ideal of quality education for South Africa's most vulnerable populations (Visser-Valfrey, 2004). Although the implementation of policies at every level within the school and community is often challenging (Dreyer, 2017), including strategies to address the vulnerable child through policy implementation form a vital component of whole school improvement programmes (Wood & Webb, 2008).

Educators and school managers have a role in recognising whether policy is applicable to school circumstances. Additionally, both educators and school managers must be educated formally on the various policies that exist that govern the management of vulnerable children in schools. SMT's are to ensure that they increase the focus on education of staff regarding policies relating to orphaned and vulnerable children. Transitioning from conventional means of management of issues of discipline in the school through a shift in mindset will form a major component of improved management of vulnerable children. In the areas of curriculum development, discipline enforcement, support systems, resource allocation and all functional management functions within a school, it is imperative that educators and school managers

apply policies and treat them as the framework that directs all decisions regarding their interactions and treatment of the vulnerable child in the school environment. Education of staff regarding policy and support of staff members to appropriately implement such policies with channels available for discussion and direction is imperative. Identification of the vulnerable child and advocating on their behalf in terms of protecting them within the schooling system is indeed an important function of educators and school managers. Advocacy by educators and school managers to strengthen and improve access to education, enforce rights and policy, reduce discrimination and inequality in schools is a major responsibility of educators and school managers.

2.7. CONCLUSION

South African Education was shaped by colonial rule under the auspices of apartheid politics. Segregation profoundly influenced the quality of education provision thereby perpetuating a system designed to encourage dissimilarity in opportunity by virtue of racial profiling and status (Asmal, 2000). South African Education revealed evidence of political restraint in education provision to a vulnerable population of people reflecting inequities imposed by the apartheid government. Since the implementation of a post-apartheid education system with new admission policies and laws regarding school admission, governance, funding and provision of curriculum and resources, schools have great diversity in terms of the population of learners and educators.

Literature revealed that there are many and varied views of the phenomenon of child vulnerability. It provided a deeper understanding of the dynamics of child vulnerability. Literature established that it is necessary for educators and school managers to recognise the forms of vulnerability. The main ideas which emerged from research included recognising that provision of education amidst poverty, inequitable social systems that still experience marginalisation along racial lines cannot be approached superficially. Literature suggest that a deep understanding of vulnerability and its dynamism would be a more appropriate approach. This involves identifying manifestations of child vulnerability including environmental, physical, psychological and health related challenges which affect the teaching and learning process.

Literature suggests that identifying forms of vulnerability in the school mostly reflect children rendered vulnerable through poverty with subsequent deprivation. Neglect and unmet needs

also characterise the phenomenon of child vulnerability and these are critical factors which influence vulnerability significantly. Factors contributing to child vulnerability were described as intrinsic and extrinsic in the literature. This distinction of intrinsic factors which include individual factors which influence a child's life and extrinsic factors which refer to those factors occurring externally which affect the child are important to recognise with equal importance. Research reveals that circumstances which exist within the school system that place children in a vulnerable position are largely overlooked and represent a gap in research. Inferior teaching competencies, poor leadership approaches and poor educator attitudes all affect the teaching and learning process negatively.

Leadership approaches are described as critical to the success of any school-based intervention to address child vulnerability in research. Leadership styles relevant to addressing child vulnerability are highlighted in research and include the participative, transformational and distributed leadership which all share similar ideation. Decentralisation of decision making and shared responsibility in the school setting through encouraging collaboration to achieve the ideals set out in the roles of educators and school managers are the most obvious highlights of leadership approaches pertaining to child vulnerability. Educator and school manager role recognition is highlighted from a leadership perspective, but also inherent in the policy which governs professional practice of educators.

Research reveals that some educators do not fulfil their roles optimally due to impracticality of the expectation to fulfil many roles amidst challenging circumstances in the school. The gap in research is that the reasons for educators and school managers not fully understanding the dynamic nature of vulnerability tends not to be clearly described. In instances where educators are able to recognise the unique and diverse needs of learners, simultaneously creating learning environments which are conducive to teaching and learning is challenging for educators and the gap in understanding perspectives of educators is apparent. Research reveals that to effectively perform their duties, educators need to be supported and capacitated whether it involves their roles as an educator, a transformational leader in the school environment, manager, an SBST member and in their roles of offering pastoral care. Literature fails to provide a clear idea of how this may be accomplished in multiple contexts.

Research identifies policy provision and implementation as a critical factor for educators and school managers to influence child vulnerability. Ensuring compliance with all prescribed

policies are highlighted yet the process of developing structures to implement policy and create programmes which are context specific and needs responsive is not well documented.

Overall, literature reveals that despite exceptionally progressive improvements in access to education, there still exist the challenges reflecting a nation that has not fully overcome the pervasively negative impact of a fragmented, strained education system that is challenged by vulnerability and seems to also be a contributor to the phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed literature pertaining to the study. This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the study which is the structure that guides research and is supported by formal theories (Eisenhart, 1991). A theory is a set of concepts, plausible principles, ideas, definitions and statements which allow for interpretation of social phenomena (Kawulich, 2009). According to Eisenhart (1991), a theoretical framework is described as an established, coherent and general representation of the relationship that exists between aspects within a given phenomenon. The theoretical framework is not arbitrary but reflects beliefs and understandings about the nature of knowledge and how that knowledge exists in relation to an observer, highlighting possible roles and tools which may be applied in research (Lysaght, 2011).

The phenomenon explored in this study is child vulnerability within the primary school context with a focus on leadership and management. Complex phenomena need to be explored within a broad context, therefore the adoption of a three-pronged theoretical framework was appropriate in this study for foundational knowledge construction and application. The three theories provide structure and the framework for discovering the complexity of the phenomenon of child vulnerability.

First is psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological system's theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) including the Bio-ecological model of process, person, context and time. Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological System's Theory reflects dynamics as a collection of both independent and inter-related aspects of a complex phenomenon (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Rosa and Tudge (2013), the evolution of Bronfenbrenner's theory may be identified in three distinct phases. Bronfenbrenner's early works between 1973 and 1979 culminated in the publication of The Ecology of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Modifications to the theory between 1980 and 1993 saw greater focus on to the individual and greater concern with developmental processes. Lastly, between 1993 and 2006 proximal processes were defined and central to the framework of the Bioecological theory. Since 1998, the Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model was described (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

In the study I apply the latest which enables placing children at the centre of multiple systems of influence whilst also considering proximal processes and the way that these influences affect

child development over time. To interpret phenomena such as child vulnerability within the school, it is necessary to consider the roles, experiences and beliefs of educators who interact with children within each system of influence. Exploring the manner in which educators exert influence within and across systems is useful in determining how management of the vulnerable child may be improved. The way in which educators and managers perceive and conceptualise children's circumstances offer key insights about the state of education. Therefore, utilising frameworks which provide a lens and structure to explore aspects of educator experience, perceptions, beliefs as it pertains to child vulnerability. These frameworks delve into systems, leadership and management as well as needs, which ultimately impact the learning and teaching process.

The second theory, the theory of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) involves a form of influence that encourages followers to accomplish more than which is usually expected (Northouse, 2016). This theory emphasises the importance of the role of educators and managers in understanding and managing the phenomenon of child vulnerability in an adaptive, responsive manner. Educators and managers have an inherent responsibility to promote transformation within the education system. Transformational leadership primarily focuses on the nature of human behaviour and beliefs as well as inherent differences (Bunaiyan & McWilliams, 2018). Schools are dynamic environments with differences in needs and beliefs. Transformational Leadership influences behaviours and is associated with leadership effectiveness, driving change and transforming organisations (Trmal, Bustamam, & Mohamed, 2015). Considering that this theory explores potential for educators and managers to transform organisations, conversely non-implementation of transformational leadership may compound child vulnerability through non-recognition of needs and key differences in the school environment.

The third theory is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (Maslow, 1943). According to Maslow (1943), motivation is contingent on satisfying needs arranged in a hierarchy. Basic needs are to be met first before attainment of self-actualisation, where higher order needs are satisfied (Maslow, 1943). The needs of children as well as the needs of educators who exert influence on the lives of children in school are considered in the context of their development. The effects of unmet needs and its impact on child vulnerability are reflected on.

When considering a theoretical framework for this study, I connected the three theories on aspects of the systems or contexts in which children live, effects of unrecognised or unmet needs and leadership imperatives for a dynamic school environment. I also use these three theories to emphasise how systems are dependent on and influenced by educators and school managers as key individuals who populate these systems. The beliefs, perceptions and behaviour of educators and school managers due to their experiences shape their understanding of phenomena such as child vulnerability. Understanding this may in fact hold the key to truly transforming the education system impactfully. The following sections describe the three theories.

3.2. BRONFENBRENNER'S BIOECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

The first of three theories on which this study is based is the theoretical underpinnings of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The Bio-Ecological Systems Theory describes how individuals develop and function within a system and complex relationships that exist across multiple associated systems and in the broader context of the world.

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), these systems exert influence over behaviour and when comparing behaviour in the presence of different people or in different contexts. Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological systems theory explains the influence of environmental systems on human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Development occurs over time as part of complex and dynamic processes. This involves interactions within the individual and between the individual and environmental contexts (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017).

Four inter-related levels are described (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) outlining systems of influence. These systems are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. These levels range from smaller, proximal systems characterised by direct interaction to larger, distal systems of significant yet indirect influence. The various levels within ecological systems theory are often presented graphically as a series of four systems concentrically arranged around a central or focal individual (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017).
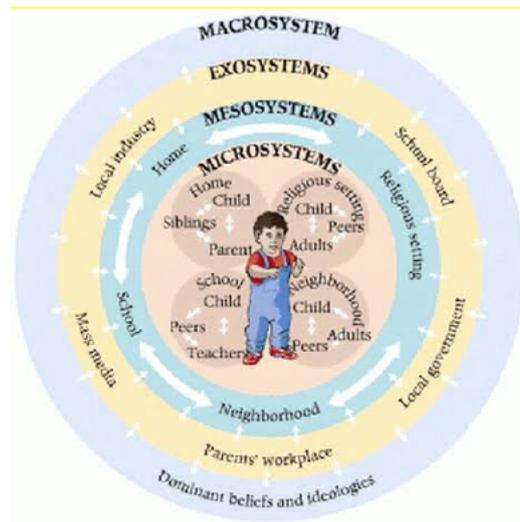
Fig. 1: Diagrammatic representation of The Bioecological systems (Mngomezulu, D.S., 2014)

3.2.1. Micro-system

A micro-system in the context of childhood development may be described as the first sphere of influence in a child's systems of relationships (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). This system is described symbolically as a sphere which encompasses and interacts with a child directly. It may itself involve layers of different environments where influential relationships contribute to shaping a child's experience of the world (Berk, 2000). Truly understanding the societal landscape of a child, particularly a micro-system, may allow quantification of the impact of factors which may contribute to or cause vulnerability. Often those individuals in the immediate system or sphere of influence tend to exert the most impact and have the greatest influence on the child and their development.

A micro-system is further described as a pattern of activities, roles and inter-personal relations experienced by the developing child in a given setting with particular physical and material features and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics and systems of belief (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). The family is the core of this system. The parents and immediate family members of a child form the first circle of influence around a child, creating the immediate environment of physical, psychological and social platforms that become a micro-system in which they tend to reference the world (Brendtro, 2006; Swick & Williams, 2006). Socialisation of the child occurs within this environment and the home environment is generally considered crucial in determining other aspects of the child's life and their propensity to go on to develop vulnerability.

Research conducted in the school environment, or educational research in general which seeks to explore how circumstances which occur in the micro-system of the child may translate both positively and negatively in the school environment. Vulnerability may emanate from circumstances, environments and relationships within this sphere. Understanding the origin of a phenomenon such as child vulnerability and recognising the manner in which connections within this sphere contribute to its existence is necessary to address the phenomenon effectively.

3.2.2 Meso-system

The meso-system is considered the second system of influence characterised by interactions or relationships between persons from the developing child's microsystem (Newman & Newman, 2020). The mesosystem involves processes occurring between multiple microsystems and is a function of the quality of relationships and degree of connectedness the child has with those individuals that exist within each sphere (Berk, 2000). The mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person, for example, the relationship between home and school. In other words, a meso-system is a system of micro-systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

The meso-system may comprise of relationships that exist between the developing child, school, parents, friends, neighbours, youth, sports groups, tuition groups and community. It widens the circle of influence making it multi-faceted and extending it beyond the environmental aspects of the micro-system, it reflects the quality and nature of relationships (Brendtro, 2006). A child within a thin meso-system comprising limited positive relationships may be expected to have aspects of their development compromised. Mesosystems with strong, nurturing relationships may enable a child to develop positively and particularly achieve well at school and beyond. Educators, managers and leaders are considered key individuals within this meso-system and therefore have the capacity to influence the development of a child.

3.3.3 Exo-system

The third level is the exosystem. This level includes the microsystems in which individuals are involved but the influence on childhood development is indirect. The exosystem encompasses the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not ordinarily contain the developing person, but in which events occur that influence processes within the immediate setting that does contain that person (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

Linkages could be two or more. Departmental support, external stakeholder involvement, community collaboration and higher management; provincial, national and executive planning and policy provision, may be considered as indirect but powerful contributors to the child's experience within the schooling system. The developing child is not necessarily in the system, however, lack or deficiency within this system if undetected may itself cause or perpetuate child vulnerability.

3.2.4 Macro-system

The fourth level is the macro-system, which is the outermost layer. It encompasses the larger societal influence on the central individual, in this case the child (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). These are broad directives, which can include race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, socio-economic status and geographic location of a developing child. It consists of the over-arching pattern of micro, meso and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, sub-culture or other broader social context with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

The macrosystem influences development among all systems. The child is affected by the triad of community, home and school. Negative factors or any form of maladaptation which occurs within this system may cause vulnerability. Bronfenbrenner recognised that the original ecological model needed revision. This became the Bioecological systems theory with the PPCT Model. This culminated due to there being insufficient emphasis on the way in which time may influence aspects of development. Bronfenbrenner finally added the chrono-system which refers to how a child and environments may change over time and ultimately affect development.

3.2.5 Chronosystem

The chronosystem refers to change that occurs in a throughout a person's life over time and which relates to each system identified by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Historic time and context influence the generation developing in that time, with issues unique to that historic time pervading aspects of development. The development of the person over the years is contextualised as movement from the micro-system outwards as it experiences influences from the changing environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This system is dynamic and in a continuous state of flux. The people and the environment continually influence change in each

other, while the individual actively contributes to his or her development (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Development and transition occur along the way for all individuals within the chronosystem.

The chronosystem enables exploring the way that children function within a system over time, which has particular significance in educational research considering the timeline of schooling that spans over a decade. A chronosystem encompasses change over a time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives. For instance, changes over the life course, in family structure, socio-economic status, employment, place of residence, and in every facet of everyday life which influence the development of a child (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

The Bioecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) as a theoretical framework in this research focuses on systems of influence where a child interacts. Bronfenbrenner's conceptualisation of systems as influencers of a child's development has applicability in assertions that these systems also then have the potential to cause or worsen vulnerability. The influence these systems exert on more distal systems is well demonstrated when considering that at each level, the organisation of the system how it interfaces with adjacent systems would determine how smoothly each is able to achieve the ultimate objective of providing a child with the best opportunity for optimal development. Applying this theoretical lens to understanding the dynamics of child vulnerability is significant because the child moves between systems during their development and considering the translational impact of systems and its constituents is a key area for educational research.

For child development to be optimal, each system ought to function to complement and support the other. In addition to recognition of influence, an obvious need for connectivity and collaboration between systems as a child participates across these levels emerges to create stable, harmonious circumstances for child development. The consequence of several different environmental systems which are inextricably linked is that environments themselves, the school in this case, may cause or perpetuate child vulnerability. The concept of proximal processes within this theoretical framework corresponds to the influence of the immediate environment on children, including educators, school-based support teams, other children at school, school management and the community at large on vulnerability (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

The individuals within these systems are those who are responsible to drive collaboration between systems. The beliefs of individuals within these systems are generally formulated by the meaning made from experiences of the system in which they function. These experiences ultimately shape their behaviour toward others within and across these systems.

The child is heavily influenced by people and environments within the proximal systems. Children are impressionable and reliant on the world around them and the people who exist within these proximal systems to learn effectively. Learning is not limited to the curricular activities of the school environment but reflects what children assimilate from their multiple exposures within systems to environments, circumstances and people. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), learner attributes, key social relationships, and primary social contexts influence the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children. School performance and learner engagement are influenced by central social constructs (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The interaction between child and educator in one of the more influential immediate environments as part of the greater societal landscape of a child is crucial in steering the development of a child (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Educators and school managers therefore have an extremely important role to play in the lives of children by virtue of their level of engagement and exposure to children. The nature of relationships and interactions between key individuals within each system such as those between the child, the parent, the educator and school manager undeniably affect child development. These relationships occur within and across the various systems where children live and interact. For this research, particular interest was given to the dominant relationships that occurred in the more proximal systems which include the home and school environments. These proximal environments often dictate the way that children develop and the way in which they experience the education system. The realities that children face consequent to the circumstances and relationships that exist within these systems reveal themselves as dynamic contributors to the phenomenon of child vulnerability. The views held of key individuals who interact with children within these systems inadvertently affect the child.

Reigeluth, Banathy and Olson (1993) describe a system's view as one that suggests there is interdependence of people and systems. This is congruent with the idea that the dynamics of the phenomenon of child vulnerability cannot be viewed in isolation, but within the context in which the child functions. Schools cannot operate in isolation and are components of the

communities in which they are located. It is worth recognising that even within a school, there are interdependent parts which need to work synergistically and effectively toward achieving quality education. Considering the state of schooling and the multitude of challenges facing the child, it doesn't seem that this has been achieved. Educators and school managers would therefore have to fully understand the reciprocal effects of each system on others, the impact of their behaviour and influences in child vulnerability and how the phenomenon could be perpetuated rather than curbed. Since Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) explicates the importance of understanding proximal processes and the interdependency of systems, relationships between families, peers, schools, or communities may prove to be resources or impediments to children's learning. Educator-learner relations are invariably influenced by how families, peers, and neighbourhoods interact and operate together.

Demonstrating how children are ultimately influenced by each system whilst also considering the contributions of individuals that exist within these systems that ultimately contribute to vulnerability in some way, is necessary to reveal key insights about dynamic phenomena. It stands to reason that the way vulnerability is interpreted, understood and managed amongst the participants within the particular system may determine the way in which it is experienced by children. Moreover, rather than just recognising multi-layered influence and affectation of the child, it follows that changes, conflict or circumstances that exist within one layer inadvertently permeate to other layers and may also be compounded through circumstances that occur across each system. Individual parts of a system cannot be isolated but must be studied in the system's wholeness. Bronfenbrenner's theory asserts that all the levels of influence are reciprocal and not unidirectional, with the different contexts influencing one another (Weiss, Kreider, Lopez & Chatman, 2005).

Singal (2004) states that an eco-systemic framework allowed for a broad view of inclusive education that looks at and defines systems. It allows for representation of a multi-layered society considering each of its levels of influence as reciprocal, complex, interdependent and wholly context dependent, with the child at the centre. According to Taylor and Gebre (2016), Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems theory provides a conceptual framework from which to organise information to structure education systems for learners. The model suggests that at the most basic level, the process of learning and development occurs through educator–learner interactions in the classroom (Taylor & Gebre, 2016). The model highlights diverse ways and

various contexts in which learners reside and how they ought to be considered in creating learning responsive to learner needs. The Bioecological Systems theory was later operationalised and refined where a model emerged termed the process-person-context-time model (PPCT).

3.2.6. Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) Model

Bronfenbrenner revised his Bioecological Systems theory subsequently creating a model that gave prominence to proximal processes and the relationship between the context and individual characteristics (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). The Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) Model has distinguishing features which consider reciprocal interaction between an individual and their environments with persons, symbols and objects all defined as proximal processes and mutually influence developmental outcomes across these contexts over time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Developmental outcomes are contingent on relationships and interaction which occurs in a specific environment or context within a particular time frame.

3.2.6.1. Person

Bronfenbrenner acknowledged that an individual's personal characteristics affect social interactions. Proximal processes are influenced by three personal characteristics namely demand, resource and force characteristics.

Demand characteristics are individual characteristics that act as a "personal stimulus" and may influence the manner in which proximal processes are established in many environments, including the school setting. Physical appearance, temperament, overt behaviour and demeanour may result in victimisation or discrimination which in turn affects the quality of the relationships formed. Gender can also be a factor which hinders optimal achievement within a context in which gender inequality exists. It is necessary in the school setting for educators, leaders and managers to be mindful of this reality as it may prove to be a source of vulnerability.

Resource characteristics include mental and physical resources which influence effective engagement with proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Resource characteristics which influence development favourably include ability, knowledge, intelligence and skills. These forms of vulnerability and associated trauma would heighten vulnerability and diminish progress.

Force characteristics are described as most likely to influence developmental outcomes. These characteristics relate to individual variations in motivation, persistence and temperament and may be generative or disruptive (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The relevance of this consideration is that children with equivalent access to resources, similar environments and systems may still have different developmental outcomes. Force characteristics consider an innate drive to succeed, persistence and resilience. It is closely associated with motivation which often requires basic needs to be met.

3.2.6.2. Process

Proximal processes are viewed as the driving forces of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), proximal processes refer to progressively complex reciprocal interactions between persons and their environments which ought to occur regularly over extended periods of time. These proximal processes are described as mechanisms for actualising potential promoting optimal psychological functioning and development (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). The properties of proximal processes are described in two propositions outlined by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, (1994);

Proposition 1 states that human development occurs through processes of progressively complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and persons, objects and symbols in the immediate external environment. Enduring interaction which is consistent and occurs regularly over an extended period of time is more effective in influencing developmental outcomes.

Proposition 2 states that whilst proximal processes contribute to development, the form, power, nature and direction of processes vary systematically. Proximal processes are therefore influenced by the characteristics of the developing person and environment, both immediate and remote environments, in which the processes occur.

The nature of developmental outcomes, social contexts and the historical period during which a child lives influence proximal processes; relations between people and the objects and symbols with which they come into contact. The individuals role in determining the direction and power of the proximal process cannot be however overlooked whilst characteristics of the setting also have relevance (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

3.2.6.3 Context

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), proximal processes, whether involving solitary interaction with objects or symbols or interaction with one or more other social partners, occur within microsystems, but consider that other systems of context are also influential. Context involves five interconnected systems; the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, macro-system and time which were described early in descriptions of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems theory.

3.2.6.4 Time

Time is prominent in the PPCT model and is a derivative of the chronosystem. The concept of time within this model evolved to include aspects of historical and ontogenetic time where development may be considered to be shaped by conditions and events occurring during the period in which a person lives. This concept of historical time affecting the individual on micro, meso and macro levels is an interesting concept as we delve deeper and consider its application in the context of educational research. Time is described by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) as having three distinct levels; micro-time, meso-time and macro-time. Micro-time refers to what is happening in proximal processes. Meso-time is the extent to which processes occur in the person's environment over days and weeks. Macro-time or the chrono-system refers to shifting expectancies in society, culture and across generations affecting proximal processes across a lifespan.

Unravelling the dynamics of childhood vulnerability using three theories provides not just a representation of the context within which educators and school managers operate, but the importance of aspects of leadership, needs identification and barriers to provision for these needs within these systems throughout the course of the child's schooling career. Understanding the developmental needs of children and functioning of school-going children in a multi-layered society provides meaningful insight and should inform intervention strategies not just at one particular point in time but over the course of a child's schooling career. This also implies that there is need for integration of leadership insights and expertise to inform best practice drawing on insights derived from longitudinal observation of the specific needs of the vulnerable child in the school system. It is particularly relevant to consider the changes in a child's development over time and how that correlates with changing needs which the education system ought to recognise and respond to through appropriate interventions.

3.3. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

A second theory which I adopted is the Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978). Leadership has been recognised as a key variable in schools to respond to adaptive challenges that exist in education (Heifetz, 1994). Transformational leadership is an approach that seeks to effect change in individuals and social systems (Burns, 1978). According to Burns (1978), the extent to which a leader is considered transformational, is measured first, in terms of ones influence on the followers. The followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader and because of the qualities of the transformational leader are willing to work harder than originally anticipated (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders motivate followers to extend beyond what they ordinarily do, in order to achieve more than they set out to (Krishnan, 2005). Leaders who promote transformation inspire others to act in pursuit of a shared mission and vision. This shared pursuit and alignment offers a sense of belonging and identity. Using their influence, intellectual stimulation and consideration they promote change and offer motivation (Burns, 1978).

Transformational leaders commit to a shared vision and goals which challenge them to be innovative problem solvers and develop followers' leadership capacity via coaching, mentoring, and provision of both challenge and support (Bass & Riggo, 2006). Bass and Bass (2008) suggest that transformational leaders tend to improve organisational efficiency and thereby improve productivity through the alignment of organisational values with the values of those whom they are tasked to lead. They possess the ability to adapt to the environment and adjust their environments to support those who depend on their leadership.

Based on elements described by Bass (1985), four characteristics of transformational leadership namely intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration, idealised influence and lastly inspirational motivation are described.

According to Bass (1985), intellectual stimulation is a key characteristic of transformational leadership. In order to be transformative, the leader would have to challenge the ideas and beliefs of followers and promote progressive, independent thought. Challenging circumstances are considered opportunities to grow exponentially. Through intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders are able to encourage critical thinking, formulation of innovative solutions and an independence and freedom of expression amongst followers.

Bass (1985) asserts that individualised consideration is the degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs. A transformational leader is able to communicate effectively whilst maintaining respect and empathy. Individual contributions from followers are encouraged and support is offered. Despite being challenged by leaders, followers remain in pursuit of self-development and display intrinsic motivation.

 Inspirational motivation occurs when a leader holds a meaningful, purposeful vision that inspires followers (Bass, 1985). Leaders with inspirational motivation encourage followers and are engaging. They inspire hope, optimism and belief in the capabilities of their followers. Lastly, the concept of idealised influence posits that transformational leaders uphold high ethical standards, exceptionally effective performance and are well respected (Bass, 1985).

The characteristics of transformational leaders described by Bass (1985) are rather significant in the current education system as this theory advocates that educators and school managers are change agents poised to transform the current education system. It follows that educators and school management are ultimately responsible for change implementation and transformation to improve the quality of education. Transformational leadership is associated with the concept of change and has been described as significant in creating successful schools (Parag, 2014). In order for this to be achieved in the school, educators and school managers would have to shift the current paradigm. Maxwell (2011) asserts that in order to impact an organisation meaningfully, a focus on Transformational Leadership is necessary.

Transformational leadership applied in the school setting expects educators and school managers to elevate beyond prescribed roles and duties, applying their expertise in novel ways and taking ownership of the circumstances within the school. Burns (1978) theorised that transformational leaders aspire to change organisational culture and enhance the motivation and morale of others through a variety of mechanisms particularly better-quality engagement and understanding stakeholder needs and experiences in the school system. Mechanisms to achieve school improvement include creating the conditions within the school system to enable innovative, progressive, stimulating learning environments. When transformational leadership is effective, it has the potential to engage all stakeholders in the achievement of educational objectives (Bush & Middlewood, 2013). Traditional leadership styles cannot stimulate educators into productivity and therefore it is suggested that transformational leadership

approaches advocated by school leadership are to be adopted in the education system (Money, 2017).

Leaders, as visionaries influence others and foster teamwork, thus creating a shared vision. This type of synergy in dealing with a highly dynamic and multi-faceted phenomenon of child vulnerability will be highly productive. Policy implementation and recognition of the vulnerable child in education is largely dependent on school leadership and school management (Dreyer, 2017). Transformational leaders who encourage teamwork will ensure consistency in policy implementation within the school. The drop-out rate in schools and the disconnect between existing policy and policy implementation may be addressed. Adoption of this theory will enhance this study, as it advocates for school managers to encourage maximum involvement of all stakeholders and offers the freedom to create the type of organisational culture which is desirable within the school so that vulnerability is addressed.

According to Leithwood (1994), transformational leadership was identified as an ideal model for school leadership and saw rapid adoption even amidst criticism (Berkovich, 2015). This theory has dominated leadership paradigms and has proved to be an influential leadership model in educational administration (Bush, 2014).

3.4. ABRAHAM MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDS

3.4.1 Definition and Description

Abraham Maslow, a psychologist who contributed significantly to the development of human psychology, inspired a new approach termed humanistic psychology (Bogenhold, 2009). Maslow identified drivers of human behaviour and human motivation (Maslow, 1943). These drivers were examined based on anecdotal experience, observational and experimental information. The Theory of Human Motivation was formulated depicting human needs according to a hierarchy organised within a pyramid (McCleod, 2018). According to Hunter and Schmidt (1996), conceptual models and empirical evidence reflect motivation as a key determinant of success (Hunter & Schmidt, 1996). Maslow (1943) asserted that basic needs are motivational drivers which are interdependent and arranged hierarchically. The principle of hierarchical organisation is that higher needs are not associated primarily with survival and recognises that people are not unidimensional (Bogenhold, 2009). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is led by a conceptualisation of human beings that is not unidimensional.

3.4.2. The Pyramid (Hierarchy) of Needs

Maslow (1943) asserts that the most prepotent goal monopolises consciousness and may tend to completely capture the attention of the self. Five basic needs were initially proposed by Maslow (1943) stating that certain basic needs must be satisfied first before others. In Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (Maslow, 1943) the first stage of needs is represented by those biological and physiological needs. The second stage represents safety needs and the third stage introduced belonging needs and emotional inclusion (Maslow, 1943). Esteem needs represent the fourth stage of Maslow's hierarchy which includes sociopsychological dimensions. The fifth stage includes self-actualisation needs at the pinnacle of the hierarchy pyramid.

3.4.2.1 Physiological needs

Physiological needs are the most basic human needs. To advance to higher order needs and toward self-actualisation, we would need to satisfy lower order basic physiological needs. Physiological needs are critical including the need for food, water, rest or sleep all which are essential for human life. These needs must be satisfied before any other needs and this applies across and within every systems where the child interacts. Unmet needs manifest in the life of a child and impact negatively on their development. A child who is hungry, thirsty and not well rested will likely lack motivation, lack concentration in school and may not be able to perform optimally. This reinforces poor attitudes toward schooling and poor learner performance.

3.4.2.2 Safety and Security needs

Safety and security needs refer to being protected from harm or disorder. These needs include a basic need for physical safety and being safeguarded in social situations. Activities which undermine peaceful co-existence in communities and circumstances which disturb harmonious living are in opposition to the fulfilment of needs for safety. A child who feels unsafe, threatened or fearful in any environment is vulnerable and may lack motivation. Bullying, anti-social behaviour, aggression and undesirable attitudes and behaviour directed at the child may also cause vulnerability, also negatively affecting motivation. These behaviours which commonly occur in the school impose on the basic rights of a child to being in a safe environment and learning in a safe environment.

3.4.2.3 Sociopsychological needs

Love and belonging or social needs encompass the need to be loved and to be accepted in a group; whether family, peer, social group, friends or community. Loving and nurturing builds confidence and positive self-esteem in children and is critical to their development.

3.4.2.4 Esteem

Esteem, prestige or ego needs motivate people to seek self- respect, recognition, reputation and self-worth. This can only happen after love, belonging and social needs are met.

3.4.2.5 Self–actualisation

Self-actualisation or self-realisation needs relate to need for development of talents and achievement of potential. Individuals become innovative, improve living conditions and excel where they are able to develop in circumstances where basic needs have been met.

```
                    5 - Self-
                    actualisati
                        on

                 4 - Esteem needs

              3 - Love and belonging

            2 - Safety and security

       1- Basic needs: Physiological needs
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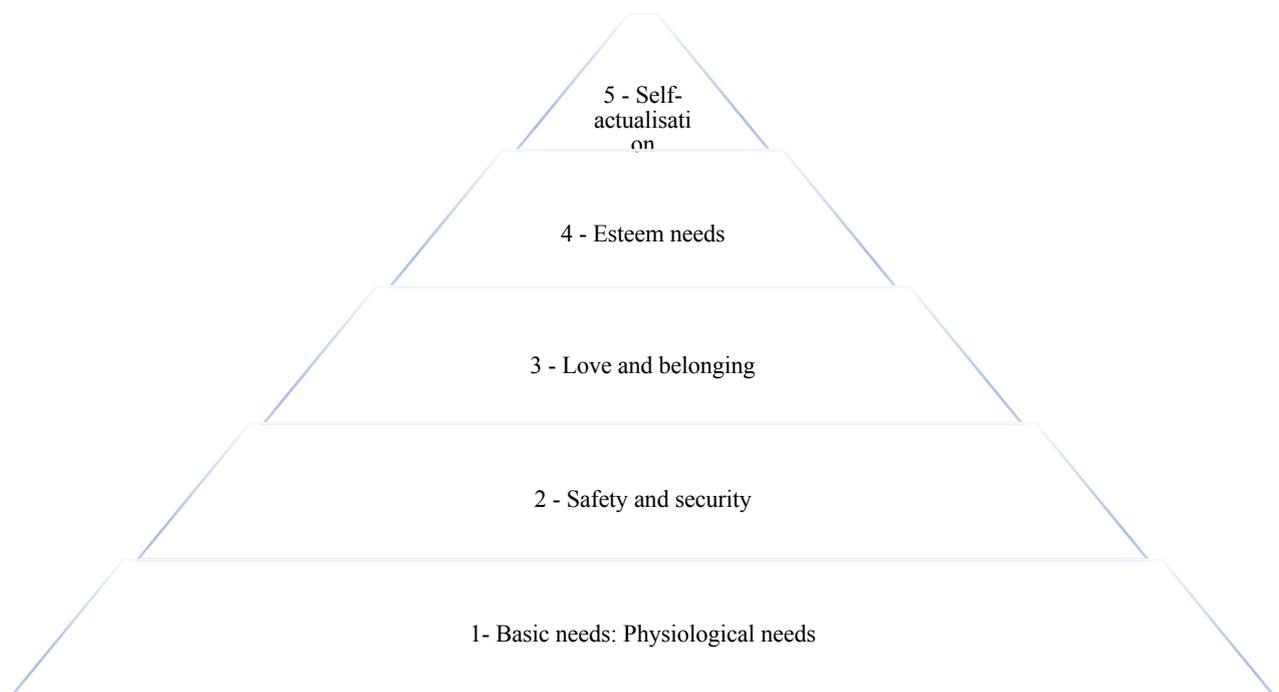
Fig. 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Deficient needs are needs which must be met before any growth needs. If needs 1 to 4 (as outlined in Figure 2) are unmet, an individual may never go on to Reach their full potential. Unmet needs within any multi-layered system can have compounding effects on growth and development. A failure to address deficiencies heightens the phenomenon of vulnerability. Higher order growth needs which contribute to self-actualisation can only be fulfilled once lower order deficiency needs are met.

3.5. CONCLUSION

The three-pronged theoretical framework was suitable for this study due to it holistic approach. Abraham Maslow's Theory outlined deficiency needs and growth needs. Higher order needs must be met before fulfilling higher order needs. Bronfenbrenner's Bio Ecological Systems theory, together with the PPCT Model outlines the multi- faceted system in which the child is central. It highlights the fact that all participants relate to each other and affect each other; roles and inter- dependency. The multi- faceted, complex nature and dynamics of child vulnerability is thus emphasised. The importance of understanding a person's development within environmental systems is elucidated. It highlights the fact that person and environment affect each other bi- directionally. It offers a platform for applications for developmental research, practice and policies. The model of transformational leadership emphasises the role of educators, leaders and school managers as change agents in addressing challenges in the transformation process. These are the most significant people in the school since the child spends most time in school.

The use of these three theories provides a context in which educators may better understand how children function within a system by highlighting possible needs and showing the relationship between various factors within a child's life. The importance of the relationship between educators, managers, leaders and school- based support team members, and how they relate to children who may display signs of vulnerability, is elucidated. These theories concur that various factors impinge on the life of a child. Some factors which negatively affect the child are detrimental to health and wellbeing and hamper progress at school causing vulnerability. An understanding and application of these theories will help unravel the dynamics of child vulnerability in schools so that educators, leaders and managers may be able to put strategies in place to address issues of child vulnerability in a more effective, holistic manner and improve the standard of education.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter I provided an exposition of the theoretical framework of this study. In this chapter the research design and methodology are described. According to studies by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007), research design refers to the procedures of collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting on research in a study. The research design therefore provides an overall framework for the study (Jilcha, 2019). Research methodology involves the analysis of the assumptions, principles and procedures in a specific approach to scientific inquiry (Schwardt, 2007). Included in this chapter is discussion on the research paradigm broadly positioned as a qualitative study, located within the interpretive paradigm. This is followed by an exposition of the research design and methodology, data-analysis procedures and data generation methods. The aspect of trustworthiness as advocated by Guba and Lincoln (1985) is described. This is followed by a description of the ethical issues observed. Limitations of the study are described.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm in research may be described as a set of beliefs or perspectives that guide action (Guba, 1990). A paradigm may be further described as a world view and is a representation of a general philosophical orientation of the world used to make meaning of reality (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2009). It is a pattern of thinking guiding research through key issues, models of quality research and methods which guide seeking of answers and is guided by philosophical assumptions (Groenewald, 2014). In earlier works by Burrell and Morgan (1979) key philosophical assumptions are epistemological, ontological, axiological, and methodological. The interpretive framework underpinned this study and is based on social constructivism.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), the interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to delve into the subjective world of participants' lived experiences. The interpretive paradigm enables the researcher to develop descriptions of participants' meaning systems relating to their understanding and experience of the phenomenon in question (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this study, as a researcher working within the interpretive paradigm, I was reliant on participants' realities to discern the dynamics around the phenomenon of child vulnerability in a primary school with a focus on leadership and management.

According to Briggs (2007), interpretivism attests that reality is made up of multiple perspectives and is influenced by context. In this study multiple realities are created by exploring the lived experiences of educators. I was able to gather information from Level-One educators, SMT and the SBST. This paradigm considers that the knowledge-base and meaning derived of lived experiences is socially constructed based on the knowledge, culture and perspectives of participants. Interpretivism posits that reality is not an isolated concept separate from our senses and perceptions. Interpretivists attest to multiple realities which are socially constructed by the researcher and the participants and is therefore subjective. Reality is created and shaped by participants who draw from their own experiences, and which are not accessed from other sources.

The epistemological area of philosophy deals with the nature of being and concerns itself with creation of new knowledge through interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It illuminates how we know what we know and deliberates on what are the most valid ways to reach truth. The epistemological assumption of the interpretive approach is that knowledge is socially constructed in people's natural contexts or settings. In this study, personal interaction with the participants took place in the selected school, which is the natural workplace of the participants. Reality is subjective and is created between the researcher and the participants.

Ontology is to do with beliefs of the nature of reality. Ontological assumptions are those characterised by the dynamic realities experienced by the researcher through the process of research. The ontological position of the interpretivist paradigm is that reality is relative and may be based on multiple truths (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is based on the premise that multiple realities exist and are constructed through the lived experiences of the researcher and participants in their interaction with each other. In this study it was the researcher, educators (Level one), SMT and SBST who engaged with each other in sharing their experiences in unravelling the dynamics of child vulnerability within the school, with a focus on the role of school leadership and management. There was no one, single truth or opinion but various ideas, beliefs, opinions, and experiences in accordance with the subjective realities of the participants.

The methodological standpoint concerns the entire research process. Methodological beliefs define the approach to the inquiry. It refers to the techniques adopted to produce data and the tools used to analyse the same. Methodological questions guide the researcher to the information which is sought from participants. It includes issues of ethics and trustworthiness.

Methods refers to a collection of techniques used to gather, refine, analyse, and report on data gathered. Interpretive methodology seeks to garner information based on the participants' views (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

This study proposed to unravel the dynamics of child vulnerability, adopting a qualitative approach using qualitative methods in natural settings, framed within an interpretive paradigm (Creswell 2007; de Vos, Delport, Strydom, & Fouche, 2011; Smith & Shepard, 1988). Child vulnerability is multi-faceted, therefore, to develop a rich understanding of the phenomenon necessitated immersion in participants natural settings to fully appreciate people's experiences and perspectives (Henning et al., 1994).

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research refers to an enquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of enquiry that explore problems. Qualitative research methods and processes have greater flexibility to suit the dynamic nature of phenomena under investigation, allowing a researcher to build a complex and holistic perspective whilst conducting the study in a naturalistic setting (Smit, 2003). Immersion in a natural setting, which in this case was the school environment, allowed me to engage with participants to understand and interpret their different experiences with child vulnerability. This type of engagement also allowed me to delve deep into participants' realities and their experiences to explore the meaning they attach to these experiences. which ultimately shape their beliefs and perceptions (Cohen et al., 2007).

In this study, I interviewed Level-one educators, the School Management Team and School-based Support Team to uncover their experiences and perspectives. According to Cresswell (2008), deriving perspectives from multiple sources may reveal data that is rich and thick. Qualitative studies systematically describe the characteristics of a given phenomenon. This type of inquiry focuses on recognising multiple realities and meaning, seeking to understand phenomena in particular contexts (Merriam, 2016). Reality is socially constructed and context dependent. Context is considered an integral part of identifying characteristic differences and similarities that may exist of a phenomenon studied in naturalistic settings. I directly interacted with educators, school management and school-based support teams in the school environment. Since the qualitative approach operates within structures that are fluid, it provided much flexibility on the research design and process. A range of modes of inquiry are consistent with qualitative studies, some of these being phenomenology, ethnography, case study, grounded

theory and critical studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Nieuwenhuis, 2011). This study used the case study design. The methods adopted within this research generate qualitative data. The approach to analysing data is inductive and begins with data gathered from participants. New ideas emerge from data gathered from participants and this informs new theory.

Qualitative analysis is meaningful since the researcher is personally on the site and thus able to see, meet and verbally engage with participants in their natural settings. Individual interview and focus-group interviews were employed as data- generation methods. I conducted interviews personally in the school setting, transcribed interview data and subsequently analysed the data independently. Emergent themes were formulated from data that was gathered from the interviews. Qualitative research here furthered an inductive approach, exploring new ideas in response to the research questions. Therefore, qualitative research also reasonably allowed for exploration of the dynamics of child vulnerability in the context of actionable insights seeking to improve or alter the current realities faced.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design refers to a plan including an overall framework and description of the study as it pertains to data collection (Leedy, 1997). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), research design includes participant selection, a plan for research site selection and data collection procedures. A research design acts as a guiding instructional tool that strategically maps out research activities, enabling the researcher to address the research problem, consider data requirements and techniques that should be utilised to obtain the necessary data whilst ensuring that the researcher gains maximum validity of the research results (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012; Crotty, 1998; Yin, 2003). A research design outlines means by which a study unfolded, to produce new knowledge and better understanding.

A research design which allowed for collection of first-hand, rich information was necessary to uncover the dynamics of the phenomenon of child vulnerability. A single case-study design was adopted as a mode of inquiry. According to Yin (1981), case studies reveal contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, especially in cases where no clear or evident boundaries between the phenomenon and the context exist. This was regarded as being appropriate since it allowed generation of information based on the first-hand, lived experiences of participants within one school context.

The case under the microscope was to study the dynamics of child vulnerability in a selected South African Primary school, with a focus on leadership and management. The choice of this design may be attributed to the work of Yin (2003) which presents guidelines which endorse relevance of choosing case- study design. The location of the study was Hope Primary School which is a pseudonym.

4.3.1. Characteristics of a Case-study

According to Creswell (2014), case studies are a mode of inquiry which involve thorough investigation; in this case exploration of real experiences of educators pertaining to child vulnerability rather than abstract theories or principles (Cohen et al, 2000). A case-study may allow the dynamics of child vulnerability to be explored from both a descriptive and explanatory perspective (Yin, 2003). Case-study design allowed me to explore and investigate current, real-life experiences of participants through detailed contextual analysis of the dynamics of child vulnerability within the primary school.

Yin (2003) suggests that selecting a case-study design considers focusing on specific questions, non-manipulation of behaviour of research participants, relevant contextual circumstances and that the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are difficult to distinguish. The nature and context of the research was suited to my area of interest. The contextual conditions were appropriate for the study.

4.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a total strategy, from the identification of the problem to the final plans for data-gathering and analysis (Burns & Grove, 2001). Methodology, therefore, included the research paradigm, research design, site selection and sampling procedures, instruments for data-generation and process of data analysis and reporting It even includes ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness. Ethical considerations and constructs to ensure trustworthiness were described.

4.4.1 Sampling

I adopted purposive sampling for the purposes of this research. Creswell (2003) states that purposive sampling refers to selection of sites or participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. Participants must be willing to reflect on and share this knowledge. Sampling criteria are the characteristics essential to the membership

of the target population and these are the characteristics that delimit the population of interest (Burns & Grove, 2001). I selected one public, co-educational, primary school in one district where participants from three identified groups were involved. The rationale for selecting one specific school was to engage in an in-depth study of context, thereby eliciting rich data and to determine, on a specific, small scale the dynamics of child vulnerability within that context.

4.4.2 Research site

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a research site may be described as a setting where the researcher conducts a study and where the researcher may identify participants. The research site selected was a public, primary school located in an urban area in the Umlazi District in KwaZulu-Natal.

Despite its location in an urban area, the research site is based in a community in which social circumstances are characterised by poverty, social deprivation, socio-economic instability due to unemployment, low-income earners and elements of crime and other conditions that are not ideal. The infrastructure is poor. A large percentage of the 784-learner school population comprised of learners who resided in nine informal settlements in the vicinity of the school. Considering the multitude of dynamic issues facing this community and the children in this community, this site was identified as having the potential to provide rich data for the study. This rationale of selecting such a research site was that it would help provide a deep understanding of the dynamics of the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, this site was easily accessible to me, having also conducted a previous study at a school in this district. In this regard, convenience sampling was adopted (Cohen et al, 2011). This school was easily accessible to me.

4.4.3 Selection of Participants

According to McLeod (2014), sampling refers to selecting a particular group. Seventeen educators participated in this study. The participants were classified into three strata:
  i.   Level one Educators
  ii. School Based Support Team (SBST)
  iii. School Management Team (SMT)

The justification of inclusion of each of these groups is that it was necessary to select these participants to achieve representation of educators in their different roles and as they interact with children in their specific professional portfolios. Level one educators are directly involved

in the teaching and learning process. Their direct influence on the child and the education system identified them as a key-participants to determine perspectives on the dynamics of child vulnerability. The entire SBST is involved in whole school development, educator and learner welfare which is a portfolio that is crucial to advancing the ideals of creating a transformed and inclusive education system. The insights in dual roles of welfare and leadership offer key insights on the dynamics of vulnerability and moreover, on the overall state of education in the school. The School Management Team are responsible for the administrative and management of the schools. School managers are responsible for the overall management of all activities of the school that would lead schools to achieve quality education.

4.5. DATA GENERATION METHODS

Data generation techniques in qualitative research include amongst others, interviews, participant observation and document analysis (Cresswell, 2012). To obtain the richest information, the data generation instruments that I utilised two methods including face-to-face, semi-structured individual interviews and focus-group discussions. According to Yin (2003), having several data sources may augment the value of data generation in a case study. According to Patton (1999), multiple data sources in qualitative research allow for the development of a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of child vulnerability.

Leadership is not solely the preserve of individuals in the school environment. It was therefore imperative to include participants from the three identified groups; educators, SMT and SBST. Level one Educators participated in individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Educators were purposively selected as participants considering that educators engage directly with learners. The nature of the research and information I sought to elicit through posing specific research questions lends itself to purposive sampling. The SMT participated in a focus-group interview to gauge leadership perspectives on the phenomenon of child vulnerability. The SBST also participated in a focus-group interview. This SBST group included school managers who also dealt with the three specific portfolios of School-Based support; whole-school development, educator support and learner welfare and therefore held key insights on the phenomenon of child vulnerability.

4.5.1 Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews

According to Sandelowski (2002), interviews are the commonest data generation tools utilised in qualitative research. The face-to-face semi-structured interview approach in this research

were selected as it was deemed congruent with the research question, aims, objectives and nature of the research.

Data was generated from face-to-face semi-structured, individual interviews of Level one educators. Each interview was of forty-five minutes duration. A schedule of questions designed for individual interviews was used and its inclusions and sequence of questions were designed to ensure maximum engagement and prevent biases. Probing questions allowed participants the opportunity to elaborate on their responses. Interviews were conducted and recorded in a private setting which also ensured that the social interaction between researcher and participant considered the need to establish rapport, to enable uncovering deeper meaning in a non-threatening manner. The goal of the interview was to deeply explore the participants' experiences through their perspectives as it yields important information (Robson, 2000). Individual interviews were appropriate as it offered me the opportunity to interpret non-verbal cues in addition to the spoken word in a naturalistic setting (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009), permitting gaining depth of meaning, insight and understanding on the phenomenon; in this case child vulnerability (Gilham, 2000).

4.5.2 Focus-group interviews

Focus-group interviews are considered to be more than a collection of individual interviews (Dilshad & Latiff, 2013) The interaction and synergy that focus group interviews offer play a pivotal role in the data generation process (Dilshad & Latiff, 2013). The SBST members were interviewed in one focus-group interview and a second focus-group interview was conducted including individuals in the capacity of their roles in the school management team. The SMT and SBST groups comprised of four participants. A schedule of questions guided the interviews with specific questions asked pertaining to their roles and experiences in portfolios held; that of school managers as well as school-based support team members. The SMT focus-group interview lasted 90 minutes and the SBST focus group interview was of 75 minutes duration. The interviews were conducted in the management office. . Focus-group interviews encourage spontaneity and in-depth discussion of participant experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009).

4.6. DATA-ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Data-analysis is the process a researcher utilises to categorise, assign meaning, organise and reduce data generated in a research study for interpretation (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In

this study I utilised the approach of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a means of recognising, isolating, examining, and reporting on themes, patterns and categories which emerge from qualitative data. This is a flexible and popular method requiring no pre-requisite skills of the researcher. The thematic analysis approach advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) and endorsed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used to identify patterns in the data and subsequently patterns to create a perspective on the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The model of thematic analysis is further described;

4.6.1. Familiarise self with data

Data generation and the simultaneous analysis of data commenced by listening intently to audio-recordings of interviews, transcription of verbatim responses generated during the individual and focus-group interviews and was followed by an interim analysis. I read and re-read data to ensure a thorough understanding. Reading and re-reading the transcribed data ensured familiarity and ensured specific perspectives and impressions are captured (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that this first step of familiarising self with data and that of data reduction ensures critical analysis of data generated.

4.6.2. Generate initial themes

For this research, data was coded as a means of organising data in a systematic way (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Data-coding is a means of reducing large volumes of data into smaller, meaningful ideas (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Data was examined and recurrent themes were highlighted and underlined. I used manual coding to find predominant codes which captured the essence of the discussion between the participants and. Patterns were drawn out through a process of open coding where interesting aspects of data were identified.

4.6.3. Search for themes

Reading and re-reading data, the process of familiarisation and the subsequent process of coding determined whether coded data remained as sub-themes or merge to become over-arching preliminary themes. All preliminary themes were recorded. Through this process data emerged. A theme captures something significant about the data in relation to the research question, representing some level of patterned response within a data set that has significance (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Codes which seemed isolated, irrelevant or did not align to any theme were recorded in a separate column.

4.6.4. Review of themes

At this stage, preliminary themes were examined to determine whether to combine, modify, to simplify or discard them. Coded data was reviewed which entailed close reading of all data so that themes were distinguishable, organised and according to a schematic plan. Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate that there is a need for re-coding as coding is an ongoing process. Re-coding was repeated until the schematic plan revealed the same themes were emerging repeatedly. This prevalence means that data is saturated (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend the review of information by an outsider. This exercise aims to enhance trustworthiness in coding of themes.

4.6.5. Define and name themes

Themes were defined and named succinctly according to what information each theme highlighted. This was the final step of refining themes and ensuring clarity. Each theme was examined to ensure it was expressed exactly as it was intended, ensuring the essence was clear and related to the over- arching theme. This helped to illuminate the relevance and meaning of each theme.

4.6.6. Producing the report

This stage entailed a final analysis of themes and the presentation of a written report. Conclusions were drawn by aligning the analysis of the data with the research questions, literature analysis and the theoretical framework of the study. Professional and procedural ethical issues such as honesty, integrity, objectivity, respect and responsible publication were adhered to. The report must interest the reader and provide concise answers to the research questions.

The next section is a presentation on the aspect of trustworthiness as applied in this study. According to Niewenhuis (2010), trustworthiness is a key aspect of qualitative research.

4.7. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is regarded as one of the most widely utilised criteria for qualitative content analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Frameworks for ensuring rigour and quality in qualitative research have considerable favour (Shenton, 2004). The ability of qualitative researchers to adhere to these frameworks and constructs determine the extent to which the data and data-analysis are believable and therefore deemed trustworthy (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). To ensure

trustworthiness I will address four aspects that I applied in this research namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, Krefting 1991; Creswell 1998).

4.7.1. Credibility

According to Merriam (1998), credibility may be described as the degree to which findings of research are congruent with reality. It is one of the key criteria demonstrating internal validity and the extent to which the results of a research may be considered trustworthy and reasonable (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Credibility strategies such as namely triangulation and member-checking were implemented to ensure credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Member checking involves continuous testing of data and interpretations, as well as ensuring that the voice of the respondent is not subject to researcher bias during data analysis (Guba, 1981). Guba and Lincoln (1985) view this as the most crucial technique to establish credibility by affording participants the opportunity to correct errors and volunteer additional information to ensure adequacy of data. I personally transcribed data immediately after interviews, ensuring it was an exact representation of the spoken words. Transcripts were verified with verbatim responses of participants, ensuring that exact responses were used, thus avoiding misrepresentation.

Triangulation of sources and methods was employed. Triangulation is to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility (Bowen, 2009). Triangulation of sources involved obtaining information from multiple sources (Level one educators, SMT and SBST members), cross-checking and comparing different perspectives within the focus-group study as well as verifying the gathered data (Hallinger & Heck, 2011).

4.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of research may be transferred to other contexts or generalised with other respondents in specific contexts (Bitsch, 2005). To ensure transferability the research provides a detailed and clearly outlined description of the participants and the research process. I endeavoured to undertake an in-depth study of a specific phenomenon and as such applicability or transferability may only be achieved through provision of a rich, thick account of the research processes and descriptive data (Li, 2004). This investigation did not intend to generalise but to explore the uniqueness of the phenomenon and systemic problems or challenges that may exist and contribute to child vulnerability. Ensuring

a rich account of descriptive data using the case study method may allow for deeper understanding and applicability (Rule & John, 2011). Merriam (1998) similarly describes transferability as the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations or populations. Considering that it is impossible to demonstrate with absolute certainty that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations, efforts were made to describe the research methods, contexts, analysis and the participant population which included educators and school leaders often appointed in dual-roles in the school.

4.7.3 Dependability

According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), dependability refers to the consistency or stability of findings over time. This concurs with Merriam (1998) who refers to dependability as the consistency of observing the same findings under similar circumstances. From the outset all aspects of this study design and its implementation were outlined describing the manner in which process and methods were executed with particular care taken to ensure that the data received from the participants formed the basis upon which interpretation of findings and recommendations are made (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

4.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which findings can be confirmed by others (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Confirmability is established by ensuring that interpretation of findings is clearly derived from the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). I sought to ensure that there is a correlation between the data collected, analysis and the findings of the inquiry which reflect unbiased conclusions, minimised researcher bias and avoided generalization (Bowen, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2010).

4.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Upholding ethically sound scientific principles throughout all spheres of scientific research is imperative. Ethics are involved with morals and involve embracing moral issues in the context of working with people (Gregory, 2003). Ethics are beliefs of what is wrong or right from a moral perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state that before data-generation, there are applicable protocols to follow and ethical procedures to comply with, to gain permission and access to the targeted population.

At the outset Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Board of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Written permission to conduct research at the selected site (primary school) was obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (Refer to Appendices A and C) Permission for access to the research site and participants was obtained from the school principal, as the gatekeeper. I called at the school in advance and presented a letter to the school principal seeking permission to engage with participants. The school principal addressed the staff on the details of the study. I thereafter held two meetings with participants where I explained the purpose of the study, context, and methodological orientation of the study. Acknowledgement of the rights of participants to privacy and anonymity is imperative. Confidentiality was assured. The school was assigned a pseudonym. No names of participants were divulged. Pseudonyms were used with verbatim quotes. All relevant information was provided to ensure informed consent.

4.8.1 Entry to the site

Permission was granted by the Department of Education KwaZulu-Natal to conduct research at the chosen site. Permission was granted by the school principal to conduct research at the site and to access the school premises.

4.8.2. Informed consent and voluntary inclusion

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), informed consent is described as a process of furnishing all relevant information to an individual with the mental capacity to understand all aspects of the potential research that may influence the individual's decision prior to inclusion. Participants were invited to participate in the study voluntarily. Participants were informed that they may withdraw at any time with no obligation and that there was no monetary gain or loss. Written, informed consent was obtained from all participants. They also signed a declaration of confidentiality. Participants gave permission for publishing of findings.

4.8.3. Confidentiality

Confidentiality was observed throughout. Interviews were conducted in a private setting; in this case it was the school library and the school office. The times allocated were adhered to. There was no disruption to the school programme. As the researcher I observed ethical behaviour throughout interviews and observed all guidelines for ethical interviewing. Participants' right to respect and dignity was accorded to them and they were not exposed to any harm. Rights of participants were not infringed on. Participants were informed that this

study is solely for the purpose of research. Research data will be stored for five years. Thereafter it will be incinerated. Participants will be given an electronic copy of the research report. They will be informed of any publications made.

4.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter commenced with an explanation of the research paradigm and research design. I discussed selection of the research site and the participants for the study. Thereafter I outlined data-generation methods and the process of data-analysis. Aspects of trustworthiness and ethical issues adhered to were explained. The next chapter comprises of analysis and discussion of data gathered, and presentation of findings.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings. I generated the data through two methods, namely, individual face-to-face interviews with educators and focus group interviews held with School Management and those who held portfolios in the School Based Support Team. Biographic details of participants indicate that in a group of a total of 17 participants, 2 were male and 15 females. The SMT and SBST comprised of 4 females. A striking feature was the difference in years of experience amongst participants. 5 participants had more than 30 years of service each and 12 participants had less than 10 years' experience each.

This chapter unfolds through three themes that emerged out of the research participants' responses. Data from both individual and focus group data collection sources were included in each theme. The first theme relates to understanding and identification of child vulnerability in the school. Under this theme I report and discuss the evidence to do with recognised indicators of child vulnerability. I also explore factors contributing to child vulnerability. The second theme is about manifestations of child vulnerability in school. In this theme I focus on the behavioural aspects of child vulnerability as experienced in the school. The third theme is on factors within the school which contribute to child vulnerability Therein, I focus on how the school itself contributes to causing and perpetuating child vulnerability. Finally, the chapter folds through a section on emerging issues wherein I describe and draw comparisons of participant responses in accordance with relevant literature.

Data will be presented from the individual semi-structured interviews and two focus-groups: they are indicated as "SMT FG" for the Senior Management Team Focus Group interview and "SBST FG" for the School-Based Support Team Focus Group interview. The grouping to which educators belong will be indicated as such in the text or at the end of the quotation.

Where data from an individual semi-structured individual interview is presented, it will be identified as such in the text with the relevant educator pseudonym and "L1, SBST or SMT" at the end of the quotation as a further identifier. L1 refers to responses of Level one educators. Similarly, data from focus group interviews will be specified as being from the "SMT FG" or "SBST FG" when presenting the verbatim quotes. The terms management and leadership will be used interchangeably.

5.2. THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING AND IDENTIFICATION OF CHILD VULNERABILITY IN SCHOOL

In this section the focus is on responses from all the participant groupings regarding how they would recognise the vulnerable child. I specifically explored the identifiers or characteristic features that constitute considering a child to be vulnerable. Furthermore, I endeavoured to find out participants' understanding of the phenomenon of child vulnerability

5.2.1. Defining Child Vulnerability

Research participants' understanding of the nature and meaning of child vulnerability are revealed through their definition and descriptions of the phenomenon.

Love described the risk of inadequate care as a determinant of susceptibility to vulnerability and said:

> *I will think, vulnerability describes children who are at risk of not receiving adequate care during their childhood years, making them vulnerable*. **(Love, L1)**

One view of the definition of vulnerability, was that rather than inferred risk due to predisposition or circumstance, vulnerability relates to imposed barriers to normal functioning. This is what one participant said:

> *A vulnerable child will be one that has emotional, social or cognitive barrier. It could be something that manifests from home or it could be something within the school context, so my understanding of that stems from many learners that have passed through my hands that have been vulnerable.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Another belief held was that vulnerability equates to the resultant state of challenges in the environment and upbringing. It emerged that several factors are considered in defining vulnerability. One view was:

> *Vulnerability is situations that the children have succumbed to, what affects them; environmental factors, family issues, the community that they are in. I think their whole upbringing.* **(Glad, L1)**

One definition of vulnerability was that it is a state of increased susceptibility to experiencing adversity due to lack of protection and exposure to challenging circumstances. *Misty* revealed:

> *Children are not protected either by family or guardians and are vulnerable to changes such as rape, molestation, malnutrition and neglect.* **(Misty, L1)**

86

Lilac indicated that childhood inherently placed children at risk for vulnerability. One view was:

> *I feel children are vulnerable because of age and children are vulnerable to their surroundings and family. (*Lilac L1)

Another view shared by *Light*, was that child vulnerability may be defined in terms of unmet needs. This is what was said:

> *I am assuming that they do not get their basic needs met. As humans we need our basic needs met. That need is child vulnerability; a child is vulnerable if they do not get food, home, shelter, that sort of thing.* **(Light, L1)**

In defining vulnerability, it emerged that these children lack care at the home. *Snow* revealed:

> *They are not getting proper care. They are vulnerable to losing out on proper care and support.* **(Snow, L1)**

Regarding child vulnerability, Level one educators considered the phenomenon in two ways. The first was defining vulnerability as a state of being at risk of experiencing circumstances that will compromise a child's wellbeing. The state of being at risk for inadequate care is described as definitive of vulnerability and causation is directed primarily to the home environment characterised by lack; lack of protection, and lack of provision of basic needs. This was an interesting stance in defining vulnerability, as the ability to stratify risk and vulnerability status would be contingent upon an educator's knowledge of the child's home circumstances. Secondly, some participants described vulnerability as not just the state of being at risk for, but rather, those children who have actual emotional, social or cognitive barriers resultant from the environments from which they emerge and also as they face deficiencies in having their basic needs met.

Moving on to the *SMT FG*, it emerged that inappropriate exposure to certain circumstances and four distinct defining features of vulnerability were recognised. This was their overall view;

> *The child is exposed to extreme poverty. The second is when it comes to sexual abuse, third is drug problem and fourth is the shortage of nutrition* **(SMT FG)**

The **SMT FG** held the view that:

> *Vulnerability is emotional, sexual abuse, poverty, drugs which cause a discipline challenge.* **(SMT FG)**

According to the **SMT FG**, vulnerability is defined as a phenomenon that emanates from dysfunctional home circumstances. They shared this opinion:

> *Basically, in our school, we look at children that are from dysfunctional families who have had many issues that they are dealing with; issues prior to coming to the school situation.* **(SMT FG)**

The **SMT FG** defined the phenomenon of child vulnerability as inadequate care given to children. The home environment which is characterised by lack of protection and lack of provision of basic needs was identified as a cause. The **SMT FG** in their roles as managers described vulnerability as not just the state of being at risk, but also those children who have actual emotional, social or cognitive barriers resultant from the environments from which they emerge and also as they face deficiencies in having their basic needs met.

From the **SBST FG** it emerged that child vulnerability could be defined from its multifactorial influence. This was their overall view:

> *Children influenced by social factors, who are vulnerable to so many factors expressed in behaviour which impacts in so many other ways on the child.* **(SBST FG)**

Another view from the **SBST FG** suggests that vulnerability may be defined in terms of exposure and risk:

> *If I think about child vulnerability, I visualise this child who is exposed to difficult environment at home within the community and possibly sometimes at school. It is basically their exposure and vulnerability to the world out there; be it abuse, physically, emotionally and a whole lot of factors that makes the child vulnerable.* **(SBST FG**)

The phenomenon of child vulnerability was defined by Level one participants primarily as a phenomenon associated with inadequate care and increased susceptibility to experiencing adversity. Whilst the **SMT FG** particularly considered vulnerability as the outcome of actual exposure to extreme poverty, abuse and unmet needs rather than risk, their experiences in the **SBST FG** largely would attribute vulnerability to that which emerges from the home. Some

Level one participants recognised that vulnerability is influenced by multiple environments in a dynamic process. The focus groups in their roles as both managers and the role of supporting the learner and other educators, interestingly considered the home environment of a child as the major contributor to a state of vulnerability. Unmet needs were commonly described across each participant group as causing vulnerability.

Understanding and definition of child vulnerability in comparison to literature reveals deficiencies in participant recognition of the role of the school in contributing to situational vulnerability. Schweiger (2019) defines inherent vulnerability as natural or ontological, specifically pertaining to the inherent features of children, whilst situational vulnerability is defined as those features associated with situational practices or norms. Inherent vulnerabilities are described as increasing risk predisposition to lack of protection, whilst situational vulnerabilities describe those circumstances, individuals, environments and experiences which may shape and mould the child and affect the way in which they experience the world. The phenomenon may be defined as a multi-faceted concept and inclusive of inherent and situational aspects. Individual and focus group interviews however, revealed that vulnerability emanates from the home environment, a view that is polarising and reveals deficits in understanding vulnerability even amongst educators who have a dual role in the school environment.

The concern that recognising vulnerability as emanating solely from the home environment raises is that it seemingly creates a sense amongst educators that they may not necessarily be contributors to the phenomenon. It distinguishes the school as a non-contributor, and a passive receiver of children who are subjected to circumstances that render them vulnerable. This view is limiting as it does not recognise the interrelatedness of the school and home environments, it creates a divide between educator and child, school and community. This disconnect can be a cause of vulnerability in the school.

The likelihood of educators becoming frustrated, disillusioned and blaming home circumstances for challenges experienced in the management of the vulnerable child is higher when these beliefs are dominant. This view may inadvertently cause educators to believe that they have a limited role in managing child vulnerability, whereas they are rather to be considered key role players.

5.2.2 Indicators of Child Vulnerability in School

In this section I report on responses regarding indicators of child vulnerability.

5.2.2.1 Social Withdrawal

Lily described social withdrawal and subsequent poor learner performance as an indicator of child vulnerability:

> *They mostly withdraw. They are very withdrawn. They are scared to talk. It affects their performance in class. You know the child's personality.* **(Lily, L1)**

Apathy that exists amongst vulnerable learners was further described by *Lily*:

> *They have no interest and are withdrawn; you can see there is a problem there.* **(Lily, L1)**

One view from *Fauna* was that amongst vulnerable children, social isolation and withdrawal make it exceptionally challenging to form social bonds in the school environment:

> *Some of them like isolate themselves. It is difficult for them to form social bonds; there is a loner syndrome in the ground. They are all on their own. (*Fauna, L1**)**

Tulip reinforced social withdrawal as an indicator of child vulnerability:

> *In the classroom they are constantly in their own world, basically very withdrawn. They cannot complete tasks on time, they cannot pay attention for long periods of time. They are socially awkward and tend not to communicate or play with other children. They are very aloof; you are talking to them, but their mind is elsewhere. They are probably thinking about what is happening at home.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Lilac revealed that vulnerable children may present as aloof, withdrawn and distracted:

> *Children that are vulnerable tend to be more withdrawn, aloof, concentration levels poor. They are very isolated because they tend to isolate themselves. They tend to sometimes be emotional. Their daydreaming is quite common; it is really very common. You clap them out of the world that they are in; and believe me, I do a lot of clapping.* **(Lilac, L1)**

Moving on to the *SMT FG,* who similarly describe social withdrawal as an indicator of vulnerability. They shared this opinion:

We investigate underlying problems of vulnerability yet some of the children suppress and never give vent; they will be absolutely quiet. These are the ones who never speak and are withdrawn.

In the **SBST FG** social withdrawal it was reiterated that social withdrawal may indicate underlying lack and poverty:

Most of the children come from the informal settlements where there is a cycle of poverty. Because of this lack they are withdrawn. We focus on holistic development of learners. We have to take them out of this vulnerability.

All participants agreed that where children displayed isolating behaviour, underlying vulnerability is likely. Social withdrawal affects learner performance negatively. Disinterest in the learning and teaching process is demonstrated by their apathetic disposition and the distractibility of learners. Self-isolation tends to also signify coping mechanisms of learners who suppress emotion and have difficulty forming meaningful trusting relationships with educators and peers in the school environment.

5.2.2.2. Learner performance

Lilac suggested that poor learner performance directly corresponds to a state of vulnerability:

When they come to the classroom you can see vulnerability affects their studies. They can be moulded very easily so when their situation is terrible at home, when they come to school, we see it in their work. **(Lilac, L1)**

Moon described vulnerability as having a negative impact on learner performance:

We are trying to help, but they don't pass because of this problem of vulnerability. They do not get good results. **(Moon, L1)**

Unfavourable academic outcomes including poor academic performance and school drop-out are associated with underlying child vulnerability.

Definitely by the behaviour we can sense when they are vulnerable. Academically it starts off good then plummeting starts; going down, wondering why work is incomplete. **(Tulip, L1)**

Moving on to the ***SMT FG***, the association between vulnerability and learner performance is outlined:

> *Vulnerability is a reality. There is little hope for our children. Academically they do not perform well.* **(SMT FG)**

Within the ***SBST FG*** it was more apparent how some vulnerable learners struggle in school with affection of learner performance. They shared this view:

> *Learners struggle with schoolwork. Their homework is not done. There is no parental supervision after school.* **(SBST FG)**

Vulnerability is recognised as contributing to impedance of aspects of learning and development with subsequent negative affectation of learner performance. Poor learner performance alone may also be considered an indicator of a vulnerable child.

5.2.2.3. Learner attire and appearance

Describing how one may recognise a vulnerable child, ***Light*** said the following:

> *Unfortunately, it is how they look. You can see, especially in Foundation Phase. In Senior Primary you can see children can keep themselves well. In Grade R, even Grade 1 you can see a vulnerable child. My mum told us to go and have a bath, brush your teeth. A child is told to go have a bath, brush your teeth alone. You can see they have not had a bath, and by their dressing. You cannot expect them to wash their own clothes. You can see their clothes are dirty, you can smell it. You can see it in the physical.* **(Light, L1)**

Misty suggested that a child's state of wellbeing may be indicated by the appearance and state of personal hygiene. It was revealed that a child's appearance may also uncover instances of abuse:

> *Children who are vulnerable are untidy. They do not bring lunch, their fingernails are not clean, shoes not polished. Tell-tales sign are lashes on the hands.* **(Misty, L1)**

Vulnerability due to neglect is noticeable in a child's appearance:

> *When you look at school uniforms, some are coming with torn clothes, not even the right school uniform.* **(Peace, L1)**.

92

Moving on to the **SMT FG,** who agreed that vulnerability due to living circumstances may be recognised in a child's outward appearance.:

> *The outward appearance and their uniforms. Sometimes they come to school and did not have a bath and you know that they did not get a chance to go to the shower, because it is a shared shower.* **(SMT FG)**

Referring to children who are faced with not having basic clothing and food provided, a discussion in the **SBST FG** revealed:

> *She cries because of the clothes they wear. Sometimes they have no food to eat.* **(SBST FG)**

A learner's appearance is used by educators to determine whether there may be underlying vulnerability. Participants agreed that physical appearance may be associated with vulnerability due to poor socio-economic conditions and deprivation.

5.2.2.4. Poor health status and vulnerability

A child's appearance emerged as an indicator of vulnerability, whilst it has also been identified as a potential indicator of a child's health status:

> *It is the health that can be seen from a child's appearance as a whole. The way they interact with other children; how they hardly have friends. Vulnerability is the appearance, the look.* **(Lily, L1)**

*Misty***,** described identifying ill-health through a child's physical appearance, using the term "health vulnerability":

> *It is health vulnerability. Children that are ill that come to school sick with scabies and sores. You can see no medication been put there. Also, children with sores on the scalp.* **(Misty, L1)**

Misty described poor health status due to malnutrition as an outcome of vulnerability and lack of provision of basic needs such as food:

> *Malnutrition is a result of vulnerability. The child tells you he is hungry and that there was nothing to eat.* **(Misty, L1)**

Moving on to the ***SMT FG,*** dire circumstances of hungry, neglected children were revealed:

> *They drink water to curb the hunger. They have no food. There is often no one to take care of them at home.* **(SMT FG)**

The ***SBST FG,*** went on to described instances of hunger and the effects of hunger and lack of basic needs on the teaching and learning process:

> *These children are hungry. They are restless and cannot concentrate.* **(SBST FG)**

The ***SBST FG*** further described the lack that children are subjected to. This is what was said:

> *They do not even have food. These children do not have basic things.* **(SBST FG)**

Participants described the state of hunger and malnutrition as negatively impacting health status. Poor health status may be recognised through physical appearance or presence of illness as a possible indicator of neglect, deprivation or unmet needs. These conditions render children vulnerable and impact on their schooling.

5.2.3. Emerging issues regarding indicators of child vulnerability

Key indicators of child vulnerability identified in this school included social withdrawal and self-isolation, poor academic performance, unkempt appearance and physical signs of ill-health, all of which were largely attributed to deprivation. Deprivation has significant, sometimes permanent implications for learners, such as affectation of health status, often with ensuing cognitive fallout secondary to malnutrition which impacts on learner performance. Participants highlight the interrelatedness of deprivation and unmet needs with recognisable behavioural indicators such as social withdrawal. Exposure to childhood deprivation at any developmental stage has been associated with long lasting negative consequences, vulnerability to ill-health and increased risk for medical and psychiatric disorders (Lippard & Nemeroff, 2020).

Indicators of vulnerability are crucial to recognise as they inform resourcing areas of need, direct policy and measure progress in reaching goals of reducing child vulnerability in specific contexts (Akwara et al, 2010). Developing standardised universally relevant indicators of childhood vulnerability have been met with inconsistencies in globally acceptable definitions (Akwara et al, 2010). Participants in this study agreed that vulnerability is mostly caused by

deprivation, and a child's behaviour, demeanour and physical appearance may be used as indicators of vulnerable states.

Social withdrawal, distractedness, poor communication and limited interpersonal relationships were identified as indicators of child vulnerability within this study. Studies by Rubin (2009) suggest that socially withdrawn children are "concurrently and predictively" at risk for a multitude of adjustment outcomes. Social withdrawal may reflect underlying challenges faced by children rather than solely an affinity for solitude (Rubin, 2009).

Although not exclusively associated with child vulnerability, Level one educators said that they tend to use academic performance as an indicator of existing or evolving vulnerability in the context of this school, particularly considering the effects of systematic disadvantaged circumstances. Where learner performance deteriorates, one may be inclined to investigate the deterioration there of as associated with vulnerability. Inequitable "militating against the vulnerable child" coupled with only fleeting instances of concern, support and care were identified as contributors to perpetuating and aggravating the plight of the vulnerable child (Motsa & Morojele, 2016). An unjustifiable disregard or incapacity to fulfil the inherent responsibility of adults to protect vulnerable children has a deleterious effect on children. It contributes to poor learner performance, poor attitudes toward school due to their experiences and leads to almost inevitable school drop-out or failure. This challenges school leadership. It emphasises the disconnect between policy and practice.

According to research by Motsa and Morojele (2016), the vulnerable child is considered a product of "thwarted socially constituted historical relationships". The incidents that have constituted subjection to a vulnerable state are submersed in complex relationships learners share with those who form part of the multiple systems of influence in their lives.
Studies by Van der Berg (2008) highlight the vast differentials in educational achievement and learner outcomes in South Africa. Furthermore, factors which were considered to inhibit learner performance included school effectiveness, socio-economic status, and school resources (Van der Berg, 2008).

5.2.4. Factors contributing to child vulnerability

I asked the participants what they saw as the major factors which contribute to child vulnerability. Here there are aspects of child vulnerability which do in fact overlap with findings in the preceding section describing indicators of child vulnerability. The overlap is due to the fact that very often, poverty and deprivation were identified as factors which underlie observable indicators of child vulnerability. Neglect, unmet needs, challenging environments and social circumstances were revealed as contributing factors to child vulnerability.

5.2.4.1. Poverty and Deprivation as contributors to child vulnerability

Fauna revealed poverty as a contributor to child vulnerability. This is what was said:

> *In this environment specifically there is poverty, high level of politicisation, entitlement mentality, there is HIV/AIDS. Some of it all overlaps.* **(Fauna, L1)**

Fauna indicated that multiple factors contributing to vulnerability should be considered collectively. This is what was said:

> *Vulnerability is a large problem. It is not just a single problem. It is a larger societal problem. We just cannot just pinpoint it at parental apathy or poverty or HIV/AIDS. It is a bigger, more comprehensive problem. You cannot look at anything in isolation.* **(Fauna, L1)**

Another view from *Lily* was that deprivation is a contributor to child vulnerability:

> *You see a lot of deprivation. A lot. You see how they take other children's belongings. They do not have.* **(Lily, L1)**

Level one participants shared similar sentiments on poverty and deprivation contributing to child vulnerability. The overall view was to maintain the importance of recognising how complex vulnerability in fact is.

Moving on to the **SMT FG,** it emerged that vulnerable children are subjected to poverty:

> *Vulnerable children are products of a cycle of poverty and violence.*

The **SMT FG** reiterated that vulnerability has its origins in a society that is plagued by poverty, lack and social evils:

> *Vulnerability starts from a society, home, family, city, province, country, and in all of our communities, with all the same social evils.* **(SMT FG)**

The **SMT FG**, further described poverty as a contributor to perpetuating child vulnerability in the school environment:

> *It is poverty that creates this cycle, and it is sad because 99% of children are from the informal settlement, therefore my problem will be different from other areas and this is why we have to see them in a different light and care for them differently if we want to instil in them the values that will make them better citizens.* **(SMT FG)**

It further emerged from the **SMT FG** that the vulnerable child faced alarming realities in the setting of poverty and deprivation:

> *Many children struggle with poverty. Many families receive social grants but in many cases the caregiver or parent uses the social grant. For example, in one case the father works, the mother is at home under the influence of alcohol. They receive a social grant for four children. Beautiful, lovely children. You find one child in the park sniffing glue with other boys. The mother's concern is just that if we report her, her children will be taken away from her and her grant will be taken away. She used the social grant to buy alcohol.* **(SMT FG)**

From the **SMT FG** emerged the perspective that deprivation and poverty ultimately result in discipline issues in school:

> *Vulnerability is emotional abuse, sexual abuse, poverty, drugs which all cause a discipline challenge. We identify vulnerable children as a result of children's disruptiveness. When you do an investigation, you see that the behaviour is related to poverty.* **(SMT FG)**

The **SMT FG** reiterated this stance linking poverty and deprivation as factors contributing to ill-discipline saying:

> *Vulnerability is not a problem of discipline, but because they are not well cared for, it becomes a discipline problem.* **(SMT FG)**

Moving on to the **SBST FG,** their overall view reiterated the stance during **SMT FG** interviews where poverty is considered a significant contributor to child vulnerability:

You can see extreme poverty, sexual abuse and shortage of food amongst the vulnerable children. There are orphans. Many children live with their grannies. Poverty creates a vicious cycle. You can see the deprivation. **(SBST FG)**

The overall view was that poverty is described as a contributory factor to child vulnerability. Deprivation due to poor socioeconomic circumstances emerged as causative of child vulnerability and participants from all groups shared this opinion. The perspective from the focus groups was that deprivation is described as having impacted learner behaviour and equating in some instances to ill-discipline.

The use of the social grant by family members for reasons other than for the child may serve as an indication of the despair and extreme poverty some families and children are subjected to. Parental employment instability, economic, residential and family instability is related to creating intergenerational poverty, negative academic outcomes and behavioural instability (Huerta, 2013). This idea of intergenerational poverty and deprivation is crucial in determining why poverty and deprivation continue to pervade our current schooling system perpetuating vulnerability. The overall view was that unmet needs consequent to deprivation and poverty are described as having negative effects on children's lives and their progress in schooling. This was agreed across participant groups.

According to Schweiger (2019), four distinct points are necessary to characterise the depth of the relationship between child vulnerability, poverty and subsequent lack with resultant unmet needs. Firstly, lack of protection is identified as a key feature of situational vulnerability. Children living in poverty are at greater risk of lack of protection and more susceptible to forms of abuse, neglect and deprivation. Participants in this study described how socioeconomic circumstances are similarly at risk of abuse and neglect.

Secondly, poverty as a social phenomenon influences child vulnerability due to the inherent and situational dependence children have on other individuals and institutions for care, protection and to meet basic needs. Participants shared the opinion that an important factor which children within this school experienced were the due to the consequences of unmet basic needs.

Thirdly, poverty is described as a situational vulnerability that influences other situational vulnerabilities. Schweiger (2019) describes this as "corrosive vulnerability" referring to the way in which poverty affects the environment of a child and also determines how the child may be susceptible to further risk during development. Lastly considering the temporal dimension of poverty would necessitate a deeper understanding amongst educators about the depth and severity of poverty and how it causes and encourages ongoing vulnerability.

According to research by Naidoo (2007), the recognition and measurement of poverty in a society is critical. Additionally, it is suggested that societies commit to identifying deprivation, inequality and vulnerability for cognitive purposes, analytical purposes, policy-making purposes and for measurement and evaluation. What emerged across all participant groups was that educators believed that factors contributing to child vulnerability were largely home-based. Their understanding of the phenomenon was ultimately predicated upon such beliefs. Perhaps then, the beliefs of educators recognising vulnerability and its relationship with underlying poverty, deprivation and unmet needs in the school environment is crucial for similar cognitive, analytical, policymaking and evaluation purposes.

5.2.4.2. Neglect

Neglect was recognised as a factor contributing to child vulnerability by participants. The effects of neglect were described as noticeable from a child's behaviour and physical appearance:

> *Vulnerability shows as behavioural problems. Indigence. Some of them they are clearly neglected. Look at their uniforms. Some of them are emaciated, they are painfully thin.*
> **(Fauna, L1)**

Another view described neglect as emanating from family fragmentation and is observable by behavioural changes:

> *Most are neglected, so badly neglected. They are living with their grannies or mothers and dad is not in the picture. Most are living with old grannies who have no control.*
> **(Sun, L1)**

Sun further revealed how some of these neglected children display aberrant behaviour;

> *They are so unruly. They do this everyday. They do things to aggravate the teacher; to make you lose control and shout. They provoke you.* **(Sun, L1)**

Against a background of neglect, many children were reported to be performing the duties of adults in the home. Child-headed households emerged as causative of child vulnerability which became recognisable in children's inability to complete tasks such as their homework:

> *Children are neglected. Their clothes are not ironed. After school, they go to crèche to pick up younger children. They cook, boil the rice, do a lot of chores. Also, they have no time for homework.* **(Misty, L1)**

Another view shared by *Lily* described the recognisable emotional effects of neglect and family fragmentation on a child and how it presented in this school:

> *Some are neglected. Some parents party a lot. They go drinking. In some cases, the mother does not care; just drinks a lot. In some cases, the mother is not here at all. The child lives with a granny and the mother is on the farm. You can see that this makes the child miserable. I think it is a big problem. If it were not a big problem we would not have the same problem in each and every class. It is not just 1 or 2 cases, it is 10 or 13 in each class; it is the same problem in each class.*

Moving on to the *SMT FG* who revealed their experiences of vulnerability. This was their overall view:

> *In a case of neglect, if you suspect the child is neglected, then you do an investigation of neglected children. You ask; Why are they so dirty? Why is there no care? When children do not do well academically, what do we do is we call them and interview them then ask why their homework is not done and schoolwork not done. Some children play truant and do not come to school. Then we investigate and realise there is a problem. They are neglected and doing other things.* **(SMT FG)**

The dire situation facing children with lack of protection and obvious neglect is further described in the *SBST FG*. Participants revealed instances of neglect and sexual abuse. They had this to say:

> *We filled in Form 22 in the case of sexual abuse and the case of neglect. The parents are alcoholics; both parents. They're lovely children but you can see the neglect. Both*

are alcoholics and they use the grant money for that; whilst the children go begging.
(SBST FG)

The findings reveal that neglect was described as a contributing factor to child vulnerability across all participant groups. Neglect is directly in contravention of the South African Constitution. The Bill of Rights states unequivocally that children have a right to protection. A lack of safety and protection can be harmful and life-threatening. Neglect, whether intentional or unintentional, similarly constitutes impingement of a child' s right to being protected, nurtured, supported and cared for. Extreme poverty, chronic illness, lack of social support and education have been identified as factors that make children more susceptible to abuse, neglect and deprivation (Arora et al, 2018). Group participants agreed that neglect predisposed children to abuse and reported an overall negative perception of parental involvement in the life of children made vulnerable by neglect.

Level one participants considered the negative effects of neglect on emotional wellbeing, behaviour and school performance. This is in accordance with literature which suggest that neglect, childhood abuse and psychological distress predispose children to heightened emotional and cognitive vulnerability, rigid and dysfunctional negative self-schemas, poor adaptation and poor resilience (Soffer et al., 2008). Study participants considered the home and family dynamics as a primary source of neglect.

5.2.4.3. Unmet Needs
Light describes child vulnerability as resulting from a series of unmet basic needs. This is what was said:

> *I am assuming that they do not get their basic needs met. As humans we need our basic needs met. A child is vulnerable if they do not get food, home, shelter, that sort of thing.*
> **(Light, L1)**

Another view indicated that those children who are not protected are considered vulnerable. *Misty* shared this view:

> *I know a lot of children without protection. Children are either not protected by family or guardians. They are vulnerable to rape, molestation, malnutrition and neglect. Certain children have no love at home.* **(Misty L1)**

Misty revealed that education is of secondary importance to children who face having their most basic needs unmet. This has implications for the way in which children interface with the school environment, their attitude and value systems*:*

> *The main need is the need to survive, not education.* **(Misty, Ll)**

What emerged was that the basic need of food provision is not met. The behavioural effects of lack are described by *Lily*:

> *They do not bring lunch. One child does not bring lunch at all. If you give or ask people to give them lunch, they snatch it. They snatch even if you have enough.* **(Lily, L1)**

It emerged that children attending this school face living in deplorable conditions and experience extreme adversity. They are subjected to enduring hunger with resultant malnutrition. The state of hunger, deprivation and lack affects the way in which they are able to engage in learning is described by *Misty:*

> *The child tells you I was hungry there was nothing to eat. In our class we have a policy that some children will share lunch, or I will give R5 or R2 to a child to buy something from the tuckshop.* **(Misty, L1)**

Moving on to the **SMT FG**, the magnitude of the problem of unmet basic needs is revealed:

> *There are at least 100 learners in dire need. Last week we managed to get blankets and we gave them out to those who need it, we gave them school shoes too. Then there were fires and floods. We gave out socks and jerseys to these children. Where the homes have been destroyed by fires and floods, we get sponsors. We cannot collect within the school…We cannot raise money from the children; cannot collect cans to give the others because they do not have sufficient food for themselves. It is a very sad situation.* **(SMT FG)**

The stance of the **SMT FG** was that needs identification is crucial in identifying the vulnerable child. Their stance acknowledged deficits that exist in identifying child vulnerability:

> *In every situation there are vulnerable children. It is up to people that are leaders, like teachers and SMT to make sure we identify them in the right time, assist them and get them out of the vulnerable situation. They become problems because we adults have not identified their needs* **(SMT FG)**

Moving on to the **SBST FG**, their responses seem to reveal that unmet basic needs not only render a child vulnerable but put them at grave risks of harm, abuse and even can be life threatening. This is what was said:

> *This problems of vulnerability are specific. It can be controlled or curbed on the side of the government. We are not addressing the basic problem; which is poverty and unemployment, about provision of basic needs; shelter, food, water, sanitation. In communal bathrooms they are raped. If they play by the fence they are burnt or electrocuted. After the holidays we do not know if they will come back. They may die, they lose their lives.*

Drawing from the theoretical framework of this study, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which was published in A Theory of Human Motivation (Maslow, 1943) postulated a general pattern of needs recognition and satisfaction that people follow (Gawel, 1996). The concept of prepotency is explored by Gawel (1996) suggesting that a person could not recognise or pursue higher or alternate needs until a currently recognised need is substantially satisfied. The Needs Theory therefore emphasises that basic needs, for example, food, love safety and security must be met, before certain other "higher order needs". Education in the context of the vulnerable child may therefore be considered a "higher order need" than those needs which would satisfy what is required for survival; food, shelter and protection. That equates to the prioritisation of physiological needs first before self-actualisation ones.

In my opinion, a child who has no food and is being neglected, simply cannot be expected to perform well at school. Child vulnerability in this school is described as resulting from a series of unmet basic needs. Multiple forms of deprivation primarily consequential from their state of poverty and unmet needs impact negatively on a child's ability to learn, interact and perform well in the school environment. A child who is not fully engaged in the learning process because of neglect will be prone to be ill-disciplined, exhibiting anti-social behaviour including violence or withdrawal and inadvertently this may result in poor performance. This compromises educational standards. Moreover, it perpetuates vulnerability in different phases of a child's life and into adulthood.

5.2.4.4. Challenging environments and social circumstances

Unstable home environments are collectively described as having a detrimental impact on socialisation, behaviour and academic performance which may be considered indicators of underlying child vulnerability. One view of vulnerability was that a child's environment and circumstances of the child's upbringing are often revealed in their behaviour. This is what was said:

> *I think vulnerability is a result of situations that the children have been succumbed to, what affects them; environmental factors, family issues, the community that they are in. I think it is their whole upbringing which presents with behavioural issues definitely.* **(Glad, L1)**

Negative affectation of academic performance in children who experience fragmentation of nuclear families is described as an indicator of child vulnerability. An additional observation was that children who came from unstable families often present with difficulty forging normal interpersonal relationships. *Love* reported on familial instability and the way in which this may be recognised through observing the vulnerable child:

> *Vulnerability is very prevalent in our school because many come from homes where they do not have both parents. This impacts on the academic and the way they interact with other learners. The main point is that they do not have a stable family; the ideal family home with both parents. They are raised by grandparents.* **(Love, L1)**

Moon described how vulnerability ensues through failure to provide a conducive home environment for the child as well as no provision of basic necessities for school. A noticeable difference in children from intact family units versus those from fragmented families exists, reportedly noticeable in school performance:

> *That child is vulnerable because of the programme at home. There is no one to take care of them, there is no one to give them anything to come to school. Like sometimes the children come to school without pen, pencil, ruler, without aids in order to study well. Another thing is sometimes a child has a problem, the parent passed away or the child is not staying with the parent but staying with the granny or aunt. That child is not like a child staying with their parent. Even the school performance is not like that of a child who is staying with a parent.* **(Moon, L1)**

It emerged that abusive homes and poor socio-economic conditions negatively affect children's emotional status. Instances where children are hungry and not cared for in their home environments present with observable features of emotionality said to be associated with underlying child vulnerability. This is what was said:

> *Many of our learners come from impoverished homes. Many of our learners come with no lunch and have not eaten the night before. They cry because they have not eaten. There is a lack of parental empathy…We do not know unless we question the children about why they are emotional.* **(Tulip, L1)**

*Moving on to the **SMT FG**,* it emerged that children who come from unstable backgrounds often present with distorted value systems, engaging in activities like theft and being untruthful. This is what was said:

> *It is that whole home environment and community. There is no control of the vices in the informal settlements; such as alcohol, loud music. There is no sense of values and that is what we try the hardest to bring out in school. The child will lie in your face. Steal in your face.* **(SMT FG)**

It emerged from the **SMT** FG that unmet needs due to inappropriate exposure to certain adverse circumstances are contributors to vulnerability. This was their stance:

> *I think this, like I have said before, learners come from informal settlements, so they do not live in structured homes, as in a physical structure. They live in shacks. One finds that these children are exposed to a lot in terms of home environment, poverty, no space to do homework, or play. One room for a family with a toilet and shower which is a communal one outside. There is no separation of parents' rooms and children's rooms. There is exposure and we find it manifests in the behaviour causing problems.* **(SMT FG)**

Inappropriate exposure to adult behaviour in the home amidst challenging environmental conditions contribute to children presenting with inappropriate, abnormal behaviour towards peers. This is recognisable in the way in which children interact in a sexually inappropriate manner. The **SBST FG** shared this opinion:

> *Sometimes it is the home condition as well, where they share an open room. Where everything happens in the confines of that. That is why there is that rape and a cycle of poverty. You know what is surprising now over the years, we find that it is the smaller*

children, the younger ones that run away to the park with the friends or touch girls inappropriately. It's like as young as Grade 1, 2 and 3. This year was a Grade 6 child whose been playing with a Grade R child, but that happens at home, they are friends, but they are calling it rape. **(SBST FG)**

5.2.5. Emerging Issues regarding factors contributing to child vulnerability

Characteristics of a child's home and social environment were identified as having a direct influence on the learners' capacity to adapt to the schooling environment. Some Level one participants and opinions that emerged from the focus groups believed that child vulnerability should be considered as primarily emanating from home circumstances. According to Huerta (2013), vulnerable learners who experience residential instability and poor living environments demonstrate poorer developmental, academic and social outcomes.

Instability particularly as it pertains to the vulnerable child is conceptualised as an involuntary, abrupt or negative change in the child's circumstances or family circumstances with a high likelihood of adverse implications for development (Huerta, 2013). Some children come into the school system deprived not only of food, care, stable family circumstances, but also deprived of the basic resources they require to perform well at school.

Social problems which render children vulnerable contribute to discipline problems and ongoing vulnerability. Considering that survival of the vulnerable learner is an instinctive basic need that would surpass all others, one cannot overlook the state of social circumstances of these learners as a determinant of how they interact in the school environment.

Studies by Fulner et. al. (1985) described the concept of relative vulnerability. Relative vulnerability is multiple dimensions of vulnerability and prioritises the learner at the centre of all proposed interventions. Understanding that vulnerability may not be generalised or compartmentalised is a key determinant in considering vulnerability. Understanding the dynamics of vulnerability will allow for better identification of vulnerability in schools.

Children are at risk of experiencing adverse outcomes when exposed to challenging environments. This frequently presents in their behaviour as exposure to certain circumstances whilst they undergo developmental changes, have limited coping skills and depend on primary

caregivers for protection places them in an extremely vulnerable state (De Young, Kenardy & Copham, 2011). In terms of factors which cause child vulnerability within the school, educators predominantly considered the learner's home as the problem. The idea of vulnerability emerging from the home solely is contentious and needs to be challenged and corrected in this school.

Theme Two delves further, identifying and describing manifestations of child vulnerability.

5.3. THEME 2: MANIFESTATIONS OF VULNERABILITY

5.3.1 Disruptive behaviour, ill-discipline and violence

In conceptualising educator experiences of behavioural manifestations of vulnerability, aberrant behaviour is described as a characteristic manifestation of vulnerability. One view was:

> *We recognise vulnerability by the behaviour and discipline. The lack of response. It can be bad behaviour and poor discipline. Their listening skills are very poor. Behaviour is the biggest problem.* **(Snow, L1)**

Glad shared the opinion that behavioural indicators such as attention-seeking and disruptive behaviour may be identified as a feature of vulnerability:

> *We recognise vulnerability by behavioural issues, definitely! Attention-seeking and they are naughty; they do not want to do work. They want to play and cannot pay attention; just want to play, want to talk.* **(Glad, L1)**

Some educators agreed that a key distinguishing feature of child vulnerability is emotional lability of learners in the school environment:

> *These children who are vulnerable are very emotional. If you try and scold them or tell them what they are doing is wrong, they have a temper outburst. They channel anger towards you or break down or these retaliate with swear words. Same children who cannot go past the date and heading; they are walking, talking, disrupting. Their names are always mentioned.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Tulip revealed the challenges of dealing with behaviour of vulnerable children;

> *Last year with one child there was serious vulnerability. The mother walked away. The child had no elder support, no care and was neglected. He would have tantrums like you would not believe. Tantrums! He really challenged me. I could not read to my class. He would continuously disrupt us. I had to chase him down the stairs one time. He was trying to run away. Once I catch him, after the tantrum he will sit and cry. He took a transfer, went to stay with his granny. She also does not know what to do.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Tulip went on to describe the impact of this disruptive behaviour on educators and how it affects their agreeability to support the vulnerable child. This is what was said:

> *Vulnerability has a major effect on behaviour. Even a normal test we could not do. He will be screaming even with Ritalin. Other learners could not concentrate. It impacted on other learners' ability to learn. Impacting on my sanity. I could not send him outside, inside he would use vulgar words; it was beyond…The child was mocking me. I broke down…It was horrible. After that I stopped with the lunch. I could not help a child who was torturing me.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Similarly, **Lily** recognised that vulnerability may be identified by behavioural deviations from what would be deemed normal, acceptable behaviour. This implied that educators need to distinguish what would constitute acceptable forms of "child-like" behaviour from what would be construed as problematic behaviour:

> *Actually, I think behaviour. By the behaviour you notice there is a problem or how they are reacting when they are together even when the teacher is there. The character you see. You would know the child's personality. Quiet or beyond that. You would know there is a problem there.* **(Lily, L1)**

Another view shared by **Glad** was that behaviour such as ill-discipline was described as a manifestation of child vulnerability. One view associated ill-discipline with exposure to circumstances that render the child vulnerable:

> *I would say child vulnerability sometimes exhibits itself as a behaviour problem, that becomes a discipline problem in class. Then when the teacher tries to discipline the child it is viewed negatively by the child himself and by his parent. They do not understand that you trying to discipline the child and you assisting him at the same time.* **(Glad, L1)**

The detrimental effects of ill-discipline on learning are described by *Snow:*

> *We spend more time trying to discipline and as a result, our goal for the day has not been met. It affects us a lot. It is a very negative situation to be in. Learning cannot take place without discipline. They cannot listen, they cannot learn.* **(Snow, L1)**

Instances of deviant behaviour and physical violence that are experienced, disproportionate even to the trigger or nature of the interaction between aggressor and victim occur amongst vulnerable children:

> *They can fight for small things. Big fights for small things.* **(Peace, L1)**.

Despite efforts to intervene to correct violent behaviour, educator powerlessness to correct such instances of physical violence persisted:

> *Two learners in the class have been spoken to. I have spoken to the parents, but I still have a problem; they fight, hit and are wild. They can cause damage to other children and the environment.* **(Snow, L1)**

One view was that abuse and fear of being subjected to physical violence in the school environment potentially emanates from the home environment.

> *I would say some children are being abused at home by their parents. The management investigate but nothing happens. They go to the home and talk to the parents. How I notice is, when you go close to these children, they block the face, as if you are going to hit them; it shows they are exposed to that violence. They do not know if you going to hug them. You just walk past, and they duck. (***Lilac, L1**)

It became evident that a degree of frustration and helplessness existed amongst particularly Level one educators whilst they described their experiences of working in a challenging environment, seemingly fraught with ill-discipline, disruption, attention seeking behaviour, learners with inability to concentrate and cope with the demands of the learning and teaching process.

In the **SMT FG** it emerged that vulnerable children who acted out violently in the school environment sometimes admitted to being angry due to circumstances they have been exposed to in the home:

What was striking about the fight was he would say "You're starting with me again!" That did something for me and I had a one on one. Am I reminding you of somebody? He said, "my mother". I discovered after chatting with him about that he was angry with his mother. **(SMT FG)**

During an ***SMT FG***, traumatic experiences that are seemingly a reality facing these vulnerable children emerged:

I have another child in Grade 7 who saw her mother being killed. These are the environment and socio- economic conditions they live in. They witness such scenes, and the child is very, very disturbed and we need to emotionally develop the child, spiritually first, and then only can we do anything academic or intellectual. If the child is not emotionally settled the child will not be able to cope with the work. We have to find the underlying issues that are disturbing the child. This is what we generally do and then we do intervention. **(SMT FG)**

An alternative view from the ***SMT FG*** was that where there is no care for children they develop issues with discipline:

It is not a problem of discipline, but because they not well cared for it becomes a discipline problem. **(SMT FG)**

The ***SBST FG*** reiterated that vulnerability and disruptive behaviour are interlinked and said:

Basically, it is behaviour. In most cases we've called in parents. Always an underlying problem. I know there is really disruptive, deviant behaviour. With discipline, they do not listen, focus is not there. They can be disruptive, walk about, talk too much, make a noise. I do not understand. Whilst we are teaching, they do that. They do not understand this is an important time. They cannot get into their system yet. **(SBST FG)**

The stance from the ***SBST FG*** was that issues of discipline exist which make managing the demands of the learning and teaching process challenging;

Amongst the vulnerable children there are issues of discipline. There are so many demands from the children and many educator demands.

Instances of educators being subjected to "torture" and the failure of even medical intervention to improve behaviour of learners in some instances represent the reality of a most complex

phenomenon of child vulnerability and its behavioural manifestations in school. Educator's subsequent withdrawal from being involved in interventions such as the lunch program may be indicative of the potential of permanent effects of deviant behaviour on educator perceptions of their role in managing both a disruptive child and the vulnerable child. It is not acceptable for educators to be treated in this manner. It is not acceptable for learners who are merely children to be subjected to failed healthcare and educational interventions that do not address their individual needs either. Interventions which are not definitively corrective, but rather uproot them whilst their problems remain ongoing and likely persist into adulthood are just temporary solutions which superficially address the problem. Therein lies an apt description of the convolutedness of vulnerability. The complexity of the phenomenon of vulnerability within this school emerges clearly.

Disruptive behaviour emerged as detrimental to the process of teaching and learning. This resonates with research by Khasinah (2017) which reinforces that disruptive behaviour which affects the learners' school experience and performance negatively. One cannot, however, overlook the missed opportunities by educators to help learners overcome the difficulties they face. A learner being transferred to an alternate institution or to another living environment is not necessarily the solution to addressing vulnerability manifesting as deviant behaviour. Loss of learners without resolution of the problem or improvement in their plight is indicative of a failure in our schooling system to support learners. Granted, however, there is variability in the ability of educators to implement strategies that manage disruptive behaviour (Khasinah, 2017). However, as trained professionals, and according to the seven roles of educators in South Africa, it is a cause for great concern if educators cannot establish positive discipline in the classroom.

Whilst associating vulnerability with deviant or unacceptable behavioural manifestations is found to be appropriate in some literature, in this study forms of deviant behaviour including those who are disruptive, ill-disciplined, violent, engage in bullying, and those who display anti-social behavioural traits and emotional lability were described as almost exclusively associated with vulnerability amongst a large contingent of educators and even those who held dual roles. The challenge, however, that emerged from this ideation that disruptive behaviour is always attributable to underlying vulnerability seems to be an over-generalisation. Not every disruptive child should be considered to have underlying vulnerability.

There can be no constructive teaching and learning without discipline. Collective perspectives suggest that ill-discipline and violent behaviour of learners negatively influence the quality of teaching and learning. A lack of discipline may seriously hinder the teaching and learning process, with few ideals of education being realised if disruptive behaviour is prevalent (Roussouw, 2003). Discipline ensures functionality of education and management of the learner is considered a central role of the educator (Rambuda & Segalo, 2018).

Perspectives that ill-discipline emanate from the exposure to abuse within the home environment emerged as a cause of learner vulnerability and deviant behaviour. This is contentious as the school itself must also be examined as a source of vulnerability. Research by Burton and Leoschut (2012) suggested that school violence is undergirded by a myriad of individual, school, family and community level risk factors which are dynamic and strongly associated, which "coalesce" to create further vulnerability for violence. Other forms of violence such as bullying were further described by individuals and formed a point of discussion within the focus group interviews.

It was evident that a degree of frustration and helplessness existed amongst educators. The experiences of working in a challenging environment, seemingly fraught with ill-discipline, disruption, attention seeking behaviour, learners with inability to concentrate and cope with the demands of the learning and teaching process seemed to cause this frustration amongst educators.

5.3.2. Disrespect, poor learner attitude and inappropriate value systems

In addition to deviant learner behaviour, it emerged that disrespect and poor learner attitude were noticeable amongst some children. ***Sun*** revealed the following about experiences with the vulnerable learner:

> *Every year it gets worse. Like compared to previous years I noticed this year children have an attitude; a look like "You can't tell me!" In Grade R! and I am shocked. Every year it seems to be getting worse. **(Sun, L1)***

Susceptibility to the effects of poverty and deprivation resulted in instances where children acted under the influence of adults allegedly thought to encourage criminal behaviour such as stealing. ***Misty*** shared this view:

There were cellphones and pencil cases getting stolen. The parent was called in. and the child said to the mother; "You said if I find a cell-phone, I must bring it?". The emphasis is not placed on education. **(Misty, L1)**

The plight of the vulnerable child and the reality both learner and educator face in developing a deep understanding of this sad and unfortunate reality facing learners in the school system became apparent. The illegal activities of learners place them in a precarious position and presents a challenge to school leaders and managers as is further described by *Love:*

There was a child in my class not sniffing glue but living with an aunt. The only child who did not have a uniform. I was speaking to him one day and when I asked questions, the following was the answer: We have nothing at home. When I asked what he means, he said they have no food to eat. So, I asked, "so when do you eat?" and he said, "you gave me porridge at the beginning of the year." We have a make breakfast possible club. Lunch at school provided by different organisations that give about 100 children lunch everyday, that is what he was having and then whatever his aunt would get from selling cardboard she would try and get some meal for them that day. **(Love, L1)**

Early unplanned pregnancy and inappropriate relationships were further described as associated with drug use even at Primary School level:

With the Grade 7 learners, we have seen them dabbling with drugs. Over the past 10 to 15 years there were three Grade 7 learners, girls in our school who fell pregnant. I remember the offspring of one is in our school. **(Glad, L1)**

Instances of drug use were described by *Love*:

In our country there is not a lot, or maybe there are a lot of things, but I do not see it helping children in terms of drugs. That is another thing in terms of drugs. The area has a lot of drugs, sniffing of glue, especially with older children in the High school. It does rub off on our children, the Grade 6's and Grade 7's. A child said they sniff glue because of hunger. A sense of high makes them forget they are hungry. **(Love, L1)**

The **SMT FG** concurred it is the duty of educators to assist vulnerable children who find themselves involved in illicit activity:

One child is a drug addict. We got him involved with the social worker and SNES is involved. He is an orphan. I told the Gr.7 teachers if we do not keep him in our fold, he

will be working for handouts. It is our duty as educators in this four months to take him out of that habit. We have about ten of them in similar conditions. **(SMT FG)**

From the ***SMT FG*** it emerged that poor learner attitude to learning, peers and educators was identified amongst children made vulnerable by family fragmentation. Educators specifically highlighted the lack of value system and disregard for the teaching and learning process amongst learners. This was attributed to home circumstances. This was their overall view:

> *Teaching here for a few years there is a common pattern every year, mostly coming from home. There is lack of value-system in place because if the parent is a bit responsible, it teaches you respect and manners and that is not there and neither are academics. It is because this lack of values is there. If parents showed that school is important, the child will know school is important. The child will come with the right attitude, will come with discipline. There is a lack of value system. With them not having contact with a parent, they do not know the value of mother and father. Not knowing this, they cannot respect a teacher. They do not know the value of relationships.* **(SMT FG)**

The stance held on some learners having a poor attitude to education and holding distorted value systems persisted in the ***SBST FG.*** They shared this opinion**:**

> *There is no sense of values. Today a child was not handling the book properly and I said watch how you are handling the book. The child said it is only a book. They have no value-system.* **(SBST FG)**

Disrespectful learners who display distorted value systems cause educator disillusionment and a feeling of helplessness in dealing with the vulnerable child, according to Level one participants. It would not be fair however to conclude that all learners who display aberrant behaviour are indeed vulnerable. Whilst many educators ascribed poor behaviour to underlying vulnerability which manifests in this manner, some educators described a general culture of lack of values and poor attitude amongst some learners which may not have any association with vulnerability.

Serious instances of ill-discipline and violence were described further as associated with child vulnerability. It is indicative of a greater problem of vulnerability which has serious implications for school leaders. Furthermore, where educators experience disrespect, stealing

114

and poor learner attitudes educators revealed an unwillingness to engage with children as despite their best efforts in their roles as educators, managers and dual roles in welfare and pastoral care, a degree of disillusionment and hopelessness pervaded. Complex issues facing young primary school children who are victims of abuse, poverty and deprivation emerged which seemingly exceeded initial understanding of the depth of the issues that exist.

5.3.3. Bullying

Bullying involves physical, verbal forms of repetitive, intentionally harmful and abusive behaviour inflicted on other learners. In this study, bullying emerged as a manifestation of child vulnerability:

> *What I notice a lot is vulnerable children try and protect themselves by bullying other children. They feel that if they come across as a big, strong boy no one is going to come and interfere with them.* **(Love, L1)**

Poor-socioeconomic circumstances learners face were highlighted as a contributor to bullying which emerges as a manifestation of their circumstances plagued by lack:

> *There is bullying, stealing lunch and stationery. With bullying, most children do not tell anyone. In my class, a boy who is 10 years old, going on 11 has serious socio-economic problems. He is disruptive. He is a bully. Steals lunch and pins the other children down on the floor and hits them.* **(Misty, L1)**

Another participant shared similar sentiments regarding bullying, although it emerged that the bullying was primarily related to lack of food:

> *Bullying maybe a sign of vulnerability. Other children bullying for money, food. Food is a big issue here. Bigger children bullying smaller ones for food and their money.* **(Glad, L1)**

It emerged from the ***SMT FG*** that older children are more commonly found to be the aggressors in instances of bullying in the school environment, which itself places younger children in a vulnerable position:

> *There is a lot of bullying. Bullying for lunch, bullying for money. This year I gave Grade 7 learners a letter to write. Many wrote about bullying for lunch or money. It is contained because many do not speak up. We separated the breaks now.* **(SMT FG)**

From the **SBST FG** it emerged that bullying is associated with underlying vulnerability, highlighting a case of abuse. This is what was said:

> *There was a child in Grade 5 who would not talk even at 6 years old. It was a case of abuse. It improved for a while but in Grade 6 he started to bully. He has been doing this for last four years and got comfortable doing it. Other parents came to complain and address it. Some methods say it would be easier to say we are giving a "transfer card" but this does not help. He is still bullying though…taking lunch and money.* **(SBST FG)**

Bullying is typically associated as being a manifestation of a troubled learner often considering this a means to protect themselves against being perceived as potential targets of bullying but also to exert power or control over other learners. There is bullying, stealing of lunch and stationery described in this school. It emerged that the perpetrators of bullying do so to protect themselves against being perceived as weak. As a means to exert authority and as a protective mechanism against potential harm which they may already experience in their home environments and communities. There is mostly bullying for food, money and stationery signifying that deprivation may also influence behaviour that encourages exerting control over others even by force to "survive". It emerged that the victim of bullying may too often be vulnerable, not by virtue solely of the experience of being bullied, but their protection of the perpetrators of both bullying and violence may also reflect underlying vulnerability and exposure to similar dysfunctional relationships in the home. In this way, perpetrators and victims of bullying in the school remain in a perpetual cycle unless definitively rectified by parents, educators or school management which does not seem to be occurring nor is there any sense from educators or managers in their dual roles that it is at all possible.

Studies by Bialobrezka et. al (2012) revealed that due to "endemic suffering" characteristic of the plight of vulnerable children, the passivity and silence in our communities pertaining to vulnerability, deprivation and abuse which is reflected in learner behaviour may be causative in the difficulty educators and school managers may experience in recognising vulnerable children. Often instances of bullying are overlooked and allowed to continue for many years inflicting trauma on both the aggressor and victim. Educators described overwhelm and a loss of control despite their best efforts and whilst in the capacity of school managers the sentiment was that attempts are made to achieve good learner discipline, ill-discipline, bullying and poor

learner attitudes are recognisable features of vulnerability which exceeds even the capabilities of formal structures to address it at this stage.

5.3.4. Truancy, Late coming and Absenteeism

Absenteeism was identified as an indicator of instances of abuse and increased responsibility held by children in their home environments. *Tulip* had this to say:

> *I know of a child that is very emotionally abused by his parents and he tends to stay away. He's been absent over forty days. He had to stay home. His mother told him to stay away and look after other children. It is not his fault.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Another view was that vulnerable children faced with adversity may be recognised by absenteeism, violence and absconding:

> *Children are so deep in this issue or problem they do not know how to find a way out and they cannot see the school is one place to them, then they do various things; they abscond, stay away and fight.* **(Snow, L1)**

Peace indicated that educators may not fully understand the phenomenon of vulnerability in cases where they do not attribute absenteeism to potential underlying vulnerability. This is what was revealed:

> *We as teachers we just scold them, just take their books, and ask why you stay away? We do not know the reason behind it.* **(Peace, L1)**

It was further revealed by *Peace* that children rendered vulnerable were identified as those amongst whom absenteeism occurs. This is what was said:

> *We always want them to learn, to get a good education. We try our best. The school is trying but the absentee rate is very high. Late coming is quite common. Educators are 100% good. Parents are letting us down, not even the children. Children are like this because parents are not worried about them.* **(Peace, L1)**

An *SMT FG* discussion regarding identifying the vulnerable child revealed that late-coming and absenteeism occurred in this school amongst these children. Truancy is revealed as one of the main issues. This was their stance:

> *In terms of the late-coming and absenteeism, all of that happens in this school. The common problem that is rife is truancy.* **(SMT FG)**

SBST FG participants revealed that absenteeism or truancy may be associated with underlying problems when asked about their experiences of child vulnerability. Measures are implemented in school to ensure that educators are equipped to manage it. This is what was said:

> *Attendance control measures are in place in terms of attendance and late coming...We eliminated a lot of the problems. This term we had nobody who was absent more than 3 days. We noticed teachers are getting proactive with that. They come down and telephone the parents. We assured the teachers we will get the help whether it is behaviour problem or absenteeism or truancy.* **(SBST FG)**

It emerged that high absenteeism occurs where there is inclement weather, shack fires, strikes and violence from civil unrest. Late coming is commonly cited as a challenge in these school records. Learners walk long distances from their residences to school and therefore late coming was found to be commonplace. There was evidence of instances of truancy. A misdemeanour file is kept by every class educator. Frequent absenteeism was sometimes misunderstood or overlooked in this school. Failure of the school to recognise absenteeism as problematic and a potential indicator of vulnerability, may perpetuate child vulnerability. Child-headed households and fragmented family structures with subsequent behavioural manifestations are indeed striking indicators of child vulnerability. The educator and school leaders ought to look beyond the non-compliance with school rules, code of conduct and expectations of the academic environment to fully ascertain the circumstances of the children and their potential vulnerability.

Whilst in Theme 2, educators primarily focused on behaviour as a manifestation of underlying vulnerability, with causation in most cases attributed to the home environment, individual and social circumstances, Theme 3 explores the school as a contributor to child vulnerability.

5.4. THEME 3: FACTORS WITHIN THE SCHOOL WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO CHILD VULNERABILITY

In this theme I sought to explore educators understanding of whether the school itself is considered a contributor to child vulnerability.

5.4.1. Policy and procedures

I sought to establish participants' awareness of policy and understanding of policy provision which guides teaching the vulnerable child. The point of policy and procedures emerged as a topical issue in discussions around factors which contribute to child vulnerability. The rationale was to establish whether educators felt empowered by having formal directives to effectively manage child vulnerability and explore whether the policies and procedures are useful in dealing with child vulnerability in the school.

Misty revealed no knowledge of policies that exist regarding the management of the vulnerable child:

> *I do not know, I am not aware of policies at school. I know in staff meetings they said there must be policies and policy committees. I am personally not aware of these policies and committee; I do not know.* **(Misty, L1)**

Regarding knowledge of policies to manage the vulnerable child, *Glad* similarly stated:

> *Not that I know of. I am new.* **(Glad, L1)**

Tulip revealed that policies regarding child vulnerability are linear and not solution-oriented therefore having little practical relevance. This was what was said:

> *I do not think the policies assist these children who are vulnerable in any way. It harms them because they are not getting help…When you do not have parental care, policy does not assist. I really think that policy does not assist. The policy is not very effective. It just tells you to do this, do that; policy is very straight. There is no fixing of the problem, just going according to school rules. What is in policy is not assisting the child.* **(Tulip, L1)**

The *SMT FG* revealed an alternate view around matters of policy, stating that educators are encouraged to consider applicability and practicality of policy application in their unique settings and are not expected to proceed without support:

> *During staff meetings I tell the teachers about policy. It is not policies to be kept on paper; only policies that need to be done. It is stated at a staff meeting and if the teacher does not do it the teacher is answerable. At a staff meeting all staff are informed. I also do it at School Governing Body level where the community is involved. The SGB and parents are also aware so that they recognise the state of vulnerability and are informed*

119

of it and of the children who are vulnerable. They also assist us. So, it is not only my teachers, but the Governing Body is also included in it. **(SMT FG)**

Regarding effectiveness of policies in managing vulnerability, it emerged from the ***SMT FG*** that policy plays a critical role in ensuring compliance amongst educators in managing the vulnerable child:

Basically, it runs the school. Policies helps us to run our school. Everything is according to policy. Everybody complies; if you say it is policy, they comply. **(SMT FG)**

Regarding knowledge of what governs management of the vulnerable learner, the Constitution was recognised as a guiding tool by the ***SMT FG***:

In the Constitution it says that we always have to be in compliance with those Acts. I am governed by the Constitution. The right to education cannot be deprived to any child and that is what I always tell my teachers. All other policies follow that right to education and no child no matter how poor they are, no matter how badly behaved they are, no matter what their circumstances are they will be at school in the classroom, for the 5 hours that they were supposed to be and that is the policy of the school, first policy and there is nothing else. **(SMT FG)**

It emerged from the ***SBST FG*** that specific policy pertaining to screening for vulnerability have been provided to educators. This is what was said:

Educators are very aware of the SIAS document, the screening document. Each one has been circulated amongst the educators. I would like to believe that all of them are very au-fait with how to do the screening. We do it as an ongoing thing, as a refresher as well with a Professional Remedial Educator to come in and address the staff on how to actually screen for learners with barriers and vulnerability. **(SBST FG)**

According to the ***SBST FG,*** educators were empowered in order to support vulnerable learners:

In terms of documentation and policy they are constantly refreshed on it; At staff meetings, phase meetings, individual conversations, support and supervision. **(SBST FG)**

The differing responses from educators and the school leaders who held dual roles in the portfolio of the SBST was that this discrepant belief and experience may signify an un-

standardised system of dealing with child vulnerability. There are gaps in knowledge regarding the policy pertaining to management of child vulnerability amongst particularly the Level one educators. Whilst management believed that the existence of policies was adequate to address the challenges of managing child vulnerability, whether or not the existing policy frame is effective seems to be a different matter altogether.

Some Level one educators state that inexperience or non-provision of policies limit their exposure and understanding, whilst others expressed with some degree of frustration that they are not aware. Non-awareness and a lack of a cohesive, co-ordinated response to child vulnerability is concerning and affects both educator and learner negatively. Educators may not be functioning effectively or feel supported if they are not fully conversant with policies. This divide in policy knowledge which was identified whether due to inexperience in the school environment or lack of knowledge on policy pertaining to child vulnerability is significant.

A pertinent point raised by Level one participants was that policies maybe altogether ineffective and linear. Vulnerability is multi-faceted and unique to every victim so specific policies in that regard may be deemed irrelevant and impractical. The focus group contingent, however, agreed that policy is necessary to guide and govern the management of the vulnerable child, also promoting compliance and some form of accountability amongst educators and the community at large.

A study by Motsa and Morojele (2016) revealed that educators play a central role in influencing the experiences of the vulnerable child. Compassionate, affirming teachers that were able to extend themselves "beyond mere pedagogical classroom didactics" and issues of policy and governance, were found to be more influential, supportive and have a transformational effect in the school environment (Motsa & Morojele, 2016). Educators were not able to use policy in a practical manner although that would have been ideal in this school. Positive, affirming educator attitudes sounds idyllic and is desirable in education, but the realities were described as different.

The unfortunate reality described is that despite educators' ability to recognise vulnerability there are still instances where educators describe themselves as ill-equipped and lack knowledge on policy. There is clearly a disconnect between policy and practice. According to research by Motsa and Morojele (2016), the policy-practice gap is recognised as an element

contributing to poor learner and educator educational experiences. Despite recognition and adoption of conventions, laws and policies, suboptimal governance in schools stemming from impractical application of policy was identified as a key contributor of schools in perpetuating child vulnerability (Sukati, 2013), a sentiment that was also expressed by some participants in this study.

5.4.2. Educator attitudes and experiences

Educator attitude, beliefs and subsequent behaviour due to their own experiences contribute towards child vulnerability. In dealing with the vulnerable child, one perspective is that it is difficult to fulfil many roles in the school environment. Teachers expressed being overwhelmed by having too much to do and having to fulfil multiple roles which isn't amenable to affording certain learners adequate attention. One view was:

> *Challenges are that we are playing mother, father, pastor, nurse roles other than teacher. They are lacking love and attention. You go out of your way so that they have what they need. Even check who has money to buy a pen. It is not always roses and sunshine.* **(Misty, L1)**

It is not apparent however to the educator here that they are in any way potential contributors to child vulnerability as their stance is that they have inherited circumstances within the school which make it challenging to fulfil all the roles expected of a teacher.

Instances of overwhelm and feeling unsupported in managing the vulnerable child in the school environment is described by *Light.* These instances have inadvertently affected educator attitude toward the vulnerable child negatively:

> *Every day I take work home. I hate it when your superiors say, "You should do this at home?" I do have a life at home. I have a child who has special needs. They cannot tell me to get a full-time maid. If I tell you, I sometimes sit and cry. "You need to do it at home." It is like you have free time there is relief. You need free time, relief. When in the classroom, you cannot sit. You cannot sit and do your admin work; means you are not doing your job. Do my admin during that time. There is always answers to everything, but no proper solution. They not looking at the child holistically; one direction. Not looking at a child holistically.* **(Light, L1)**

Some educators expressed challenges that influence their experience of managing the vulnerable learner. The following was revealed by *Sun*:

> *It feels like it is a big gap that you are struggling to get across, A to B. It is a bridge that is there. I am not going to say there is no hope. There is hope and we can change. Change is from within. We got to want to do it. The saddest thing is the principal goes the extra mile for the children. Brings all these athletics stuff for them to be involved in. They are not even interested. You have to be grateful for the little you get.* **(Sun, L1)**

I sensed that some educators' attitude as a result of their experiences may in itself prove to be a source for vulnerability. The actions of learners were identified as affecting the relationship between educator and learners, further compounding a challenging environment in which educators feel aggravated, frustrated and a lack of a sense of control. Others who took a different stance described that educator attitudes toward the vulnerable child are largely optimistic and they are trying their best under challenging circumstances. A sense of hopelessness, however, pervades despite commitment to improving the plight of these children:

> *Honestly, it is for the one or two children you get through to that makes the difference. I am teaching for eight years now. Over the years, each year it becomes worse to handle at each stage of their life. Like I, as a teacher lost some hope, but I am regaining it slowly. Like now we started the Intervention Programme. I am trying to give them as much of my attention. I am trying, I feel I am not doing enough.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Whilst educators made the impact of the experience of educating a vulnerable learner on themselves clear, one is inclined to consider that the firm stance that generally the child is already vulnerable before they come to the educator is one that needs to be challenged. Exploring the possibility that educator attitudes and behaviour can in itself make learners vulnerable was not one which emerged as a priority, although it ought to.

The attitudes and perceptions of educators regarding how managing the vulnerable child is meant to be a shared responsibility is further described by *Glad*:

> *It is a lot to take in as a teacher; to go home, knowing what they are going through is not very easy. If you look into their eyes and think if they have eaten, what happened to them yesterday. Lots of our children live in informal settlements. There are shebeens and taverns. They are tired the next day. They say there is drinking near us, fights outside our rooms, it is difficult to sleep. This does affect them. This is the reality of*

123

what is going on in most schools and it seems to most of my friends I speak to they say this is what it is. They say that many of the children are being neglected. Many children are being neglected. Sometimes the parents are not there they have a don't care attitude about their children. They think they are sending their child for an education. It is like a creche. But they do not want to parent the child. It is just not the teacher. It is the responsibility of the parent to work with the teacher to basically bring that child up: it is a village, not the responsibility of one person. **(Glad, L1)**

This opinion reflected an underlying belief that lack of support of children in the home is primarily what may account for child vulnerability.

It emerged that some educators feel as though they are expected to extend themselves to scenarios which they do not feel equipped to handle. In some instances, they believed that their training is inadequate to handle instances of vulnerability. One view from ***Lily*** was:

We are trained that every behaviour comes from somewhere. We are not psychologists. We cannot do more than what we can do. These children should be moved to those places to get help, or the teacher can be trained. **(Lily, L1)**

This opinion of some educators demonstrates that educator perception and attitude are indeed potential sources of vulnerability. Educators who do not realise the dynamics of vulnerability and are not able to reflect on the school as being a source of vulnerability itself further compounds an already challenging situation, perpetuating vulnerability. The general feeling of Level one educators was seemingly a sense of hopelessness, defeat and frustration.

The ***SMT FG*** identified inconsistencies in the approach of educators in managing the vulnerable child. They similarly believed that the child is already vulnerable, and it is not the circumstances within the school which serve as the potential cause. They expressed the following view:

All staff members are not consistent in managing children. Another lot just do the work and are out. They like do not worry about anything else. **(SMT FG)**

The ***SBST FG*** provided a more introspective stance regarding child vulnerability when considered from a non-management perspective:

When you go home and think about it you get that feeling of "I have not done enough". We cannot change the world, but we can touch a few lives. **(SBST FG)**

Regarding attitudes towards the effectiveness of the SBST in managing child vulnerability, the overall view was that educators are trying their best but come up against various limitations. I found this interesting as in their dual roles as manager and as part of learner support, the ***SBST FG*** conceded that there exist a multitude of challenges. This was the overall view from the ***SBST FG***:

We are facing challenges. We are effective in terms of output, not input. We are trying every avenue within our possibility. We do everything from thereon, yet we meet blocks and have to consider "Where to from here?" Then time lapses, which means the problem becomes more challenging. **(SBST FG)**

Level one educators appeared to believe that the child is made vulnerable by sources outside of the school. There is no acknowledgement that educator beliefs and attitudes may influence the vulnerable child. It seemed that amongst some participants they had resigned themselves to accepting that addressing vulnerability is beyond their control. It emerged that the issue of vulnerability is not their duty or responsibility to handle in the school environment as they are not adequately trained. It was also highlighted that the experiences that they have had has led them to become disillusioned and to doubt that they would make any difference. Educators feel ill-equipped and inadequately supported to address systemic issues that exist in the dynamic phenomenon of child vulnerability.

Despite describing school-based intervention strategies, the efficacy of these strategies was seemingly limited due to a myriad of factors, according to some educators. Whilst some participants identified inadequacies, others lauded the role of the school as a consistent, positive influence on the life of the learner. This polarity reflects the subjectivity of lived experiences of educators. It also demonstrates the potential negative impact and influence of such varied educator experiences and attitudes on addressing the phenomenon of child vulnerability. Whilst the management team felt empowered and fervently believed that educators are well equipped and well supported, the same attitude was not evident among all participants.

5.4.3. Curriculum and teaching strategies

The curriculum and curriculum delivery discussions were characterised largely by dissatisfaction amongst educators. Dissatisfied with having to comply with a curriculum which seemingly does not meet the needs of vulnerable children, *Love* said:

> *Makes it difficult when you always have to stick to curriculum. If you see a child is struggling emotionally and say in an hour English lesson you want to talk to the child, at the same time you are depriving children of time and your assistance. Makes it difficult to always stick to curriculum.* **(Love, L1)**

The curriculum was further described by *Tulip* as not universally appropriate :

> *So, the Policies and curriculum, they do not cater for all children, especially in our school. This could work perfectly in an ex-Model C school or Private school, not this is a disservice to the children. That one curriculum sees to a private school and ex-model C school and our school. So how can you compare our school to an ex-model C school and a private school? It is very hard, and the class sizes are large. We come from a community we are the only Primary school in this area, so the children come here.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Implementing an unsuitable curriculum is further described as challenging and necessitated remedial work to support the vulnerable learner. *Tulip* stated the following:

> *We have a curriculum that we have to cover. With those learners who are vulnerable, we cannot complete the syllabus and basically, that is why we started Intervention, trying to give them extra attention and extra help. But in a class of 40 and more it is very difficult to give them the attention that they need and require. We feel that it is very hard to teach. It is very hard even though we try different methods. It is very difficult for them to understand, especially when new concepts are being taught.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Here the issue of whether the curriculum itself is a factor which contributes to child vulnerability emerged. Educators recognised the unsuitability of the curriculum and this is what was said by *Lily*:

> *Here I feel that the curriculum itself is not best suited to the learners. We are trying to achieve high standards, but they lack the basics. Curriculum is a factor contributing.* **(Lily, L1)**

One view was that the curriculum placed learners in a vulnerable position by virtue of it not being responsive and adaptive to the differing needs of vulnerable learners. A standardised curriculum is less appropriate than a blended curriculum to accommodate the vulnerable learner:

> *The children do not have time to learn in their own space. Sometimes they ned two weeks on one concept. They rushing to prepare them for a test. So, a lot of it, I think, is the curriculum we have to cover. The children don't have time to act, absorb. It is monotonous, like rote learning. It is too tight. I feel that we do not give children a chance anymore to learn at their own pace. Yes, OBE was a good initiative, but you cannot base all your teaching on OBE. It needs to be a mixture of both. Yes, we all have the same Assessment Standards and Outcomes of our lessons or the term, but we need to be given more time to understand concepts and more time basically to children. Some may be more advanced and grasp concepts more quickly, but other children they need more time.* **(Tulip, L1)**

Love agreed that the curriculum itself as well as the associated testing system were also not ideally suited to serve the needs of the child, suggesting that:

> *If I bring in CAPS, it is very fast paced. There is a lot to cover. It is about academics. The department calls on your statistics, want to know what the child is doing, what is going on. They do not want to know about the background of the child, the attitudes so it is a very one-track thing. Do not want to know background but just is child passing or failing? So, we are not looking at the bigger picture, where the child must go out into society and cannot function because in school the teacher has no time to talk. It is quite large, but I cannot tell you how deep it goes. Maybe if we spend a year with our children getting to know them, know our children not teaching.* **(Love, L1)**

Curriculum inappropriateness was largely agreed upon as a salient school-based contributor to an inadequate response to child vulnerability. Educators expressed frustration at inability to make changes since curriculum is streamlined with stringent time management.

The **SMT FG** acknowledged that there are deficiencies in the current curriculum from a management perspective, however little can be done to rectify this. This group also revealed that they have rather limited expectations of what some of these children may go on to achieve. Curriculum adjustments are made in accordance with this expectancy. This is what was said:

I think the thrust for us here at school is that how we can improve the life of that child knowing that the area is fraught with problems; poverty, food shortages, child- headed households, diseases, HIV/AIDS. We basically, all the teachers, the staff and the teachers try to look at ways to improving their lot and we do it via the curriculum, as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular involvement. We also do not have learners who have the academic calibre, so we find things that bring out the best in them and we would like to do sport on a much larger basis but given curriculum constraints of time. We are not able to do that all the time and we also try to establish partnerships, given our experiences with the children. **(SMT FG)**

Moving on to the **SBST FG***,* they reiterated that the curriculum itself was poorly suited for learners and alluded to a greater issues that exist. Even with adjustment, they struggle with the process of teaching and learning:

The curriculum itself is not best suited to the learners. We are trying to achieve high standards, but they lack the basics. Curriculum is a factor. We do not even get homework done. Homework does not get done. We've got to find the resources and tailor-make it to get done. Even with that we get 70 percent of the work done. We push and push. **(SBST FG)**

These responses and reflections highlight a seemingly flawed system where educators have identified the curriculum itself as potentially causative of vulnerability. In instances where educators recognise that the vulnerable child does not have the capacity to cope with the demands of the current curriculum, but as it is prescriptive, are not able to make suitable amendments event at management level; this may further perpetuate vulnerability. Despite adjusting teaching practices due to the inequities noted of the current system and despite identifying that it is unsuitable, it is apparent that the general feeling is one of needing to comply with, despite its poor applicability in practice. The deficiencies of the curriculum specifically pertaining to time, content suitability and practicality for learners as well as learner inability to connect with and understand curriculum content were shared amongst all participant groups.

A sense of powerlessness to change these circumstances existed also across all participant groups. Level one educators consistently referred to fundamental foundational aspects of learning which were lacking which compounded the plight of the vulnerable child. Managers

acknowledged curriculum inappropriateness as a contributor to child vulnerability and also as an indicator of vulnerability but did not have the authority to make transformative amendments to the curriculum and therefore described having to resigned themselves to doing whatever it is within their capacity to assist learners and educators. In the SBST, the importance of resourcefulness even in circumstances where there is a sense that they may not achieve absolute compliance with the expectations of the current curriculum was notable.

5.4.4. Medium of Instruction

The medium of instruction presents a challenge and renders learners vulnerable due to their inability to learn and to effectively communicate and express their needs in the school environment. *Fauna* expressed the following view:

> *We are an English medium school. For many learners, English is a second language. Sometimes there is a lack of communication between us because of the language barrier.* **(Fauna, L1).**

Another view concurred that the language barrier impedes the process of teaching and learning and causing vulnerability:

> *Language barrier is one. There is a child in my class totally not understanding. I call them, read question and explain, not giving answer. It is time-consuming to call and explain the question. All teachers should be developed. That will help with our dual teaching. If you speak their language you speak to their hearts.* **(Lily, L1)**

Light, however, disagreed and shared the following view:

> *I do not agree with language barrier. I am coming from studying in a private institution. They (learners) do not even know it in their own language; colours, adding, basic numbers. They cannot even recognise. Even in Addition, if I put it together in English and Isizulu they just do not understand. The Government does not see it. Make the easy way out and bring mark levels down. Take the easy way out. Unfortunately, that is the reality. I get very emotional. I am talking so loudly.* **(Light, L1)**

Whilst some educators identified that the failure to learn successfully due to barriers imposed by the medium of instruction makes learners vulnerable, an alternative view revealed

frustration and concern, stating that learners struggle even when the medium of instruction is in their mother tongue. *Moon* stated that:

> *They struggle even in mother tongue.* **(Moon, L1)**

The ***SMT FG*** revealed that although the language barrier may be recognised as a problem in the school environment and suggested mechanisms to overcome it from a management perspective. This is what was said:

> *The language barrier is a serious challenge. We try code-switching and whatever we can. Many do not understand so the work does not get done* **(SMT FG)**

The ***SBST FG*** indicated that medium of instruction and communication presents a barrier to learning. The overall view was:

> *It is a challenge in terms of the language. If all learners do not understand the language then learners are disadvantaged. This is a barrier to learning.* **(SBST FG)**

A lack of consensus regarding whether the language barrier is indeed causative or a significant contributor to perpetuating vulnerability existed comparing responses from different participants. Many Level one educators acknowledged that the language barrier impacts on teaching and learning negatively. Some educators recognised that where the child is unable to learn due to poor communication and a language barrier, this may cause child vulnerability.

Whilst others revealed that language has no bearing on learner performance, suggesting that children even struggle academically when taught in the appropriate home language. This has implications for the school in signifying that it may be necessary to truly evaluate how effectively they are managing children overall in terms of educating them, not just as it pertains to the vulnerable child but to all learner populations. The degree of frustration that exists amongst educators is again evident in responses as it pertains to the challenges presented in terms of limitations that occur as a result of language and medium of instruction .It represents a strained schooling system, which may, despite its best intentions, be perpetuating or causing child vulnerability unknowingly by not having definitive means to address such major inhibitors of the teaching and learning process.

5.4.5. Large class sizes and limited resources

Large numbers of children per class is a challenge particularly in affording children the attention they require to promote effective learning. The large classes themselves make some learners vulnerable. One view from *Misty* was:

> *The class sizes are big. 46 children in one class. Teachers trying to give individual attention. Class sizes and space. How do you give individual attention to 46 children in space of 30 minutes? I had 50 children when I first came here.* **(Misty, L1)**

Similarly, *Lily* suggested that large classes result in decreased time available to connect with and teach learners. Subsequently and indirectly subjects some of the other learners to neglect in the school setting. Large class sizes are not suitable for establishing good relationships between learner and educator. This is what was said:

> *Large numbers in class does not give you time for one on one. You do not look at good children in class. The weak children seated in front. We constantly concentrate on children who are really weak. The good children are not being recognised and they just mind their own business. You are not knowing them as a person. If child is an orphan or lost an uncle or anything happening in the family, you do not even have time to interact with them.* **(Lily, L1)**

Snow contextualised the reality of large class numbers, indicating that it is absenteeism in fact which offers a transient opportunity to work in an environment which is more suitable for teaching and learning due to reduced learner numbers:

> *The biggest barrier is class size. When 10 absent and if we have 30 in class, we work very well.* **(Snow, L1)**

Moving on to the *SMT FG* who acknowledged the challenges of teaching larger numbers of learners in the classroom:

> *Challenges would be in the classroom. It will be difficult for the teacher to manage over 40 of these children in the classroom because you have to constantly be talking to them as individuals and according to CAPS you have workloads.* **(SMT FG)**

The *SBST FG* described the challenges they encountered in managing large numbers of learners:

> *There are so many children that are vulnerable. We find that we are not doing them justice. We try to screen our worst- case scenario and we try to work with them. It is that niggling feeling that so many are lost along the wayside. The challenge is that we do not have the manpower to deal with so many children.* **(SBST FG)**

Large class sizes hamper teaching and learning. It is detrimental to creating positive change in education and is not conducive to meeting the needs of all learners, especially vulnerable learners. It impedes efforts of the educator to connect individually with the vulnerable learner. On a background of large class sizes, compounded with limited resources, the process of teaching is described as difficult. This was the overall view:

> *We have to use whatever resources we have to concretise concepts to the learners and use lots of repetition for them to learn and remember and the more exposure, the better. Sometimes it becomes difficult. In large classes we cannot give them individual attention and there is a lack of the learners own resources. Even the Grade 7s have no pen, they sit and do not do any work. Some of them just do not have the ability.* **(SBST FG)**

Lack of resources is seen to contribute to causing and perpetuating vulnerability in school. Many learners lack access to resources and depend on the school to provide for their basic needs and resources. The opinion of the majority of participants was that the school provides whatever resources they can to promote teaching and learning, but compounded with large class sizes, lack of resources renders children unable to learn. If a child is unable to learn and ill equipped to learn due to resource or environmental constraints this too causes child vulnerability. Here, the school is implicated in causing vulnerability.

5.4.6. Emerging issues regarding factors within the school which contribute to child vulnerability

The predominant perspective that emerged from educators was that they believed that the school and educators did not cause or perpetuate child vulnerability. One thing was clear; there was acknowledgement that the school did indeed play some role in this phenomenon through the child and educators' interaction in the school-home interface.

132

Systemic issues including lack of policy awareness, perceived policy inappropriateness, limited implementation of policy directives and poor curriculum suitability which did not meet the needs of the vulnerable learner are highlighted as factors within the school which contribute to child vulnerability. The medium of instruction and large class sizes also appeared to impact vulnerability.

5.5. CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 presented and discussed data generated from individual and focus group interviews in response to the research questions. This chapter revealed that educators and school leaders in this school experienced many challenges. The issues surrounding child vulnerability are complex and experiences have resulted in educators attaching different meaning to their experiences shaping their understanding of the phenomenon. The data revealed that in this school educators define and identify child vulnerability as a phenomenon which results from exposures in the home and community. Educators in the school recognise and report on the manifestations of vulnerability within the school in a similar way. They do not however, consider that the school itself is to be included as a potential contributor to child vulnerability. This was a common observation across all themes and is the most contentious and consistent discovery in this research.

The definitions and identifiers encompassed the physical and psychological effects of unmet needs of the child, indicators of deprivation, neglect and poverty as critical identifiers of child vulnerability. Social withdrawal and poor learner performance are recognisable features of child vulnerability. Reference is made to the observed appearance and physical condition of a child as an identifier of vulnerability secondary to neglect, poverty and deprivation. Even through passive observation, many challenges children face due to their challenging environments and circumstances were revealed.

The manifestations of child vulnerability were characterised by educator experiences of children faced with unmet basic needs which manifest as active, observable aberrant behaviour in the school environment. Disruptive behaviour, ill-discipline and violence coupled with disrespect, poor learner attitude and inappropriate value systems confronted educators. Whilst such behaviour cannot be solely attributable to vulnerable, it was commonly found to be present in instances where pre-existing vulnerability existed.

There is a negative impact of disruptive behaviour on the attitudes of educators toward learners. This impacted the overall vision of effective teaching and learning adversely as educators also expressed frustration, overwhelm, disillusionment and disbelief in the ability of learners to manage well academically and navigate the schooling system.

Contextual issues and challenges within the schooling environment which impact on educational outcomes and thus on the phenomenon of child vulnerability were deliberated on. The aspects of exploring the existence and applicability of policy around child vulnerability revealed that educators disagreed on its true value and practicality in managing a dynamic phenomenon. Policy knowledge-gap was apparent mostly amongst the newer educators. The deficits of the curriculum and its role in causing child vulnerability in the school setting was apparent. Teaching strategies that were rigid and the medium of instruction influenced the child's ability to learn in the school environment. It emerged that a child who is unable to learn for any reason is made vulnerable by that circumstance. Large class sizes and limited resources are identified as causing child vulnerability as well as perpetuating child vulnerability.

School managers maintained the stance that all attempts to implement policy, to recognise and correct what is within their mandate to do as management have been attempted. It was clear that management believes that in their roles they have exhausted all resources and commit to various initiatives to attempt to appropriately manage child vulnerability. In their roles as part of the School-Based Support Team tasked with also prioritising the less procedural aspects of manging the vulnerable child and additionally focusing on their pastoral role, there is recognition amongst all participants that a multitude of systemic deficiencies exist which impede appropriate and effective interaction with the vulnerable child, and which hinder their experience of the learning and teaching process.

CHAPTER 6: REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study I examined the dynamics of child vulnerability in a selected primary school from the perspective of school leadership and management. Drawing on experiences across research participants' professional roles and portfolios held within the school environment, I sought to understand the complexities of this phenomenon. Examining child vulnerability through the lens of Level one educators, SMT and the SBST revealed their understanding of the phenomenon. This illuminated perspectives which shape their beliefs about the phenomenon. Educator beliefs influence the way that they approach child vulnerability. Therefore, their beliefs have the potential to shape the way that vulnerability is managed in the school environment. Educators play a significant role in shaping child development in the school environment. They are also considered key figures in the school environment and exert considerable influence in the life of a child.

It was necessary to explore the dynamics of the phenomenon of vulnerability on a background of recognising deepening socio-economic burden, progressive decline in the quality of education coupled with poor learner performance and emerging issues pertaining to social cohesion. The nature and extent of child vulnerability were exposed, with manifestations of child vulnerability also described. The true impact of increased access to education was of interest, as beyond improved access to education I sought to discover more about perspectives on the quality of education provided for the vulnerable child. Critical engagement on vulnerability, including the difficulties facing learners and educators in our school system, offered a robust representation of the phenomenon. Understanding the phenomenon in this comprehensive manner and from an unfamiliar perspective offers alternative approaches to change it.

A changing climate in education characterised by a multitude of challenges emanating from the home, community and the school system position the school precariously. Exploring the deleterious effects of deprivation and the challenges that ensue from unmet needs are revealing. The phenomenon of vulnerability unfolded in this way, with an explicit association of deprivation with educational disadvantage, poor educational outcomes and propensity for poor quality of life. Primary school education forms amongst the most important foundational elements of a child's life. Perhaps then addressing the educational rights and needs of the

vulnerable child early on in life presents new opportunities for intervention and challenges to overcome (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015).

This concluding chapter is made of four sections. First I present a personal account of my observations of child vulnerability. Next I present a synopsis of chapters outlining information as my study progressed. This is followed by perspectives on the dynamics of child vulnerability which refers to findings, finally leading to articulation of the thesis of my study. Limitations of the study are then described with a concluding discussion.

6.2 THE TRAGEDY OF CHILD VULNERABILITY

My interest in exploring child vulnerability from the perspectives of educators and school leaders was ignited by observations made over the course of my career (see section 1.5). Uncovering harrowing realities facing vulnerable children is of grave concern. Exploring the way educators embrace the responsibility inferred in their roles as they co-exist with children within multiple systems, with each exerting varied degrees of influence, is both intriguing and exceptionally concerning. The realties facing the vulnerable child impacted the way they interacted with the school system. The phenomenon also seemed to have become increasingly complex in recent years, as social deprivation and the effects of inequality, inequity and stark realities of socioeconomic disparities intensify, continuing to erode aspects of South African society and particularly education. Despite formal and informal provisions made to address child vulnerability in the school system, the absolute momentum gained has been limited in my opinion. The existence of nationally enforceable policy and frameworks, the transformation agenda as well as international directives on managing child vulnerability and education has not translated to addressing the phenomenon definitively.

As I engaged with children who came to school from challenging backgrounds, working alongside and managing educators, whilst attempting to institute strategies to effectively engage vulnerable children, I recognised the tragedy of the situation. I realised that these children are reliant on the education system for more than education. In many instances, unfortunately, the education system was not able to extend itself to meet the needs of these children. In my experience, often due in part to failures in our own education system to meet the needs of both learners and educators.

That many of these children had immense potential, yet little evidence exists in our current school system that we are nurturing such potential universally is to me indeed a great tragedy. It represents generations of possibility and opportunity that may never be realised. Perpetuation of difficulty, of lack, of almost normalising difficulty which ought to be considered unacceptable. I wondered whether the systemic inadequacies of our schools, fragmentation of our societies and the multitude of limiting factors that exist within our schooling system would ever be fully revealed.

This phenomenon necessitated an evaluation of every reciprocal relationship within every system of influence with the child at its centre. Leadership within the participant school was explored. School leaders understanding of vulnerability is necessary to create and implement effective school-based strategies to address it. A lack of realistic representation of the nature of these relationships, actual insights from educators, children and communities and a lack of practical understanding of the realities of our school system may be undermining the quality of education. It became clear that a deeper understanding of the dynamics of child vulnerability was necessary. Uncovering the dynamics of this phenomenon follows through the synopsis of chapters.

6.3. SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS

In Chapter 1 of this report, I present the research problem which is to unravel the dynamics of child vulnerability in a South African Primary School with a Focus on Leadership and Management. I presented a background to the study and placed it in context within the South African Education System. I presented a statement of the problem, rationale and motivation for the study. I further contextualised child vulnerability and causality describing extreme poverty, child hunger, family fragmentation, malnutrition and resultant impaired growth and development.

I stated that whilst transformation in education in South Africa yielded improved access to education, it was accompanied by a myriad of challenges which continue to perpetuate inequality, challenge and lack in our current schooling system. Inadequacies of the education system to provide for the needs of children are attributed to multi-layered dysfunction. Highly racialised economic inequality in South Africa infiltrate every aspect of a child's life.

Furthermore, I stated that despite the South African Education system being undergirded by a strong legislative and policy framework there is seemingly a disconnect between policy and practice. I highlighted the challenges which exist with educator capacitation and fulfilment of expected duties and roles. A brief outline was given of the theoretical framework adopted and the methodology employed.

I formulated research questions to unravel the dynamics of child vulnerability. The manner in which the phenomenon of vulnerability played out in the school and how it was identified and experienced. Exploring why child vulnerability is encountered as it is, whilst exploring perspectives and encompassing lessons learnt in this whole quagmire around child vulnerability then contributed to articulation of the thesis of the study.

Chapter 2 examined existing research on the phenomenon of child vulnerability. This included examining forms of vulnerability and associated factors influencing child vulnerability. Recognising personal characteristics and multiple forms of vulnerability resulting from specific circumstances provided a greater breadth of understanding of the concept.

Literature reviewed revealed deepening social inequality. Adverse social circumstances were directly linked with vulnerability. Transformation of the schooling system has not been absolute with deficits in resources, leadership and support counteracting efforts to address vulnerability. Research also revealed, however, that resourcefulness in the context of child vulnerability should not be underestimated. Innovative, transformational leadership in resource constrained settings is directly correlated with the quality of its leaders, their adaptability and capacity to work in a manner that is resourceful and responsive to the needs of that particular setting. This contradicts what has been generally expected of resource constrained settings.

Transformational leadership was identified as a form of leadership that may be a key differentiator in the success or failure of interventions that seek to develop and support both educators and vulnerable children in resource constrained settings. Research revealed that there is a disconnect between policy and practice in delivery of education within schools and particularly pertaining to the management of the vulnerable child in South Africa. Whilst international provisions, governmental and institutional policy provision were available, research suggests that policy provision alone is inadequate.

In Chapter 3, I presented a three-pronged theoretical framework. I referred to Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory (1979), The theory of Transformational Leadership (1985) and Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (1943). These provided a suitable framework to describe the layers of influence that are important to recognise in evaluating a complex phenomenon, to recognise the way in which meeting the needs of individuals and collectives that exist within systems may drive true transformation. Considering multiple systems of influence, reciprocal interaction and influence, linear understanding and approaches to a dynamic phenomenon would be unsuitable. Therefore, considering the study through the lens of the transformational leadership theory considered visionary, innovative leadership. Each of these theories were described in relation to this study. Key aspects among these theories were highlighted to substantiate the adoption of these theories and endorse their relevance to this study.

Chapter 4 outlined the research design and methodology adopted in this study. This is a qualitative study, located in the interpretive paradigm. I explain the methodological approach describing the selection of a single case-study and explain characteristics thereof. The aspects of access to and selection of the site, selection of participants, methods adopted and data-generation methods are presented. Thematic analysis which I adopted was explained. The chapter concluded with an explanation of issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Chapter 5 was a presentation and discussion of data which emerged from interviews. There were individual interviews and focus-group interviews held. The actual words of participants were used. These verbatim quotes were analysed, and information from them were arranged in themes. There were three themes and each theme had sub-themes.

The themes were formulated as follows:
Theme One dealt with the understanding and identification of child vulnerability in school. It included defining vulnerability, indicators of child vulnerability and factors contributing to child vulnerability, both of which had four sub-themes. The indicators of vulnerability identified were social withdrawal, learner performance, attire and appearance, and poor health status. The factors identified were poverty and deprivation, neglect, unmet needs, challenging environments, and social circumstances.

Theme Two explored manifestations of child vulnerability within the school. The sub-themes were disruptive behaviour, ill-discipline and violence, disrespect, poor learner attitude and inappropriate value- systems, bullying, truancy, late-coming and absenteeism.

Theme Three examined factors within the school which contributed to vulnerability. Under this theme the sub-themes were policy and procedures, educator experiences and attitudes, curriculum and teaching strategies, medium of instruction, large classes, and limited resources. Key issues that emerged and lessons to be learnt were identified. The chapter folded with a summary of the chapter. In the following section I present the findings of this study.

6.4. PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD VULNERABILITY

This section has been set out in accordance with exploring perspectives derived from research participants' experiences in managing child vulnerability. Reference is made to findings in response to research questions and in the context of the theoretical framework.

In Chapter 1, I articulated the research problem of a systemically challenged and inequitable education system which may itself be a contributor to the phenomenon. These challenges are reflected in a system unable to meet the needs of the learner where the inadequacies of each level are superimposed, seemingly compounding the challenges of the other.

Vulnerability tends to be exclusively explored through the lens of the home environment, however, this study sought to examine the experiences of educators and school leaders in managing this phenomenon. I argued that the dynamics of the phenomenon of child vulnerability within the primary school context were not adequately researched. I also argued that the challenges which exist in education are often influenced by a multitude of social determinants. The concept of child vulnerability, the influence of the school and its constituents and the true impact of the greater community cannot be evaluated in isolation when conceptualising or characterising a dynamic phenomenon. I therefore, cast my research questions as follows:

The main research question explored is;

What are the dynamics of child vulnerability in a selected South African Primary School?

The research was guided by the following research sub-questions;

i. What is the nature and extent of child vulnerability in the work experiences of Level one educators, school management team (SMT) members and school-based support team (SBST) members?

ii. How does the phenomenon of child vulnerability manifest in the school in the experiences of Level one educators, school-based support team members (SBST) and school management team members (SMT)?

iii. Why do Level one educators, school- based support team members (SBST) and school management team members (SMT) understand and experience the phenomenon of child vulnerability within the school in the way that they do?

Findings pertaining to the main research question and sub-questions do display overlap and are not siloed. The questions enabled holistic exploration of the dynamics, nature, extent and manifestations of child vulnerability in the school setting, delving into why vulnerability is experienced in the way that it is. Sub-question four served as impetus for the construction of a model about the dynamics of vulnerability exploring what can be learnt about the phenomenon of child vulnerability and how it can in fact be addressed.

6.4.1. Key Dynamics

The most revealing finding which emerged in exploring what are the dynamics of child vulnerability was the importance of conceptual construction of vulnerability as a dynamic entity. It emerged that vulnerability is a phenomenon where the intricacies and relevance of every influence on the life of a child cannot be underestimated. Appreciating the definition, nature, extent, challenges faced and implications of such a phenomenon in the school environment is critical to ensure effectiveness of teaching and learning. According to Pillay (2018), learning difficulties, emotional, interpersonal, and behavioural issues in school-age children affect their academic and social development negatively (see section 2.3.2).

Drawing on research findings, vulnerability itself is dynamic too. When educators and managers described vulnerability, it seemed that there are core elements and then those elements of the phenomenon which are in evolution. These evolving elements are based on the nature of the child's exposure and experience in each system or environment. The Bioecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) describes how children develop within systems and the complex relationships that exist across multiple associated systems and in the

broader context of the world (see section 3.2.). It seems that as a child develops, they tended to face greater difficulty at each developmental phase and within each environment. The impression I got was that there is a snowball effect best describing the evolution of vulnerability.

The core elements of vulnerability seemed to be identified as home-based, whilst other issues facing children contribute to further acquisition of compounded, layered hindrances and disadvantage as children navigate successive phases of their lives. Whilst our schooling system is constructed with a vision for education provision to ultimately improve the quality of life of our citizens, it seems poised rather for children to inherit disadvantage perpetuated by fragmented social and educational systems.

Findings of this research did not suggest that we are making considerable progress in halting accumulating and evolving aspects of vulnerability. The understanding of vulnerability as a static concept is flawed and appreciating its dynamism tends to be a key determinant of whether deep, rich understanding is achieved by educators and school leaders. Vulnerability in this school tended to be described in this research by core characteristics; where there is an identifiable causative environment (usually the home), system (school) or prominent influence (parental, educator, caregiver), subsequent exposure to this identifiable cause, followed by affectation of the child in identifiable ways which manifest through their behaviour in certain settings (such as the school environment).

Whilst clear, systematic approaches to vulnerability are favourable, certain governance approaches which were rigid were somewhat challenging to reconcile with the experiences and beliefs of educators and school management that proposed a phenomenon which is dynamic. Findings suggest that in this school, the contrast of perceiving the phenomenon on one hand as evolving and on the other requiring static, prescriptive approaches may in fact be one of the gaps in their approach to child vulnerability. Whilst there is undeniable intent and commitment amongst educators and school managers to address child vulnerability when they are presented with it, this contrast is a hindrance and a source of frustration for educators. Ideation around a static nature of vulnerability is systemically flawed and conceptually inaccurate. This would require management intervention to firstly correct their own notions and prioritisation of the phenomenon and then proceed to support, develop and direct educators.

Interpreting the experiences of educators in this research revealed that recognition of vulnerability was done with ease but strategic correlation of interventions, policies and strategies that understand and respond to dynamism lacks profoundly in our current schooling system. The realities of circumstances within this school reflect what is occurring in the broader national educational system, where there is concern about improved access to schooling, but no major progress made in improving the quality of education provision within the school due to many barriers to achieving this. Vulnerability is one such phenomenon that should not be considered a barrier to achieving quality education, but rather reflects the total failure of our society to protect children or create homes, communities, schools, countries and a world where they may thrive.

In defining vulnerability, aspects of compromised care, state of risk for harm and actual circumstances which have rendered children vulnerable in both the school and community emerged from this research (See section 2.1.). Whilst educators in this research displayed ease of recognition of what constitutes vulnerability, my impression was that their perceptions around causation of vulnerability were not only static, but also directed primarily to the home environment. Children are subjected to poverty and deprivation, unmet basic needs, experience violence and abuse, have unfavourable living conditions in challenging home environments (See section 2.2.)

Environments characterised by lack of basic needs worsen the situation in the school environment. Unfulfilled needs can certainly cause vulnerability (See section 3.6.1.) What was interesting within this research is that whilst it is common knowledge that needs of children result in vulnerability, it emerged that needs of educators which are not being met in the professional environment also contribute to perpetuating child vulnerability. This is critical as even where the identification of vulnerability was easy, educators did not feel adequately supported or capacitated to manage its causation. In this setting, causation was almost exclusively classified as emanating from the home environment which seemed to appear as a common thread in this research. Educators felt incapable of addressing vulnerability due to inadequate training and little consideration given to the overwhelming expectations of them around what is realistically accomplishable. The need to work collaboratively with the home and community to address child vulnerability was not realised in this school.

143

Delving further into educator understanding of the phenomenon revealed that a divide does exist between educator, child, school and community. There was a sense of despondency and a degree of frustration amongst some educators primarily due to recognition that there is a disconnect between school and community despite multiple initiatives and efforts. Some educators felt that some parents, caregivers and families are not available, accessible, present or capable to manage this phenomenon collaboratively. More than a disconnect between school and community, research findings pointed to a disconnect which exists within the school itself.

Educators felt that despite their best efforts to institute strategies to address child vulnerability, the multitude of challenges faced made even their best efforts unsuccessful. This would render recognition of child vulnerability in the school environment somewhat of a futile exercise if there continued to be a sense of resignation around what could truly be achieved to address it. Moreover, the issue of whose responsibility it is to address the dynamic issues associated with vulnerability became apparent. It emerged that the challenges experienced in the school setting with inability to translate the important starting point of identification of child vulnerability to directed intervention has caused educator disillusionment. Some educators believe that they have a limited role in managing child vulnerability. Even in instances where they have extended themselves in their professional capacities, there is a sense that it is unfortunately inadequate to achieve true transformation. This points to a disconnect between educators and school leadership in terms of communication and depth of engagement on challenges faced, beliefs and positioning on the matter.

Recognising vulnerability in the school setting was not challenging. The challenge, rather, was that after recognising that vulnerability exists, there was not consensus about how to proceed to actually intervene effectively. According to Akwara et. al (2010), recognising vulnerability informs resourcing areas of need, directs policy formulation (see section 5.2.3.) What emerged is in this setting educators were expected to follow policy, yet the very policy was deemed unsuitable to manage a dynamic phenomenon by the educators entrusted to implement it. School management were far more optimistic that policy driven school-based interventions were effective in recognising and addressing vulnerability. School management encouraged active participation in intervention programmes and formulation of strategies derived from policy to address the challenges identified. It emerged that educators were unconvinced that current strategies were satisfactory to meet the needs of children, themselves, the school or

community at large plagued by poverty, deprivation and a multitude of other challenges that less optimistically, did not look to have any concrete, achievable solution in sight.

In exploring the dynamics of vulnerability, the negative impact of deprivation and the manner in which it pervaded all aspects of education and how that translated to recognisable detriment in significant parts of the life of a child was profound. What emerged is that in response to the deprivation that exists within the home environment, the school was expected to fill the gap providing relief in some way for the children deprived of basic necessities. Whilst no formal training was provided to educators to identify indicators of child vulnerability, most educators understood that considering the community in which the school was located, it would be necessary for them to be able to recognise indicators of child vulnerability. Educators and school management agreed that lack and unmet needs inadvertently translated to children being disadvantaged in the school environment.

Educators and school management also agreed that social withdrawal, self-isolation, poor academic performance, unkempt appearance and physical signs of ill-health were key indicators of child vulnerability. Deprivation and unmet needs compounded circumstances facing learners in the school environment putting them at a disadvantage compared with their peers. Learners who experienced adversity in the home environment seemed to not have much relief in the school environment either as educators expressed the unlikelihood of improving the quality of education without improved socio-economic circumstances and home circumstances.

Educators failed to distinguish disruptive behaviour as a matter of ill-discipline from that which may be construed as behavioural manifestations of child vulnerability. In many instances, behavioural manifestations of vulnerability were associated with violence, disrespect, poor learner attitude and inappropriate, disruptive behaviour. Disruptive behaviour and the negative emotion it elicited amongst educators was apparent. The close association of disruptive behaviour with child vulnerability appeared to be a key factor that negatively affects how educators felt about their roles in managing the phenomenon and their capacity to handle it at all. The interactions educators had with disruptive children triggered overwhelm and disillusionment amongst educators. This type of behaviour attributed to an array of unmet needs with resultant child vulnerability. The association of child vulnerability with disruptive behaviour is not ideal as it left educators with a sense of frustration about the situation which

exists in the school environment. This key finding portrays the effects of subjective experiences on the perception of a phenomenon and how understanding is necessary to correct and address it.

Overall, in examining the dynamics of child vulnerability, inadequacies are obviously systemic within this school. The home environment does indeed play a critical role, however, the reality is that deepening socioeconomic issues which traverse the school and community cannot be expected to improve in the near future. These are complex, dynamic challenges with multiple issues superimposed; one inadvertently compounding the other making its management ever more elusive. Educators feel overwhelmed, unsupported and ill-equipped to manage child vulnerability. Identifying the phenomenon is contingent on discernment of educators to recognise identifiers or multiple factors which is seemingly done with ease, however, managing them in combination proves challenging.

In seeking to explore the dynamics of child vulnerability, I presented three theoretical lenses which I felt had particular relevance as I explored the dynamism of the phenomenon (See section 3.1). These were Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory (1979), the Theory of Transformational Leadership (1985) and Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (1943). The application of these theories in a dynamic way also allows one to examine and focus on contextual aspects of education; the complex system of relationships which exist within an environment, the individual and collective needs of those who exist within these environments and the way that individuals within these environments exert influence on each other.

Moreover, the intersection of theories provides an opportunity to also examine the needs of each individual within each system and what type of leadership would be required to address these needs and change these realities. Setting out to explore the broad area of dynamics revealed how the circumstances which exist in every layer of influence or in this case, system (the home, greater community and school forming the most important systems) impacts the other ultimately. Using Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological system's theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) the child was positioned at the centre of multiple systems of influence with the school forming a key aspect or layer. Deficiencies that exist within these systems surfaced.

Aligning the three theories as a framework for creating a relevant, collaborative approach to child vulnerability is necessary to manage the phenomenon within and across systems where

prioritisation of needs ought to direct any intervention. It emerged that this is not the current approach. Furthermore, Transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) conceptualises how educators in their roles as leaders have an inherent responsibility to promote transformation, change, adaptively formulate solutions ultimately shaping the process of teaching and learning and how that may be achieved. This research revealed that the development of educators toward a goal of building transformational leadership and promoting that ideation amongst educators ought to be prioritised. Conventional training and professional development initiatives are inappropriate and flawed systemically. Currently educator training is inadequate and ought to be amended in accordance with school contexts, challenges, resources and structure in order for it to have any relevance. It emerged that educators are not adequately equipped or skilled to manage child vulnerability with ease.

The third theory Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (Maslow, 1943) outlined the needs of children as well as the needs of educators and the effects of unmet needs. Connecting the three theories on aspects of the systems in which vulnerable children live, environmental contexts, needs and leadership required also allowed for findings to be characterised. A distinguishing outcome in establishing synergy of the theories was that the contexts in which children, educators and leaders operate within considering the needs of all individuals involved, and responsive, innovative, transformative leadership should not be separated and yet seem to be in the current school system. Evidence from the researched school suggests that the school itself, therefore, ought to be considered a source of vulnerability.

Although school managers believed that from an administrative, structural and organisational perspective the school is able to manage the phenomenon, overlooked sources of vulnerability emerged as policy inappropriateness, ineffective policy implementation, curriculum inappropriateness, inadequate educator support and educator training, prioritisation of context and needs did however feature as inhibitory to achieving quality education.

6.4.2. Nature and extent of vulnerability

The findings further revealed the vast extent of child vulnerability in the school. Vulnerability exists, it seems to be becoming more complex to manage and the school environment is not favourably equipped to manage the emerging and evolving realities of a vulnerable child in a challenged school system. From this emerged a key dynamic that every aspect of the current education system is sub-optimally capacitated to manage child vulnerability transformatively.

Organisational and administrative issues within the school make the task of educators challenging thereby rendering aspects of the teaching and learning process inadequate to address the many causes and effects of vulnerability effectively in the school environment. Whilst there are attempts from school leadership to provide support, monitoring and formal communication channels, the strategy and implementation needs revision. As we see in the theoretical framework of this study, the theory of transformational leadership identifies non-linear, responsive, adaptive leadership as a characteristic of exceptional leaders and would be appropriate in adverse circumstances and environments. The overwhelm, frustration and hopelessness suggests that perhaps a transformative approach would allow for the development of a school environment that does not merely follow policy but adapts and creates a more functional system.

The theoretical framework in this study also suggests that multi-layered approaches to finding solutions are more effective in identifying the levels of influence and determining the extent of vulnerability which is necessary to fully appreciate the level of input and compounding influences. How the phenomenon emanates from these levels of influence and is compounded by them too, describes how intricately it is associated with people and environments.

A key overlapping finding which emerged about the nature of vulnerability was that it is complex. It is multifaceted and as such educators found it challenging to address. Applying the Bioecological systems theory (1979) also suggests that uncovering any dynamic concept would therefore require exploration of the concept as it exists within its multiple contexts (See section 3.2). The nature of vulnerability is that it is far easier to recognise than to intervene on.

I established that participants shared some common beliefs on the nature of the phenomenon of child vulnerability. This was encouraging as the complex nature of child vulnerability cannot be overlooked (see section 2.4.1.) and would require a co-ordinated response to address it to avoid unfavourable outcomes (Chereni & Mahati, 2014). Beliefs held about the nature of vulnerability were that it is to be considered in two ways. The first finding was that the nature of vulnerability was that it involved even a state of being at risk of compromised care. The second was vulnerability referred to children who have actual emotional, social or cognitive barriers often due to unmet needs and usually as a result of the environments or systems in which they find themselves.

148

Establishing the nature of vulnerability as both a potential and actual state is a significant finding and correlates with literature on the phenomenon (see section 2.1.). Susceptibility to compromised care, lack, unmet needs being considered as vulnerability is a valuable insight and considered a key finding in this research. This ideation about the nature of vulnerability accounts not only for the easily observable or established recognisable difficulties which children face but that which is not immediately apparent which can be harmful to children. This has potential to shift conventional thought on child vulnerability. The fact that educators understood that there is far more to vulnerability than what they may be able to identify is arguably one of the most powerful of the findings. It displays a degree of self-awareness about the need for growth and development amongst educators which is a positive finding. This has not, however, obviously translated to any improvement in managing the phenomenon in the school environment yet.

This implies that to be successful in understanding vulnerability, school management and educators would have to be discerning, even pre-emptive in recognising aspects of the school itself which places learners at risk for vulnerability. Moreover, translating the knowledge and understanding educators and managers have to actionable, relevant, meaningful interventions seems limited. The home environment being considered causative also contributes to a degree of reservation amongst educators which further exacerbates the complex nature of the phenomenon.

Delving further into the nature of vulnerability revealed that educator experiences shaped their beliefs, that vulnerability is primarily a function of where it originated. A common stance was that children were rendered vulnerable by sources outside of the school. As such educators did not consider themselves or the school as a major contributor to the phenomenon. This was also the view shared by school management. It would follow that this understanding also shaped educator impressions of what their role is and what it ought to be in managing the vulnerable child. This may be considered a limiting perspective on the part of educators and school managers. Considering the amount of time that a child spends in the school environment, the nature of interaction between child and educator and peers, there is certainly potential for the school to contribute to child vulnerability.

Whilst circumstances within the home environment may undoubtedly contribute to vulnerability, it would seem that if the school solely focuses on issues that occur within the

149

home and not recognise how the school itself may place children in a vulnerable position, it will be to the detriment of the child's progress and development, another key finding.

There was consensus on a broad spectrum of possible identifiers of child vulnerability, most of which were considered to be from circumstances outside of the school. The nature of vulnerability was understood to be characterised by neglect and deprivation. Amongst the first features of poverty and deprivation are the way that the child presents in the school environment. In this research it emerged that even just the unkempt appearance of a learner may provide clues to a lack of basic necessities and neglect.

Many of the findings reveal aspects of children's lives which are in contravention of basic human rights to proper housing, healthcare, food, water and security. According to the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996), children have a right to family care or appropriate alternative care (see section 2.7). Children are also meant to be protected from maltreatment, abuse, neglect or degradation. Furthermore, children have the right to basic nutrition, basic healthcare services and social services. Educators in this research significantly identified deficiencies in provision in every one of those basic rights. This leads one to critically analyse the injustice and unfairness of this phenomenon. It is not enough that we consider whether these children are equipped for the day at school when their basic human rights are impeded.

It is in fact predictable that with children's basic needs encumbered that academic progress would be thwarted. When one considers the magnitude of the socioeconomic inequalities, inequities and the disadvantageous situation this positions children in, the nature of vulnerability is indeed worrying. I fear that the findings of this study regarding vulnerability reflect deep-rooted problems serving as an ominous warning of challenges that lie ahead for children, for educators, for schools and for society as a whole with profoundly undesirable consequences if it were to continue in this way.

6.4.3. Manifestations of vulnerability

The phenomenon of child vulnerability manifested in the school in observable ways according to participants (see section 2.3.2.). Dreyer (2017) proposed that the manifestation of vulnerability in the school environment are varied and may include amongst others disruptive or inappropriate behaviour, poor concentration, truancy and absenteeism, poor academic performance, dropping out of school and anti-social behaviour. Bullying, ill-discipline and lack

of respect for authority featured amongst other manifestations. Whilst it is universally acceptable that child vulnerability exists, its recognition alone has not translated to wholly addressing the problem of vulnerability in the school. The education system is systemically flawed with its particular inadequacies affecting the vulnerable child (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). Despite the vision of the transformation agenda, it would seem that there may be inadequacies in the existing strategy to address child vulnerability. The findings suggest same.

One of the findings was that ill-discipline and disruptive behaviour are considered synonymous with underlying child vulnerability in this school. This view is contentious and may be a hindrance to fostering more positive attitudes amongst educators to address the phenomenon simply because restless, ill-mannered and disruptive learners frustrate educators. Frustration and overwhelm may not elicit the empathetic, collaborative response required to manage child vulnerability. Ill-discipline ought to be attributed to a lack of socialisation. Educators did not feel capacitated to manage disruption particularly due to large class numbers. They argued that the behaviour of a child in the school environment revealed how factors within the home environment such as abuse, deprivation and unmet needs shape a child's behaviour.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems theory (1979) describes how systems children are in would influence their development and subsequently a child's behaviour which varies in different contexts. This is of significance in examining the reason why vulnerability manifests in the school environment as it does and why children would behave in this manner in the school context. Some educators propose that the school is a haven for learners, a welcomed relief from challenging home environments.

Contrasting perspectives position the school as systemically challenged, not necessarily equivalent to those challenges which exist in the home, but those which exist, nonetheless. Although the school may provide an alternative to the home environment, it is not necessarily positioned to provide respite. In accordance with the ideation that environments may elicit different behaviours posited by the by the Bioecological systems theory (1979), it would be of interest and a productive exercise for educators and school managers to be more concerned with what elements of the school environment that make it a favourable environment for disruption and correct them.

151

Furthermore, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (1943) asserts that basic needs are arranged hierarchically as motivational and behavioural drivers (see section 3.6.1). Therefore, it is worth considering that those children whose basic needs are unmet in the school environment may well engage in attention-seeking or disruptive behaviour in the school environment. A paradigm shift is necessary.

School managers recognised that disruptive behaviour and ill-discipline affect the school negatively. However, school managers believed that efforts were extensive to manage discipline and absenteeism. Absenteeism due to adult responsibilities being conferred to children amidst challenging social circumstances was described by educators. Educators revealed that disruption is quite significant and negatively affects school performance of learners. Unfavourable academic outcomes due to learner disinterest, apathy, unmet needs and ill-discipline are discouraging for educators and school leadership. A key dynamic in this study is that vulnerable children do not tend to perform well at school. Learner preparedness for school due to resource constraints and home circumstances seem to be limited.

Additionally, homework is often incomplete or not done attributable to learners having no supervision in some instances after school hours. This shows that there is a perceived lack of parental involvement in the education of the child and lack of co-operation with the school. The triad of child-parent-educator is incredibly significant and each individual within it is inadvertently interconnected. It emerged that some educators feel they cannot rely on parents to intervene to correct deviant behaviour which tends to result in poor performance as an almost definite eventuality. Educators describe feelings as though they have exhausted efforts to correct behaviour in their personal capacities and via school management. School managers maintain optimism that much can be done to address this.

There seemed to be a breakdown in communication between school, home and community particularly to address manifestations of vulnerability. Some parents were described as not responsive, and to further complicate matters, instances where parents become unhappy when educators attempt to discipline the child make it a delicate situation to navigate. This reflects a system that is not collaborative. Leadership intervention is necessary to improve the relationship between school and home. I argue that transformational leadership is necessary as it has the potential to engage educators, parents, the greater community as well as potentially learners in the achievement of sound educational objectives as described in the literature (Bush

& Middlewood, 2013). The current traditional leadership styles, whilst effective to some degree may not be appropriate to stimulate educators into productivity, to seek innovative solutions that may impact the school system meaningfully and also to transcend beyond the multitude of challenges facing them in managing child vulnerability (Money, 2017). Lack of leadership seemed not to be the problem anyway.

Vastly different accounts of the circumstances and incongruence about what is indeed necessary and achievable to overcome disruptive behaviour, bullying, absenteeism and poor performance amongst educators and managers is indeed problematic. Educators had negative perceptions about what is in fact achievable in the current education climate, but school management felt that collaborative practices were in existence and that the circumstances were challenging but not dire.

Both educators and school managers believed they had been resourceful in managing manifestations of child vulnerability. Attempts to engage with allied professionals and the greater community signifies that school managers recognise the challenges that exist and accept responsibility for driving intervention strategies. In addition to collaboration with parents and the greater community as well as external stakeholders, it would be beneficial for school management to restrategise and reconfigure the approach to engagement with educators both individually and in the classroom setting. School managers also seem to recognise that curricula are prescriptive and that there is evidence that children are inadequately engaged. This, however, is seemingly beyond the ambit of school leadership to act on definitively and would require escalation for further evaluation and intervention.

6.4.4. Understanding the phenomenon
According to Uso-Domenech and Nescolarde-Selva (2016), our beliefs arise through our experiences. Beliefs, reason and experience are closely related, whilst context is dynamic and is also formed upon our experiences, reasoning and beliefs (Uso-Domenech & Nescolarde-Selva, 2016). It emerged that the phenomenon of child vulnerability within the school is experienced in the way that it was due to both individual and contextual factors. One of the reasons why educators experience vulnerability in the way that they do may be attributed to a belief system or a mechanism constructed from their knowledge base and drawing on experiences they have had managing vulnerable children in the school setting. Educators interpret or experience child vulnerability in the way that they did because they recognised that

the barriers to achieving good quality education are systemic. It seemed to leave educators feeling perplexed about where to start, what else could be reasonably expected of them to do and requiring more guidance and assistance. Despite the existence of the SBST, educators did not appear to believe that they were supported to effectively address extreme poverty, abuse, neglect and deprivation.

Lack of policy knowledge and understanding further influenced the way that educators experienced child vulnerability. Not being aware of policy that exists which directs the management of the vulnerable child did in fact make educators feel unqualified to provide necessary care for these children in accordance with their needs. School managers, however, felt that they effectively enforced policy in the school environment. What was quite interesting was that existing policies were described by some educators as available to direct approaches to managing child vulnerability, yet they were also described as ineffective, irrelevant and impractical. This discordance represents the way that vulnerability is understood and the internal conflict it creates amongst some educators.

Individual care and nurturing were recognised by educators as an unmet need of children in the school setting. Educators believed that there is a lack of resources both human and other, for them to perform their duties appropriately. Lack of parental support and the administrative burden exacerbate an already challenging situation. Furthermore, a belief held was that education is of secondary importance to children who face having their most basic needs unmet. Some educators felt that education is not a priority for children who are vulnerable, a perception which also may have affected their own belief systems and experiences of the child in the school environment. Another overlapping view was that educators again appeared to believe that the child is made vulnerable by sources outside of the school. Educator beliefs and attitudes did in fact influence the vulnerable child, but educators were divided. Some educators were deeply affected by learner behaviour resulting in aggravation, frustration and a sense of loss of control.

Others were largely optimistic which influenced how they interacted with children and how they experienced the phenomenon. It seemed that some participants had resigned themselves to accepting that addressing vulnerability is beyond their control. It emerged that the issue of vulnerability may not be their duty or responsibility to handle in the school environment as they are not adequately trained. It was also highlighted that the experiences that they have had

has led them to become disillusioned and to doubt that they would make any difference. Educators feel ill-equipped and inadequately supported to address systemic issues that exist in the dynamic phenomenon of child vulnerability.

Whilst the school management team felt empowered and fervently believed that educators are well equipped and well supported, the same attitude was not evident among all participants which has implications for school management to intervene to correct these perceptions and collectively construct a system that would be suitable and conducive to teaching and learning. The implication of recognising challenging home environments and social circumstances as sole contributors to vulnerability is that it can be damaging and counterproductive to achieving the aims of inclusive education where educators and school managers are in fact the gatekeepers of the school environment and dictate to some degree the course of a child's education experience. It introduces an element of separation of educator or leader from a responsibility to the child, rather than promotes connectedness to the plight and experience of the vulnerable child. In drawing these distinctions, the psychology of addressing the phenomenon may be distorted eventually affecting the way in which the phenomenon is ultimately approached; whether a siloed approach from the school and its constituents or a more favourable integrated and collaborative approach between home and school and other stakeholders.

This points to another key dynamic which influences why educators experience vulnerability in the way that they do; finding means to fulfil their many roles is challenging. Many children who attend this school come from fragmented homes. In some instances, parents who are there are challenged by poverty, challenging home circumstances and unemployment. It is noted that in a few cases there is no adult at home, so there is a lack of supervision. Literature reveals that The National Education Policy Act no. 27 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) outlines seven roles of educators which include learning mediator, interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials, scholar, researcher and life-long learner, assessor and learning area, subject, discipline, phase specialist. Furthermore, the pastoral care role in the community would require that the educator developing a sense of respect and responsibility toward colleagues and the community at large, whilst creating a supportive and empowering environment for learners which is needs responsive. On a background of children experiencing a lack of supervision in the home environment, deprivation, poverty, abuse and family fragmentation, the requirements of fulfilling these roles are amplified. The responsibility to provide the pastoral care for children

in addition to fulfilling academic aspects of their professional roles is quite demanding in the current context.

Coupled with another dynamic I noted which was an apparent lack of respect for the authority of the educator in the school setting, it has indeed affected the way that the educator experiences child vulnerability. Educator attitudes are influenced by the nature of their interaction with the child and the effects of strained interaction where they are expected to fulfil demanding roles can be negative. Educators' perception of children; their behaviour, value systems and capabilities influenced the way they experienced child vulnerability.

Finally, in their roles as leader, administrator and manager educators are expected to participate in school decision-making structures providing support for learners and colleagues in a way that is responsive to challenging circumstances and needs. Developing mutually beneficial, collaborative, open, inclusive environments for educators and involving them in decision making pertaining to the vulnerable child is necessary. Furthermore, improving communication within the school between learners, educators and management is necessary. Striking a balance between maintaining sound relationships between educators and school managers and also creating a clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities to manage the vulnerable child is essential.

6.4.5. Leadership and management

This study is concerned with the leadership and management of child vulnerability. Literature revealed that leadership includes the responsibility to develop and support educators through influencing others' actions in achieving desirable outcomes (Cuban, 1988). According to Chereni and Mahati (2014), the inability of school leaders to understand and act on the complexities of vulnerability would render their interventions ineffective (see section 2.4.1). It emerged that educators and school leaders experienced child vulnerability quite differently. Moreover, this difference in experience and perception may indicate a lack of awareness on either the side of educators or school leadership or I propose rather of both groups, on how the other feels and experiences this phenomenon. Ultimately, the responsibility of ensuring that there is better communication within the school system lies with school management.

Vulnerability was described as typically caused by deprivation and unmet needs. School managers were themselves easily able to recognise vulnerability within the school

environment. The impression I got was that school management had a fair understanding of the community in which they operate. They have forged relationships with some community members particularly as it pertains to garnering sponsorship for the school. Leveraging existing relationships to address aspects of child vulnerability within the broader community would be appropriate and positively impact the circumstances within the school. School management agreed that more needs to be done collaboratively to address the profundity and complexity that is child vulnerability. School managers were yet to create a school environment which was successfully able to provide for basic needs of children in a sustainable way despite multiple coordinated attempts and admirable initiatives. Education will still be engaged on as a higher order need until such a time that the most basic of needs are addressed. Ultimately this would mean that if basic needs are not met, children may never achieve their true academic potential. The urgency to intervene therefore cannot be more apparent.

Adopting transformational leadership approaches is necessary in this school as traditional approaches to child vulnerability have not yet yielded considerable shifts in the school environment. A change in management approach is necessary to create new perspectives and promote collaboration and adaptation to adverse circumstances. Through transformational leadership, proper organisational directives and appropriate development plans may be implemented as an imperative to lead visionary transformation within the school (see section 3.3). Strategic transformational leadership to mobilise educators to work to achieve similar vision and make fundamental changes in education is necessary. Provision of support by managers in terms of motivation of educators is necessary considering revealing findings suggesting educator overwhelm.

I got the sense amongst some educators that there was indeed a feeling of disempowerment to change these circumstances. Where even the most fundamental foundational aspects of learning which were not easily accomplished, educators continued to highlight the home environment as causative, but also identified school-based aspects of the curriculum, policy and bureaucratic administration that in fact are proving detrimental to learner progression. Whilst managers acknowledged curriculum inappropriateness, medium of instruction and poor communication as a contributor to child vulnerability they too seemingly felt disempowered as there was a sense that they are to be diligent and resourceful, and anyway ultimately lack the authority to change things prescribed and regulated by higher authorities.

As pointed out earlier, knowledge of policy and consistency in policy implementation within this school is deficient. Ensuring dissemination of information pertaining to child vulnerability and implementation of directives are a function of school management. Policy itself was described as inadequate to meet the needs of children, yet amidst the challenges faced, efforts to formally report and act on the inadequacies suggested in current policy were not apparent. The lack of knowledge regarding policy requires rectification by school management. Finding means to apply policy in a way that is relevant to a school environment is an undertaking that school managers ought to prioritise. Communication with those responsible for drawing up policy is necessary via school management if there are identifiable flaws in policy instead of allowing this knowledge to fester and remain unactioned in the school environment.

A lack of consensus regarding whether the medium of instruction has a bearing on learner performance existed in this school. School managers themselves did not seem to have intervened on issues around the medium of instruction. There is not a sense that educators and managers have developed any strategies to overcome the language barrier. Problems with even the most elementary aspects of teaching and learning were evident. That children struggle academically even when taught in the appropriate home language presented a new dimension of challenges reflecting a failing system.

Providing educators with the opportunity to express the realities of what they experience in the classroom and of their interactions would encourage greater collaboration. Educators in this school seemed to try to navigate the challenges faced independently to some degree and sought assistance from management on matters that they found overwhelming. School managers are obliged to ensure that educators are trained, mentored and adequately exposed to policies and frameworks that will enable their capacitation to manage child vulnerability. Despite this obligation, there is evidence that some educators within this school are not yet orientated or trained. Whilst much of the responsibility is held in school management, educators, however, would need to also assume responsibility for the duties expected of them and find means to adapt to the requirements of the current schooling system reasonably. Whilst school management may hold the ultimate responsibility for certain aspects such as policy provision, implementation, professional development, staff strengthening, influencing new perspectives and innovative solutions through strategic leadership, there cannot be total dependence on school managers to manage child vulnerability.

6.4.6. Reflecting on child vulnerability

This section reflects on the findings of this research in accordance with research sub question four which sought to explore what can be learnt about the phenomenon of child vulnerability and how it can in fact be addressed. What can be learnt about child vulnerability is that it is a multi-faceted, dynamic phenomenon. Interpretation of findings also led to the construction of a model which may be employed in schools to approach this phenomenon alternatively. I propose a model called The Collaborative-Multi-systemic Integration Model (CMI) that is specifically developed for use by school managers, SBST and educators for approaching child vulnerability. This term was coined as the core components of the model were developed in accordance with findings of the research questions and are explained rather than illustrated. Key findings directed creating potential solutions. Change and transformation may be achieved through recognising the necessity for multi-level systems insight integration and collaboration within the school and between the school and the greater community.

6.4.6.1. Collaboration

A key finding within this study was that there is a divide that exists between educator and school management within this school. What can be learnt about this reality is that it is counterproductive. Collaboration in its simplest sense in this research refers to working together toward a common goal sand this is fundamentally what is required to address this. I got the impression that a lack of communication and collaboration between educator and manager which may have inhibited educator expression of the challenges and effects of those challenges on their capacities to carry out their professional duties. Educator inclusion in decision making and input on the adaptation of policies and strategies as it pertained to child vulnerability was limited which is a lost opportunity for the school to extract critical information that should form the basis of any intervention strategy.

Collaboration between educator and learner is also an essential and perhaps overlooked aspect of school improvement. Developing rapport, trust and understanding between educator and learner may require a more deliberate attempt at forging collaborative relationships with learners within the school environment. Affording children greater responsibility and including them in the process of learning and teaching in a structured manner, despite the numerous challenges facing both learner and educator, may allow for better relationship building and set foundation elements necessary to work collaboratively instead of in opposition.

Collaboration between educators is indeed necessary within the school environment to provide support, direction and encouragement amongst peers. It emerged that while some educators felt well equipped, adequately trained, skilled and comfortable managing child vulnerability, others did not. Formal mechanisms to promote collaboration and universalise knowledge and skills amongst educators may only be achieved through collaboration and must be instituted. Collaboration both within the school and externally would require partnership development. A significant divide existed between school and home environment. There was a sense that educators were frustrated with the lack of collaboration between parents and school. This necessitates partnership development between school and home. This requires partnership development and collaboration between the school and the greater community including key stakeholders.

Collaboration would specifically necessitate seeking to develop partnerships with relevant stakeholders to address social deprivation, neglect and unmet needs. One of the gaps identified was lack of parental guidance and supervision, which was linked lack of respect for authority, anti-social behaviour and lack of values in the classroom. The linking of home, community and school is necessary. This will forge relationships with those who exert key influences in the lives of children. Ultimately ensuring that these environments are positive, consistent in managing the needs of children and a synergistic extension of the other to provide support and act in in the best interests of the child is what is required to address vulnerability. Some suggestions to address vulnerability also include intensifying co-ordinated collaborative efforts pre-emptively. Improving and integrating values education, more frequent counselling provision on site, occupational therapy services, sports programmes, arts and culture programmes is necessary. Collaboration with community organisations including religious, academic, sporting, cultural and access to rehabilitative services would also advance the aims of establishing good, sound relationships within the community. This school does engage with many of these stakeholders already. The school has established relationships with the police forum, Child Welfare, two religious organisations. They have instituted an academic intervention programme and formal disciplinary intervention. There are still challenges with violence, bullying, drug misuse and abuse as well as ongoing social deprivation and deterioration in social circumstances of the community. Poor academic performance and ill-discipline remain areas they need support in.

The collaborative-multisystemic integration model encourages partnerships which are specific, co-ordinated, strategic and informed by a comprehensive assessment of the child early on. Early intervention through establishing collaborative partnerships with the home, community, government organisations and networking with neighbouring schools is potentially transformative and is necessary to address vulnerability. This model would allow educators and school management to predict the needs of the child, the educator, management and the school early on and allow for the identification of key stakeholders and development of partnerships to meet the specific needs identified from integrating insights and from examining each system critically. The Department of Health, Social services, South African Police Services and Department of Public works would be key strategic partners. National and Provincial Departments of Education would need to be engaged with on aspects of the curriculum, life orientation, life sciences and remedial education. It is not enough to follow the curriculum prescribed but it would be necessary to consult to collaboratively develop strategies which are acceptable to the regulating department yet suitable for the unique circumstances which exist within the school.

6.4.6.2. Systems and Integration

Systems here refer to the environments or contexts within which the child lives and interacts. Like Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological System Theory (1979) which clearly demarcates levels of influence, in my model I propose similar systems or levels of influence. The idea of creating a model for application in education emerged, mine with three distinct systems of interest encircling the central individual with each concentric demarcation indicating levels of influence. The closest being those that exert the most influence which are the home and school and the furthest being the one which exerts a lesser influence perhaps but is still of relevance such as the broader community. Additionally, I propose that these levels serve as sources of critical information that will input significant information to school management and the SBST through deriving formal and constant evaluation.

Currently screening and identification of vulnerable learner is operational. There are however deficits in that due to resource constraints school may conduct a perfunctory analysis. A probable solution would be to make it compulsory for every learner with suspected, potential or actual vulnerability to have a holistic evaluation annually via a co-ordinated program by the SBST. Within these evaluations, the layers of influence would be evaluated collaboratively by educator, learner and a family member or a caregiver. Aspects of interest that need

prioritisation, intervention or support would be identified through initial screening and consultation and acted upon through structured, organised and systematic collaboration.

Integration refers to drawing information about potential or actual vulnerability specifically and categorising and making meaning of it with a view to clearly represent it such that strategies may be adapted to suit the needs of the learner and educator. It is suggested that this type of model be applied as part of learner development and will offer valuable information part of educator development. Integration of information entails selecting the central figure of interest in the school environment. For instance, the child would be considered as the core person of interest who would be surrounded by systems of influence such as the home, school and then greater community. Identifying key individuals within these systems such as the educator, school management and perhaps the SBST, would then warrant deriving information about factors which contribute to vulnerability, identifying existing vulnerability, examining the nature and extent of existing vulnerability and stratifying risk for development of vulnerability within each level and in association with each person. One would also have to identify needs both met and unmet as well as predict those at risk of being unmet and stipulate the reasons why so that efforts to mitigate the risk may be instituted.

As part of professional development exercises, it would be important allow the educator to similarly consider themselves at the centre of the system in which they operate in their professional capacity and identify the influences including needs, resources and individuals who play a vital role in the life of the educator.

In this way, a comprehensive assessment may be made through derivation of rich information about the dynamism and complexity of the phenomenon. It can be clearly represented which would allow for more systematic intervention strategies once all the information is integrated. This research has demonstrated that these influences within systems and dynamics of the phenomenon eventually become determinants of successfully managing vulnerability in the school environment. The reciprocal relationships which exist within these layers are important and examining the nature of these too would be critical to developing a holistic snapshot of the reality of every child. Collaboration is the link between and within these layers.

Integration would also refer to the coming together of conventional approaches of leadership and management in the school setting with adaptive transformational leadership approaches.

This would require application of evidence-based findings in research derived through anecdotal experiences of educators, as well as through evaluation, assessment and feedback processes. It would also involve integration of insights derived from evaluating levels of influence of the child including home factors, community factors and school factors. Principles by which one could achieve appropriate management of the phenomenon are through integration, transformational leadership and adoption of progressive ideation, pre-emptive intervention of the at-risk child, inclusion and collaboration, evolution within education.

6.4.6.3. Dynamics and dynamism

This research revealed that the concept of vulnerability itself is a dynamic entity. It cannot be considered to have solitary causation and a predictable outcome. This phenomenon is not fixed. Vulnerability is in evolution as a child interacts with the systems and has varied degrees of exposure to multiple influences. I noticed that whilst educators and school managers did recognise the multitude of influences or dynamics of vulnerability, the idea of vulnerability being an evolving phenomenon which would change as a child moved through the schooling system too is an important notion. This is critical as educators did not believe that this is a fluid state but rather, a permanent one, the resignation and acceptance of this phenomenon being one that cannot really be managed is a major barrier to successfully overcoming it.

The model proposed would account for all systems of influence and integrate all aspects of vulnerability across time and contexts by allowing for a comprehensive and ongoing systematic assessment of the child, home, educator and school. Having an integrated model where changes in the life of a child are normalised and creating even the sense of possibility rather than permanence amongst educators may prove beneficial. It is also suitable as it is a model created specifically with the vulnerable child in mind rather than being a generalised principle of management or leadership.

I noticed that in addition to a gap in conceptualisation of the phenomenon being one which is dynamic not necessarily permanent and it being a phenomenon of dynamic influences, there was also evidence of what can be described as perhaps a static perspective of vulnerability. The idea that the initial assessment of what vulnerability is, where it originated and what out to be done about it are descriptive for the entire duration of a child's tenure within the school ought to be corrected. A cause-and-effect type scenario seemed to present itself, depicting vulnerability as easily recognisable, likely caused by the home environment and requiring

163

remediation for academic insufficiencies and referral for social issues. Not overtly the same permanence, but a static, more linear approach which doesn't account for the depth and breadth of influence and the multiple challenges and opportunities which therein exist to intervene.

Through integration of insights from each system and promoting linkages and collaboration between parts which seem to work in isolation in managing child vulnerability and interact only when there is overwhelm, perhaps a newer approach and a more active, collaborative approach will be more effective. Integrating findings may augment understanding of the meaning of child vulnerability rather than merely knowing how to recognise it. Whilst educators understood the identifiers of vulnerability, their manifestations, and factors which contribute to the phenomenon, I gather that there is necessity to consider this phenomenon not just in the sense of a definition. Rather, a collaborative-systems integration model may shift us toward considering vulnerability in the context of the broader life of a child. Considering how this phase of a child's life forms the foundation of the rest of their life it necessitates exhausting every possible avenue and to constantly evolve in our approaches to managing a phenomenon that is not static, that is itself dynamic and multi-faceted despite the instances of overwhelm and frustration that ensues due to challenging circumstances.

6.4.6.4. Overcoming division and dependence

It became evident from the findings that there is indeed a gap which exists between school and home. This division is the source of a large part of educator frustration, overwhelm and dissatisfaction. Educators feeling as though they are alone and solely responsible to fulfil multiple roles with little support from the home and community is problematic. This model encourages closer school-home-community collaboration.

An active, integrative and collaborative approach also would alleviate discovering aspects of vulnerability based solely on educator or school manager discernment. With many children deemed vulnerable in the current school system, but manpower limited, I got the impression that there may also be instances of children who are lost to the system due to a dependence on educators alone to recognise and intervene on child vulnerability in the classroom setting. With the SBST also being classroom-based their true effectiveness is limited considering that the demanding nature of their roles expressed by educators would also then be a reality of even those who are part of the SBST. Collaboration would allow for distribution of work, encourage

support from within and outside each level to amplify efforts of the educators, the SBST and school management.

6.4.6.5. Policy adoption, collaboration and upholding human rights

It appeared that educators were challenged by implementing policies formulated to manage child vulnerability. Some educators were unaware whilst some were experienced in protocols and policy provision. A collaborative approach would allow educators, management and SBST members to work together to familiarise themselves with all policies. A collaborative approach would also draw on strengths of educators also considering that it emerged that educators felt somewhat conflicted, overwhelmed and frustrated. Having a system which promotes understanding, working together gives professionals a sense of belonging and working together to achieve a shared purpose may alleviate much of the frustration of not feeling equipped or having a forum to express oneself. Integrative insights from the home, community and school environment would ensure that educator insights are not overlooked, that a platform is created for them to express practicality and applicability of policy in the school setting.

Compromised care of the child is to be considered a human rights issue. As such the school has an ethical social responsibility to address this phenomenon. Deprivation, unmet needs and poor-quality education are unacceptable and cannot be met with fragmented approaches or passivity. Traditional strategies, models and approaches in this school have yet to work to change these with any notable success. Compartmentalising issues facing children as those of the home versus those of the school seem to work to categorise the origin of the challenges, but in terms of the general utility of such an exercise, it is more detrimental when identifying where vulnerability supposedly started translates to affixing blame rather than working collaboratively to achieve a solution. Collaborative approaches discourage fixation on causation and blame, and they tend rather to emphasise innovative approaches to capacitation, developing solutions to challenges faced and encourage ownership of a problem. Most importantly, shared accountability and responsibility tends to foster better relationships across systems or environments which are responsive to needs of both learners and educators.

6.4.6.6. Unmet needs and systems of influence

This brings me to an important finding. The issue of unmet needs received much attention within this research. The matter of unmet needs of the vulnerable child is considered widely. I found that a gap existed where the effects of unmet needs of educators were underestimated in

the school environment. I advocate that a collaborative model may create a conducive environment for educators to express themselves and their needs. Educators need to be understood if they are expected to be empowered to offer support to learners and their peers.

I also noted that the understanding of vulnerability is profoundly influenced by beliefs of educators which tend to be formed by their experiences. These beliefs may influence the way that vulnerability is interpreted. It may also influence the way information about vulnerability is disseminated amongst peers. Ultimately this influences educator attitudes and beliefs. Ill-discipline, disruptive behaviour, disrespectful attitudes, bullying, petty thieving, violence, truancy appear amongst a myriad of examples of deviant behaviour. Whilst these are in fact appropriate representations of the realities of the way child vulnerability appears in the school environment, it is necessary to ensure that there is a balanced representation of child vulnerability. What can be done to ensure that vulnerability is appropriately represented is to encourage dialogue about it amongst peers and improve communication about aspects of vulnerability. Again, empowerment through exposure, understanding the multisystemic influences, multidimensional nature of the phenomenon and through collaboration will indeed bode well for creating an adequate representation of the phenomenon.

6.4.6.7. Towards quality education

In exploring vulnerability, much of the focus has been placed on the child, the parent, the educator, the inadequacies of the school system, the deficiencies of the home environment, unmet needs and learner outcomes. All of these are necessary and critical aspects of interest. I do believe that in addition to these what can be done to immeasurably address child vulnerability is to improve the quality of education. Some may argue that the quality of education would require addressing child vulnerability. I believe that it may be necessary to revisit fundamentals of teaching and learning. Grade R must be made compulsory with prior learning for Grade R compulsory. Employing strategies for improvement of basic skills such as reading, arithmetic and handwriting would be beneficial. Resource provision not limited to stationery and literature, but human resources in the form of mentors, volunteer educator assistants may enable providing engaging, responsive learning environments. Multi-level teaching and recognising multiple intelligences may also be something that can be done to change the trajectory of an ailing education system. Catering for diversity of though, for creativity and being inclusive in every sense of the word to improve the quality of the teaching and learning experience is necessary. Once again, quality education can be achieved through

collaboration. Dissemination of valuable information about mechanisms to improve the quality of education from the grass-roots level upward through the established hierarchical education system often seems daunting and a futile exercise for educators who do not then see changes in their school environment. However, poor quality education itself as a contributor to child vulnerability can be addressed systematically if educators collaborate with school management and the SBST and communicate actively as the holders of valuable insights. In order to improve the quality of education what can be done is to ensure there is rigorous evaluation of multiple influences, integration of information and sound leadership to formulate interventions which may be useful.

6.4.6.8. Leading in adversity

I found it interesting to explore the concept of leading in adverse circumstances in the context of vulnerability. The proposed model of considering all aspects of relevance in systems of influence and integrating information to apply findings in a meaningful way seems logical and comprehensive. Collaborating to achieve transformative outcomes for a child necessitates transitioning from hierarchical tiered leadership to a flatter more collaborative structure. Leading amidst adverse circumstances and experiencing the effects of deprivation on children and lack characterised by non-provision of basic needs is a reality experienced by educators and school managers in this school. Whilst experiential learning is beneficial in the context of child vulnerability, what can be done for educators and school managers is to have mandatory and formal professional development of educators. Adopting an attitude of being a lifelong learner, commitment to educate self and others using available resources sets the tone for collaborative approaches. These could include mentoring, team-teaching, training of young educators to share their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

6.5. STUDY LIMITATIONS

Non-generalisability of the findings could be considered as this study had employed a small sized population including one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal. It was a case study designed to explore a complex phenomenon and how the insights may effectively be implemented in a primary school environment. Research questions that were broad were formulated, with the purpose of understanding the experiences of educators and school management as it related to the phenomenon of child vulnerability. Whilst the findings cannot be generalised, transferability is possible. The information revealed may have utility in understanding the complex nature of child vulnerability from a management and leadership perspective.

6.6. CONCLUSION

Vulnerability is a multi-faceted, complex phenomenon. The extent of vulnerability in our school system is vast. The school endeavours to manage and lead identification of child vulnerability but all professionals do not feel adequately equipped to address some of the issues which emerged. This was attributed to inadequate training, inadequate knowledge and a lack of support and collaboration within the school environment and between the school, home and community. Educators would benefit from a shift to a more collaborative approach to child vulnerability.

The study found that a vulnerable child was identified as a child at risk of harm, neglect, lacking care and protection, having basic needs unmet. This description extended to those who experienced social, emotional, cognitive, financial barriers and neglect or abuse. Hunger, poverty and deprivation affected children's academic performance negatively. Moreover, findings reflect a challenging layered system in which children exist and inadequate provision for children in each of these layers impeding holistic development of the child. No linear definition of child vulnerability is congruent with the nature and extent of the phenomenon. Recognising vulnerability in the school required understanding behaviour across a spectrum where some children were noticeably quiet, withdrawn and isolated. Other learners were ill-disciplined, restless, and disruptive. Vulnerability manifested as poor attitudes, poor school performance, absenteeism, late-coming, truancy and engaging in socially unacceptable activities and behaviour.

Consensus did not exist amongst educators on a universal description of the vulnerable child, but a demonstrable understanding of the nature of vulnerability was forthcoming. Commonalities existed in educator experiences of the vulnerable child and perception that child vulnerability emanates from the home environment. This is a contentious issue.

The study established that some educators had limited and restricted understanding of policy pertaining to managing the vulnerable child. Despite intent and commitment to improve the plight of the vulnerable child, educator frustration and overwhelm were seemingly unavoidable. Strategies to overcome this would enable schools to promote a shift in mindset and perceptions held of managing the vulnerable child. Strategies which could be used by schools include establishing a collaborative approach to address some of the contributors to

perpetuation of child vulnerability both internally and externally, across contexts to involve parents and the greater community, establishing strategic partnerships.

The study was presented through the theoretical lenses of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (1979), the Theory of Transformational Leadership (Burns, 1985) and Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (Maslow, 1943). This study established that transformative leadership in the primary school setting and in the context of managing the vulnerable child is essential. School managers need to be adaptive and responsive to the needs of children and educators. School managers have an inherent responsibility to the children and their peers, as do educators. This is key to addressing this phenomenon. Inequality and adverse circumstances required a paradigm shift in school leadership.

The needs of learners are many and varied. Unmet needs cause vulnerability which leads to underperformance and poor educational outcomes. As advocated by Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation (Maslow, 1943), basic human needs require prioritisation and monopolise the attention of an individual. Higher order needs are considered secondary. Therefore, a hungry child cannot be expected to learn effectively. A lack of pastoral care on the part of the educator renders learners vulnerable whilst educator needs seemed also to be unmet in their professional capacities. Poor learner attitudes toward educators were also noticeable and challenged the educator to consider the inherent nature of their roles as educators necessitating exploration of how to effectively approach challenging or adverse circumstances.

In line with the seven roles of educators according to the National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996 (Department of Education, 1996), an educator is expected to be equipped to carry out duties that extend beyond mere didactic learning and teaching. This study found amongst educators, a sense of being overwhelmed and frustrated by circumstances surrounding managing the vulnerable child was noticeable. This mostly related to a perceived divide that exists between the home and school environment, a lack of collaboration and lack of support for educators. Many educators, members of the SMT and the SBST were impassioned about the plight of learners and committed to providing quality teaching and learning for the vulnerable child. However, educators faced a multitude of challenges causing a degree of disillusionment. The realities of working within a challenging system without a formal outlet to express the realities of their experiences were not ideal.

169

In their quest to provide quality teaching and learning, educators faced challenges around curriculum delivery, medium of instruction, class sizes and resourcing. The curriculum was described as fast paced with large class numbers and time constraints preventing teachers from giving children individual attention. The problem was exacerbated by learners failing to grasp basic concepts, since foundational elements of learning were not strong. The language of learning and teaching was a barrier according to some educators, whilst others cited a general poor academic outlook due to weaknesses in foundational elements such as handwriting, reading and basic arithmetic. Aligning educator role perception with the seven roles of educators outlined in the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996)), with particular emphasis on the pastoral care role, is necessary to address this phenomenon. Professional development of teachers through induction, ongoing mentoring, support and capacity-building through school based and individual professional development programmes is essential. A whole school approach is required as each entity within the school cannot work in silos as this results in lack of integration and fragmented approaches in education. Transformational leadership is necessary to overcome deficient leadership approaches to achieving transformation and change whilst facing a dynamic and complex phenomenon such as child vulnerability.

It is essential for the school to put measures in place to offer formal, coordinated and ongoing support for educators to ensure timeous screening, identification, assessment and support of learners facing challenging circumstances. Learner welfare must be prioritised to provide more efficient and effective services for learners within schools. Psychological services, guidance and counselling by specialists in the field is needed in schools to support children who face challenging circumstances both in the home and school. The school management team is implored to engage all stakeholders within the school and community. The functionality of the SBST is crucial to ensuring that school-based interventions are effective.

As I articulate the thesis of this study, I emphasise that the dynamics of the phenomenon of child vulnerability reveal it is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon which cannot be addressed by the school alone. Therefore, this study urges all key stakeholders in educators to engage with educators, SMT and SBST and collectively formulate appropriate strategies to respond to the challenges schools face in addressing the phenomenon of child vulnerability. This may be achieved through initiating and supporting intra-school collaborative approaches

170

and school-community collaboration. Child vulnerability, if left unaddressed, is detrimental to the development of children. This has implications for the progress of our country. Failure to care for and educate the vulnerable child places not just education, but the prospects of our country in a precarious predicament. The importance of using education to promote closer school-community collaboration therefore cannot be overstated to achieve better quality education for all children and ultimately a better future for children with a vision to overcome this phenomenon.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

23 May 2019

Mrs Lynette D Hoosen 214581914
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Hoosen

Protocol reference number: HSS/0339/019D
Project Title: The dynamics of child vulnerability in a selected South Africn primary school: Focus on Leadership and Management.

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 16 April 2019, 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 discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 1 year from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Prof V Chikoko
cc. Academic Leader Research: Dr A Pillay
cc. School Administrator: Ms S Jeenarain, Ms M Ngcobo, Ms N Dlamini and Mr SN Mthembu

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APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Application for Permission to Conduct Research in KwaZulu Natal Department of Education Institutions

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1. Applicants Details

Title: Mrs   Surname: Hoosen

Name(s) Of Applicant(s): Lynette Denyse   Email: ████████████████████

Tel No: ████████   Fax: _____   Cell: ████████████

Postal Address: ████████████████████████████████

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2. Proposed Research Title:

The Dynamics of child vulnerability in a selected South African primary School: Educators' Perspectives.

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3. Have you applied for permission to conduct this research or any other?

research within the KZN DoE institutions?

	No

If "yes", please state reference Number:

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4. Is the proposed research part of a tertiary qualification?

Yes	

If "yes"
Name of tertiary institution: University of KwaZulu- Natal

Faculty and or School: College of Humanities; School of Education

Qualification: Doctor of Philosophy (Education Leadership, Management and Policy)

Name of Supervisor: __Prof. V Chikoko_

Supervisors Signature____

If "no," state purpose of research: _____

_____

5. **Briefly state the Research Background**

The Phenomenon of child vulnerability is a prominent issue in South African schools as the numbers of the children in our current schooling system continue to rise at an alarming rate (Pillay 2018). Transformation, democratisation and subsequent reform of our education systems: admission policies and laws regarding access to education, school admission, non – racialism, school governance, curriculum, finding and resource distribution, saw South Africa move forward in formulation of strategies to optimize education (Dreyer, 2017). The Constitution of our country clearly outlines the framework for education provision, together with a plethora of strong legislative and policy frameworks which undergird education provision. The Vulnerable Groups Indicator report and Statistics South Africa reports from Equal Education indicate that our schooling system is "in crisis." The Child Gauge Report (2017) asserts that if South Africa is to reach the Sustainable Development Goals it is critical that the wellbeing of vulnerable children is prioritised (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). Indicators such as the high drop-out rate, poor learner performance, poor discipline and behavioural challenges suggest underlying vulnerability and characterizes a strained schooling system. Failure on the part of schools to address vulnerability places our education system in a precarious position and has serious economic, legal and social implications as well as poor skills development and educational outcomes. This study therefore seeks to explore the dynamics of child vulnerability within the school and to investigate why despite the strong legislation child vulnerability within the school continues unabated. Educators as trained professionals, acting "in loco- parentis" and guided by the seven roles of educators need to be able to timeously identify child vulnerability; to determine what are schools doing or not doing which heightens this phenomenon. In addition to the pastoral care role, educators have a role to play as leaders and managers. Schools will not be education centres of inclusivity and diversity if the dynamics of child vulnerability is not explored. At any given point if one examines a Grade R cohort until matric, it becomes clear that not all pass matric. That is a cause for concern; a sign of a schooling system which is failing its citizens. It is necessary against the backdrop of this phenomenon of vulnerability which pervades our schooling system, to understand the dynamics of it and formulate strategies to address it so that quality teaching and learning can take place.

6.What is the main research question(s):

What are the dynamics of child vulnerability in a Primary School?

6.1. What is the nature and extent of Child Vulnerability in the school in, in the work experiences of level one educators, school- based support team (SMT) members and senior management team (SMT) members?

6.2. How does the phenomenon of child vulnerability manifest within the school in the experiences of level–one educators, school–based support team members (SBST) and senior management team members (SMT)?

6.3. Why do level – one educators, school – based support team members (SBST) and senior management team (SMT) members understand and experience the phenomenon of child vulnerability within the school in the way that they do?

6.4. What can be learnt about child vulnerability and how it can be addressed?

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7. Methodology including sampling procedures and the people to be included in the sample:

Purposive sampling will be adopted. This will be a qualitative case–study, located in the interpretive paradigm. The site of the research will be one public, co–educational primary school, located in the Umlazi district in Kwa-Zulu Natal. There are 874 learners many of whom reside in informal settlements near the school. The entire staff comprising of 24 members will be interviewed.

8. What contribution will the proposed study make to the education, health, safety, welfare of the learners and to the education system as a whole?

This study seeks to contribute a body of knowledge to positively impact on education. It seeks to provide knowledge which seeks to elucidate an understanding of the nature of the phenomenon of child vulnerability within the school, and recommend strategies, or a model to address child vulnerability and associated challenges. It also intends to emphasise the need for stringent implementation of policies within the school as outlined by the Department of Education. The multi- faceted phenomenon of child vulnerability and effects within the primary school from an educator and school managers' perspective must be understood. The complexity, prevalence and manifestation within the school must be understood to curb it. School- based contribution to child vulnerability must be highlighted so that schools better provide for learners who are vulnerable as a result of a multitude of factors yet to be explored. The dynamics of the factors within the school which result in poor educational outcomes, poor quality education, resulting in a high learner drop-out rate is essential.   This study seeks to provide a more robust narrative and deep understanding on the dynamics of the phenomenon of child vulnerability within the school so that vulnerability maybe curbed discipline improved, learner performance improved and practical support is provided to children with unmet needs. It seeks to contribute knowledge to positively transform schools into centres of learning, inclusivity and excellence in line with the Constitution of our country and the goals: Millennium Development goals, Sustainable Development goals and the National Development Plan (2030), by addressing the dynamics of child vulnerability within the schooling system.

KZN Department of Education Schools or Institutions from which sample will be drawn – If the list is long please attach at the end of the form		
███████████	**Durban**	

9. Research data collection instruments: *(Note: a list and only a brief description is required here - the actual instruments must be attached)***:**

Data will be collected from 2 focus-groups: 1 comprising of school- based support team members and the second the school management team. Semi – structured, individual, face – to face interviews will be conducted with all level one educators. Some educators who belong to the SBST will be interviewed twice. Interviews will be recorded. A co-moderator will take notes to be discussed with researcher immediately after interviews. Questions asked will be as per interview schedule of questions. A secondary data –

collection method will be document analysis. Attendance registers of educators and learners, relevant school policies and SBST records will be accessed.

10. Procedure for obtaining consent of participants and where appropriate parents or guardians:

A written letter will be given to every participant to sign, consenting to participate voluntarily in the research process. All relevant information will be provided to participants; outlining the nature and purpose of research, researcher's details, confidentiality, time frames and freedom to withdraw at any point if necessary. Consent will be obtained in writing.

11. Procedure to maintain confidentiality (if applicable):

The name of the institution will not be published. Names of participants will not be published. Nom de plumes or pseudonyms will be used. Information from the study will be used only for the purpose of research and for no other reason. All responses will be totally confidential. Information will be stored by the supervisor for 5 years and then appropriately disposed of. Every participant will sign a Declaration of Confidentiality.

12. Questions or issues with the potential to be intrusive, upsetting or incriminating to participants (if applicable): Not applicable

13. Additional support available to participants in the event of disturbance resulting from intrusive questions or issues (if applicable): Not applicable

14. Research Timelines: Interviews will be conducted in June 2019, July 2019, August 2019 and September 2019

15. Declaration

I hereby agree to comply with the relevant ethical conduct to ensure that participants' privacy and the confidentiality of records and other critical information.

I, Lynette Denyse Hoosen declare that the above information is true and correct

_____   <u>04/03/2019</u>
Signature of Applicant   **Date**

---

16. Agreement to provide and to grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish a summary of the report.

I/We agree to provide the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education with a copy of any report or dissertation written on the basis of information gained through the research activities described in this application.

I/We grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish an edited summary of this report or dissertation using the print or electronic media.

_____   <u>04/03/2019</u>
Signature of Applicant(s)   **Date**

Return a completed form to:
Phindile Duma – Tel: 033 392 1063
Office of the HOD; KwaZulu Natal Department of Education

Hand Delivered:
Office 318; 247 Burger Street; Anton Lembede House; Pietermaritzburg; 3201
Or
Ordinary Mail
Private Bag X9137; Pietermaritzburg; 3200
Or
Email
<u>Phindile.Duma@kzndoe.gov.za</u>
Or
Fax 033 392 1203

214

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER FROM KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma	Tel: 033 392 1063	Ref.:2/4/8/1780

Mrs LD Hoosen

Dear Mrs Hoosen

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"THE DYNAMICS OF CHID VULNERBILITY IN A SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOL: FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT"**, 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 06 May 2019 to 04 January 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Kenville Primary School

Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 10 May 2019

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Attention: The School Principal

School: _____

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: Request for Permission to conduct research at school

My name is Lynette Denyse Hoosen. I am a student in the PhD Programme at the University of KwaZulu–Natal (Edgewood Campus) in the discipline of Education Leadership, Management and Policy. As part of the degree requirements, I am required to conduct research. I hereby seek permission from you to conduct research at your school.

The title of my study is: **The Dynamics of Child Vulnerability in a selected South African Primary School: Focus on Leadership and Management.**

Written consent to conduct research has been obtained from the Department of Education.

This study seeks to understand the dynamics of child vulnerability within the primary school, how it manifests, causative factors and what can be learnt from it. Based on data generated within the study, a report will be presented on findings. Recommendations made will aim to address the issue of child vulnerability within the school.

There will be semi- structured, individual, face-to-face interviews and two focus- group interviews which will include all educators, the school-based support team and the school management team. Document- analysis will be undertaken. I hereby seek permission to peruse through school policies and relevant information. All matters of ethics, procedural and professional integrity will be com plied with. Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of the participants will be ensured at all stages. Pseudonyms will be assigned. Participation will be voluntary. Participants may withdraw at any point; no penalties applicable. There is no remuneration for participation. Notification of interviews will be given to you in advance. Cognizance will be taken of the school teaching and learning times and all protocols will be observed in order to avoid any disruption of the school programme. Research will not encroach on school instruction time or examinations.

This project is purely for research purposes; to contribute a body of knowledge which may elucidate the dynamics of child vulnerability in school and present recommendations or strategies which will help to address child vulnerability and contribute in some way to a more positive school environment, with better educational outcomes.

I thank you in advance. I look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely

L.D. Hoosen (Mrs)

_____   _____

STUDENT   **DATE**

_____   _____

PRINCIPAL   **DATE**

Student: University of Kwa Zulu – Natal

PhD Programme: Educational Leadership Management and Policy

For further information my supervisor may be contacted:

Prof V. Chikoko – ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

I may be contacted as follows:

Lynette Hoosen

E- mail: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Telephone no. – ▮▮▮▮▮▮

▮▮▮▮▮▮

217

APPENDIX E: PERMISSION LETTER FROM PRINCIPAL GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I hereby confirm that I understand the contents of the document requesting permission from me to allow Lynette Denyse Hoosen to conduct research at the school.

I grant permission to the educators at school to participate. I further state that I am willing to participate in the project and offer support to the student. I acknowledge that participation is voluntary and that participants may withdraw at any time. I grant consent for interviews to be conducted, audio-recorded and for relevant documents of the school to be made available to the researcher.

PRINCIPAL: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

RESEARCHER'S NAME: _____

RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

ADDRESS: ███████████████████

███████████

████████████████

██████████

█████

TELEPHONE NUMBER: ███████████

███████████

███████████

SUPERVISOR: PROF. V. CHIKOKO

TEL. NO. ███████████

APPENDIX F: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS INVITING PARTICIPATION

<div align="right">JUNE 2019</div>

Dear _____

My name is Lynette Denyse Hoosen. I am a candidate in the PhD Programme in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy at the University of Kwa Zulu – Natal, Edgewood Campus. As part of the degree requirements, I am expected to conduct research. The Department of Education has granted me permission to conduct research at your school. I have obtained permission from your school Principal.

I hereby invite you to participate in my study. The title of the study is: **The Dynamics of Child Vulnerability in a selected South African Primary School: Focus on Leadership and Management.**

The study will include all educators. Participation is voluntary. There is no monetary benefit. There will be individual interviews and focus- group interviews. A schedule of interview questions will be used. There will be a different schedule of questions for the focus- groups and semi- structured individual interviews. Responses will be recorded.

Anonymity and privacy will be ensured. Names of the school and participants will not be divulged; pseudonyms will be assigned. Confidentiality will be ensured throughout the process. Interviews will be one hour. All correct procedural and professional ethics will be observed. There will be no risk, harm or injury to participants. You will have the right to review information being used in respect of your participation.

This study is undertaken solely for the purpose of research. The objective of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of child vulnerability and to contribute a body of knowledge and strategies to address it so that there may be a positive schooling environment and positive educational outcomes.

Attached hereto is a CONSENT FORM indicating your willingness to participate.

Please sign the attached **PARTICIPANT DECLARATION and CONSENT FORM.**

Thank you

_____   _____

STUDENT   **DATE**

DETAILS OF RESEARCHER:

Lynette Denyse Hoosen

Email: ██████████████████   Mobile Number: ██████████

DETAILS OF SUPERVISOR: Prof. V. Chikoko (University of Kwa Zulu- Natal)

Telephone Number.   ██████████

Research Office: Phumelele Ximba

Telephone Number: ██████████

APPENDIX G: LETTER FROM PARTICIPANTS - CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

PARTICIPANT DECLARATION FORM

I _____
(PARTICIPANT), hereby agree to voluntarily participate in research.

I hereby inform Lynette Denyse Hoosen of my consent to participate

I acknowledge that the topic being researched is: **THE DYNAMICS OF CHILD VULNERABILITY IN A SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOL: FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

I further understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary
2. I may withdraw from the study at any point, if necessary, without any penalty or any negative or undesirable consequences
3. Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality will be observed by using pseudonyms
4. All my responses will be handled in a highly confidential manner. Interviews will be audio-recorded.
5. The study is conducted solely for the purpose of research
6. All ethical procedures and processes will be adhered to
7. There will be no harm, risk or danger to me

I agree to observe strict confidentiality

I fully understand the purpose of the study and my role in the study. I acknowledge that this project is solely for the purpose of research.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

_____

SIGNATURE:

_____

WITNESSES: **1.** _____

                        2._____

DATE: _____

APPENDIX H: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

THE DYNAMICS OF CHILD VULNERABILITY IN A SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOL: FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS: LEVEL-ONE PARTICIPANTS – INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

1.MEANING AND MANIFESTATION OF PHENOMENON OF CHILD VULNERABILITY

1.1 What is your understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon CHILD VULNERABILITY?

1.2 How does the phenomenon of child vulnerability manifest in the school?

1.3 What do children do which suggests that vulnerability exists?

1.4 What forms of vulnerability are expressed by these children?

2.POLICIES OF SCHOOL AND DEPARTMENT

2.1 What policies and legislation of the Department of Education does the school adopt?

2.2 In your opinion what effect does policy have on child vulnerability within the school?

2.3 How effective are policies in addressing the phenomenon of child vulnerability?

2.4 What action is taken when learners breach the Code of Conduct?

3.NATURE AND EXTENT OF CHILD VULNERABILITY

3.1 What is your understanding of "nature "of child vulnerability within the school?

3.2 What background factors suggest children within the school may be rendered vulnerable?

3.3 What are the factors within the school which may affect child vulnerability?

3.4 What, in your opinion is the extent of vulnerability in this school?

3.5 What are the indicators of child vulnerability within the school?

4.EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF CHILD VULNERABILITY

4.1 Describe any negative experiences you have had as a result of child vulnerability within the school?

4.2 How does this phenomenon of child vulnerability affect teaching and learning?

4.3 What are the challenges you experience as result of child vulnerability within the school?

4.4 What do you do when teaching and learning is affected?

4.5 What are the barriers within the school which contribute to child vulnerability?

4.6 Describe any negative experience you have had in dealing with child vulnerability?

4.7 Describe any positive experiences you have had with learners who display vulnerability?

5.STRATEGIES ADOPTED TO ADDRESS CHILD VULNERABILITY

5.1 What strategies are adopted to address this phenomenon within the school?

5.2 What are the barriers within the school that contribute to child vulnerability?

APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS: SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT TEAM (SBST) FOCUS GROUP

1.MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING OF PHENOMENON OF CHILD VULNERABILITY

1.1What is your understanding of the phenomenon of CHILD VULNERABILITY within the school?

1.2 What is your experience of child vulnerability within this school?

2.POLICIES OF THE SCHOOL AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

2.1 Outline briefly legislation and policies which direct education provision?

2.2 How are educators empowered to implement laws and policies?

2.4 How effective is implementation of Department legislation and policies which direct education provision at this school?

3.NATURE, MANIFESTATION AND EXTENT OF CHILD VULNERABILITY

3.1 What do you understand by nature of child vulnerability within the school?

3.2 How do you determine the extent of child vulnerability within this school?

3.3 What background factors suggest vulnerability exists within the school?

3.4 What are the indicators of child vulnerability within the school?

3.5 What types or forms of vulnerability manifest within this school?

4.ROLE OF THE SCHOOL- BASED SUPPORT TEAM

4.1 What is the role of the SBST within a school?

4.2 What is the role of the SBST in addressing child vulnerability within the school?

4.3 What programmes does the SBST have in place to address needs of children who display vulnerability?

4.4 Are educators included in screening, identification, assessment and support?

4.5 Does the SBST refer learners to SNES?

4.6 Describe the challenges the SBST encounters in attempting to address the phenomenon of child vulnerability?

4.7 How are educators empowered in order to support learners?

5.SYSTEMIC FACTORS THAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO CHILD VULNERABILITY

5.1 What are the factors within the school which may heighten child vulnerability?

    Refer to curriculum, resource provision, educator experiences, training, attitudes

6. STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS OF THE SCHOOL- BASED SUPPORT TEAM

6.1 Describe the effectiveness of the SBST

6.2 What can be done to better support learners?

APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS: SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT) FOCUS GROUP

1.MEANING AND DEFINITION OF CHILD VULNERABILITY

1.1 What is your understanding of the phenomenon of child vulnerability within the school?

1.2 What are your experiences of child vulnerability within this school?

2.SCHOOL AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION POLICIES

2.1 What policies and legislation guide provision of education at this school, and in general?

2.2 How are educators empowered in respect of policy?

2.3 How effective are these policies?

3.NATURE AND EXTENT OF VULNERABILITY IN THE SCHOOL

3.1 What types of vulnerability is prevalent within your school?

3.2What is the extent of vulnerability?

3.3 How does the phenomenon of child vulnerability manifest in this school?

4.INDICATORS OF CHILD VULNERABILITY WITHIN THE SCHOOL

4.1 What are indicators of vulnerability within the school?

4.2 What is the implication of a rise in child vulnerability within the school?

4.3 What is the implication of a rise in child vulnerability for education in our country?

5.STRATEGIES THAT MAY BE EMPLOYED TO CURB CHILD VULNERABILITY WITHIN THE SCHOOL?

5.1 What strategies may be put in place to curb the rise of child vulnerability within the school?

5.2 What type of interventions or support does SMT provide for the vulnerable child?

5.3 Who can SMT engage with or network with for support?

6.SYSTEMIC FACTORS WHICH AFFECT CHILD VULNERABILITY

6.1 What type of attitude is displayed by educators?

6.2 Is teaching and learning effective and inclusive?

6.3 Do educators administer corporal punishment?

6.4 What are possible barriers to effective teaching and learning?

6.5 What programmes does the school initiate to address needs of these vulnerable learners?

7.MONITORING OF CHILD VULNERABILITY WITHIN THE SCHOOL

7.1 How is vulnerability monitored within the school?

7.2 What are indicators of vulnerability within the school?

7.3 What role does SMT play in monitoring incidence or prevalence of child vulnerability within the school?