GEOGRAPHIES OF UNDERPERFORMING LEARNERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

By

THOKOZANI AUCTAVIA NGIDI

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Supervisor: Professor Pholoho Morojele

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DECLARATION

I, Thokozani Auctavia (Zama) Ngidi, declare that this dissertation entitled:

GEOGRAPHIES OF UNDERPERFORMING LEARNERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY is my own work and has not been submitted for degree purposes at any other University. I declare that in this dissertation all the sources used have been indicated and acknowledged accordingly.

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Ms. Thokozani Auctavia Ngidi   Date

Student No.: 213 572 882

Supervision by:

_____   _____

Professor: Pholoho Justice Morojele   Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving parents, Nicholas Peshe Ngidi (my late father) the best life coach, and Thandiwe Alice Ngidi (my mother) who still lives to witness her success as a proud parent. They gave me another name 'ZamaNgidi' meaning (one in all Ngidi girls). Both parents have instilled in me education as my life weapon. I am proud to be their daughter.

Dedication also goes to my most amazingly adorable two gifts from God, Zekhethelo Nhlakanipho (son -15yrs) and Melokuhle Anathi (daughter - 3yrs) for their perseverance of having a parenting-alone mother who is ever occupied with work. Both are valuable source of my inspiration and joy, not forgetting their tireless effort in fighting for mum's attention. Without your love and support, this research would not have been complete.

You! Both my Angels!!

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study which set out to investigate the experiences of grade six learners who were regarded as academically underperforming at Isizwesokuthula Primary School, a combined semi-urban primary school under Pinetown District, North of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Using children's geographies Holloway (2014) and new Sociology of Childhood Studies Wyness (2013) as its guiding theoretical frameworks, the study explored the places and spaces that these learners occupy within this schooling context. It also explored the factors affecting these learners' schooling experiences and how the learners actively engaged with these dynamics. The aim of the study was to understand factors that impact on these learners' social and academic lives, as well as what we can learn from these experiences in order to enhance their social and educational experiences.

The study adopted a qualitative interpretive research design, within the tradition of a narrative inquiry as means of data generation. It utilised purposive sampling to select six (three girls and three boys) grade six learners aged between 11-14 years who according to the school records, were regarded as academically underperforming. Photo-voice and drawings were used as participatory techniques aimed at foregrounding the participants' authentic voices and agency during data collection. The participant learners took photos and drawings that captured salient spaces and places of their schooling experiences related to the objectives of the study. These (photos and drawings) were used to stimulate discussions which helped elucidate the learners' narratives during the individual and focus group interviews. The study adopted thematic and content analyses as its methods of data analysis.

The findings revealed that underperforming learner were not just aware of their labeling, but also they were aware of the low social spaces that being categorised as underperforming occupied in the hierarchy of power relations in the school. Many of the stereotypes and myths that they were associated with were found to further hamper these learners' achievement and progress and served as barriers to their learning, participation and development. Classrooms, home-school interface and school-based peer interactions were found to be major spaces and places that formed the intensity of the underperforming learners' schooling experiences. Each of these spaces and places were found to presents its own dynamics and challenges which directly affected these learners.

The study also revealed a number of creative strategies and ways in which these learners adopted to navigate and transcend their low social and academic standing in the school. Albeit, these creative navigational strategies indicated agency and self-determination on the part of these learners, these strategies were found to only aid survival at the social and peer-based interactions. Without the coordinated support from key stakeholders in the school, the study found that these learners were at high risk of being academically excluded from the school. Not only due to their low academic performance, but also as a result of some anti-social behaviour that these learners adopted as coping mechanisms in response to their unfavourable schooling experiences.

The findings from this study could prove useful to all key stakeholders, including the Department of Education in their endeavor to meet the learners' needs and so facilitate socially responsive and sensitive learning and teaching environments. Learners regarded as

underperforming should be exposed to educational activities that would help in instilling assertiveness and independence to them, so that they would also make friends easily, but mostly to enhance their primary school academic achievement. Given the findings that some of the dynamics that negatively affected the learners' performance at school emanated from home, there is need for stronger parental involvement in the education of their children.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation

SGB   :   School Governing Body

DoE: Department of Education

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child

ANA: Annual National Assessment

WP 6:   White Paper 6

I E: Inclusive Education

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency-Virus

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

IQ: Intelligence Quotient

SES: Socio-Economic Status

NGO: Non- Government Organisations

ELRC: Education Labour Relations Council

HRM: Human Resource Management

DET: Department of Education and Training

USA: United States of America

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

This is a qualitative study, designed to understand the experiences of grade six learners who were regarded as ‚academically underperforming" in a semi-urban primary school, under Pinetown district schools in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, north of Durban. Using children"s geographies Holloway (2010) and New Sociology of Childhood Studies Wyness (2011) as its guiding theoretical frameworks, the study discovered the places and spaces that these underperforming learners occupy within the schooling context. The study also explored factors affecting underperforming learners" schooling experiences and how underperforming learners actively engaged with these dynamics. The aim was to understand factors that impacted on learners" social and academic lives, as well as what we can learn from these experiences in order to enhance their social and educational experiences.

The study adopted qualitative research methodology and used focus group, individual interviews, as well as a participatory photo-voice method in order to elicit the learners" narratives of their schooling experiences. Purposive sampling was utilised in the process of selecting six grade six learners aged between eleven and fourteen years, which according to the school records were regarded as academically underperforming. This chapter provides an introduction to the study I have undertaken. It discusses the background to the study, prevalence of underperformers,

objectives and aims of the study, the key research questions that guide the study, the significance of the study, and finally, an overview of the subsequent chapters.

1.2   Background to the study

The study involved six grade six learner participants from a combined primary school called Isizwesokuthula (Pseudonym). These learner participants were within tender ages of eleven and fourteen years. Furthermore the selection of these learner participants was based on their weak performance towards produced academic achievement record within the intermediate phase. In addition the locality of the study was framed by children's geographies and the new sociology of childhood. The new Sociology of childhood quickly advanced in the 1990's and 2000's as a critical discipline within the arena of childhood studies since it positions children as active social agents with their own needs and concerns (Horton, 2010; Horton & Kraftl, 2006, 2009a). Hence the study desired to be acquainted with children's experiences, challenges and their social lives at school and home. Therefore the context of academic underperformance correlates with the spaces of school, the home and can be constructed as being „for" children.

Understanding of „space", according to this study, was not as simple as a neutral, physical surface upon which action occurs, but involved an understanding of the physical and social arena which had, more often than not, produced social meaning in a variety of ways. Furthermore, spaces and places provide significant means of hope by which societies organise themselves and distribute resources Pain et al. (2010). Hence, I noted the importance of knowing the background of each learner participant.

Regardless of much research into underachievement, however it seemed like not much had been done to deliver long-lasting resolutions to the problem of underperformance and underachievement with emphasis based on primary schools. Many readings have attentively focused on gifted underachievers whilst according to (Muir-Broaddus 1995; Peterson and Colangelo 1996; Barbara 2005) neglecting other areas such as femininity and culture in education.

Within education context of South Africa (DoE, 1997) confirmed children are challenged by various barriers to learning and to their development which, amongst other mentioned in the study, were consequences of lack of the fundamental provisions identified in Maslow's (1968) hierarchy theory of needs which were understood to form a major contribution towards teaching and learning, especially at the primary school level of every child and learner. In his theory, Maslow (1968) stated providing basic needs to every child and learner plays a pivotal role in their academic, social, emotional and physical development.

Therefore according to Halkett (2009) if any of the basic needs remained partially or altogether unmet, development will likely to be underdeveloped or distorted. Alluded the study by Chirambo and Ceasar (2003) failure of family to afford and provide these basic needs affects the child"s holistic development and is more often likely to lead to a higher rate of school dropouts, street children, and crime. Ultimately, that could dent the economy of any country. However, amongst South Africa"s educational reforms that took place after the first democratic elections in 1994, was White Paper 6, (2001) Inclusive Education. This reform aimed at ensuring all learners and students, regardless of their differences and challenges within the context of a school

environment, have equal access to quality education. Herein, some of the key barriers highlighted arise from socio-economic factors, negative attitudes, disability, shortage and unavailability of teaching and learning resources, and especially the undesirable influence of HIV/AIDS on families. The HIV/AIDS pandemic in particular, produced orphaned and vulnerable children that are affected academically, socially, emotionally, physically, and economically thus impacting negatively on their overall capability, performance and development. Hence Moletsane (2009) agreed HIV/AIDS coupled with poverty contributed extensively towards the weak /poor performance of most affected learners.

However Bronfenbrenner (1994) examined children‟s perception of human and physical context and emphasized on the importance of a person‟s background as essential in order to understand how they perceive and make sense of their circumstances including how they respond to their environment. Continued argument is necessary in order to understand human development from microsystems, which refers to the relationship between a developing person and their immediate environment, such as family and school. Hence the study served to understand the spaces and places of academically underperforming grade six learners at primary school. Nevertheless Oreshkina (2007) claimed that the world of poverty and social separation was still evident in students‟ lives, with the underperforming learners identified as continuously underperforming because they face barriers to their learning.

Furthermore explained Oreshkina (2007) some schools seemed to be focused more on boosting merely the highest performing learners which, through their maintained surroundings, were already inspired to prosper, and thus depressing those at the lowest end who had greatest need of

re-inforcement. This meant that academically underperforming learners tend to be neglected, thereby perpetuating the cycle of their underachievement and underperformance. Consequently Boyle (2009) comprehend and stimulated the implementation of WP6 (2001) Inclusive Education essential to schools to safeguard all learners even those living with abnormalities/ disabilities were not sidelined but ought to be accepted for who they are in schools, with the purpose of destroying inequalities and unfair practices amongst teachers, learners and the communities.

1.3   Prevalence of underperformers in schooling contexts

Within the context of a school environment, according to Page (2008), underperformers are learners who are at risk, consequently learners anticipated to fail because teachers could not motivate, inspire, control and instill understanding of thoughts, or create awareness and knowledge using traditional method of designed curriculum. Underperformers also commonly known as „slow learners" – a term commonly understood as one used to describe any learner who consistently fails to meet an average grade academic standard of performance. These labels were historically often attached to learners who scored low on intelligence quotient (IQ) tests which were a popular means of streaming learners in European Countries like Germany and U.S.A. However Oreshkina (2007) understood underachievement in schooling context as a term used to define „learners who are not achieving as much as they could; learners not reaching their potential; and learners having difficulty in learning."

Herein Ingram (2008) brought together all terms and described the slow learner, underperformer, underachiever as having the following characteristics of an intellectual ability lower than that of the average learner, therefore functioned below than expected level of learners of the same age, a condition often associated with impairment in adaptive behavior; a short, troubled or delayed attention span; limited reaction time; stuck in a pattern of concrete thinking and therefore less able to operate on a dynamic and creative level; difficulty in using conflicting thinking, memory problems; a struggle or problem to process information meaningfully and to integrate information with existing knowledge. During the Apartheid Era, such learners were often further labeled as mentally retarded or mentally deficient and allocated to Special Needs classes and schools.

However after the first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa expressed its commitment to democracy, non-discrimination and a unitary system of education and redress. Hence a profound distinction between the past and the present was formed; restructuring of education was one of the priorities of the new government. The Constitution (1996) and South African School Act (1996) provided a foundation for developing a new system of school governance and funding.

Reforms aimed at overcoming educational inequalities. Hence adopted White Paper 6 (Inclusive Education) 2001. White Paper 6 (hereafter referred as WP6), traced back to the Constitution of South Africa Section 29 of Act No. 108 of 1996 also (the Bill of Rights), and established that all citizens have the right to basic education, outlawed any discrimination and judgment against any person(s)/ individual on any lands, and also addressed the imbalances and inequalities of the past which were amongst others, discrimination that led to separation and isolation.

WP6 (2001) acknowledged that all children and youth in schools and communities can learn, but then need support to learn. Education and learning is more than just formal teaching, it also happens in the home and in the community. However it is clear that the current education system needs to provide the needs of all learners, to recognize, understand and respect the differences encountered amongst them. My study used the WP6 (2001) as its foundation and focused on learners referred as underperforming in grade six who were sometimes neglected because of their continuing underperformance and clearly not given the necessary support that is pivotal to creating a possible inclusive education and training arrangement.

1.4 Rationale for the study

This study was motivated by my personal experience of living with my ten year old nephew who has been labeled as an underachiever because of his weak academic performance at primary school. He has borne the brunt of countless (and devastating) negative comments both verbally and in writing as evident in term-end and year-end report cards which state „extremely weak‟ as a highlighted comment. As a result I have observed his avoidance behavior where he immerses himself in alternative non-academic activities where he can exercise control, such as, countless hours playing video games, attempting to fix broken toys or any other non-academic activity. He had plenty of energy for these activities and managed to keep him busy and occupied at all his time. However, he utterly refused to engage in homework and even tried to get out of going to school as much as possible.

This raised a grave concerns for me. I felt it was important to further investigate this issue, not only because of my personal investment in my nephew, but also because I believed there were

many learners forced to drop out of school because they have been identified as failures in their early lives. This provided me with both a personal and professional motivation to take on this study. As an educator who has taught in the primary educational sector for the past twenty-two years, I observed and witnessed learners that would be described as academically underperforming and educationally disadvantaged because of their individual challenges, however this underperformance was almost exclusively due to factors outside the school. For the period more than forty years researchers have identified variety of socio-economic factors that can contribute and negatively influence a child's educational performance.

I have also observed a number of primary school learners struggling to read and write with understanding and, as a result, they were unable to meet the required level for progression to the next grade. This has resulted in the widespread concern of parents and the subsequent issue of referrals for psychological tests and further assessments. Through my firsthand experience of working with and witnessing these learners" and parents" struggles, I have developed an interest in further investigating learners" experiences of underperformance towards the aim of better understanding how these impact their lives, and how they navigate these spaces and make meaning of such experiences.

1.5   Objectives and aim of the study

This is a qualitative study thesis that concentrated on understanding the geographies of learners identified as academically underperforming in the intermediate phase at a primary school level. The purpose of this study evaluation was to understand probable causes of underperformance

and underachievement among six primary school learners who were regarded as academically underperforming. This was strengthened by Sousa (2003) that a mixture of reasons both in the home and at school can ground to learner underperformance and underachievement. In addition Gallagher (1991) asserted thus apart from school or family influence, also individual emotional factors could cause underachievement to learners.

According to Burton (2008) schools are an environment where learners not only obtain knowledge, but where they can learn to understand themselves, to be unique while living together with others in the process self-discovery. With such in mind, the focus of my study was firstly exploring on their lived educational and social experiences at a school and beyond. Secondly, I explored the inclusionary processes and exclusionary pressures underperforming learners experienced, and lastly, I investigated and understood how underperforming learners navigated the spaces and places that they occupied in order to access quality education and sustain positive well-being and happiness while at school, not forgetting building self-confidence despite being labeled as an underachiever.

In the context of this study, learners concerned were amongst tender ages of eleven and fourteen. Using their narratives I studied the educational and socio-cultural experiences of underperforming learners in primary school with the intent of understanding how these impacted on their education and on social lives, and finally how they related to others with whom they lived, played and learned. The study identified and defined the causes of said underperformance and underachievement. The review also attracted previous investigation Arecls (2009) conducted in several cultural contexts in order to accomplish a holistic view of underachievement.

The study further explored how schooling cultures and behaviours impacted on each child"s quality of education, health and well-being. Sarr (2013) stated schools portrayed as places where learners have no control but controlled, and shaped to conform to a particular behaviour. Agreed Fendler (2001) maintained at school children are controlled and organized in a special institutional process (usually age), thus the study considered experiences of particular ages group of participants, described by Osmans (2009) as „nature of events" that happen to a person which might hold significant meaning for good or bad memories.

Consequently Archambault (2012) confirmed childhood is shaped by learner"s school experiences. While Darst and Williams (2008) declared an academically underperforming learner displayed a character of being disorganized, irresponsible, lazy and have poor study skills, eventually blame everyone else for his/her problems, and either be constantly socializing when he or she should be studying or seem to be socially distant.

Based on all of the above data, I decided to work with grade six learners particularly because they are in the intermediate phase where commonly at this stage they start assigning importance towards things around and about them also they begin to be very cautious about their behaviour. Most importantly I considered their academic progress and performance had barely improved within the period of three to four years in the intermediate phase.

My selection of grade six learners, who were exhibiting evidence of academic underperformance, as participants in this study, shed light on how underperforming learners understand and interpret their formal primary schooling. However in measuring learners"

academic progress with focuses on Languages and Mathematics the DoE (2005) implemented the Annual National Assessment (ANA) as a means of piloting school effectiveness across all South African primary schools. This has led to the availability of large-scale learner test data at the Grade Three level (the last class on the level of the foundation phase), the Grade Six level (the last class on the level of intermediate phase) and the Grade Nine level (the last class on the level of senior phase education).

However, this study does not discuss the details of teaching and learning that goes on in the classroom situation as opposed to earlier work on classroom observation taken by Flanders (1967) in the US, and positivists in the 60"s (Kohler, 1978 and Cazden 1986). Their approaches were based on Flanders (1967) type of classroom observation protocol linking classroom behaviour to student"s academic outcomes. Alluded Buchner (2006) underperforming learners might forget what you said in a teaching context, but will never forget how you made them feel". Therefore Mashau (2008) encouraged importance of understanding uniqueness of each learner thus building trust and confidence so learners feel appreciated, hence teaching and learning approaches on curriculum delivery should accommodate learners.

On the other hand in accordance to Christenson and James (2000) children"s lives are usually explored through the voices of adult proxies. Later developments in the research however, created the understanding that children are members of society and therefore are able to speak for themselves and are perhaps better sources of knowledge when it comes to their own experiences stated Hood et al. (1996). Similar concern rose from James (1998) proclaimed no one else can tell his or her own story better than the person or owner him or herself.

The learner participants in my study have experienced discrimination, oppression, bullying and isolation based on their academic underperformance including some experiences of verbal and physical abuse at school and surroundings. In some cases such experiences could have resulted to school drop-outs as early as primary school level. However as an experienced teacher, in undertaking this study I thought of means towards provision for assistance and support where possible to their learning and development. Hence the study vastly assisted in gaining knowledge and understanding of the challenges that underperforming learners experienced as they navigated all about their primary school years.

I therefore believed that those of us entrusted with teaching should identify and give guidance and support towards vulnerable learners. In conducting the study I hoped to understand how underperforming learners observed themselves which helped me to and gain knowledge and understanding of their lived experiences. It is my hope that findings from this study might be useful to educators in the application of classroom inclusivity (DoE, 2001).

1.6   Key research questions

This study was steered by the following key research questions involving underperforming learners in the intermediate phase at Isizwesokuthula primary school:

1.   What are the schooling experiences of six academically underperforming learners in one semi-urban primary school in KwaZulu-Natal?

2.   What are the geographies of academically underperforming learners in this primary school context?

3.   What are factors affecting academically underperforming learners in this school?

4.   How do academically underperforming learners navigate and negotiate the spaces and places of their experiences within this schooling context?

The study adopted a qualitative research methodology with the purpose of addressing the above questions to elicit narratives of learner participants. My aim was to understand the experiences of grade six learners (three girls and three boys) who were regarded as underperforming in a semi-urban primary school (referred to by the pseudonym „Isizwesokuthula‟) focusing on intermediate phase. The school is situated in the largely populated area of low costs houses in the north of Durban, kwaZulu-Natal. The selected participants displayed keenness to participate in the study and their desire to share their school experiences within the study.

1.7 Significance of this study

Generally speaking, in South Africa children have rights because they are human. In South African Constitutional law (1996), children‟s rights apply from newborn babies and include children up to the age of eighteen. According to (UNCRC, 1989), children‟s rights are fundamental part of human rights. This is accredited and classified in National and International Legislation, most notably in the United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC,

1989) they further recognized children as more vulnerable than adults having less power and access to resources. Hence bestowed children"s rights. (UNCRC, 1989) believed children need to be heard and understood, since their individual needs are considered essential and ought to be fulfilled in order to progress to their full potential as responsible adults. Uys & Cameron (2009) confirmed the individual need is even greater when children show signs of vulnerability.

Central to the research problem, the general aim of the study was to understand the experiences of grade six learners, regarded as academically underperforming, in a semi-urban primary school particularly in the intermediate phase, under Pinetown district of KwaZulu-Natal, with main focus to the experiences of schooling context. However Ciacio (2009) put forward evident that underperforming learners may underperform and therefore underachieve in a particular or in all areas, but underperforming learners commonly share one thing, they do inferior work in school. Ciacio (2009) further stated that learners learn best over reinforcement, nevertheless generally numerous teachers seem to focus on and have an automatic response in terms of what learners do not do, have not done even what they cannot do. Teachers are too quick to use negative words, grouping and estimation rather than encouraging underperforming learners to recognize own potential and success.

It is in this vein that Urassa and Boema (1997) argue that the best way to care for vulnerable learners is to support and strengthen existing coping strategies already available in their communities. Failure to address such needs is likely to push children out of school in search of fulfillment elsewhere. What is of concern is evidence to the fact that children who drop out of school as a result of bullying and sometimes poverty and related learning barriers tend to be

associated with theft, crime, prostitution and child labour (Chirambo & Ceasar, 2003; Santrock, 2007). Such practices can result in serious and negative consequences; therefore everything possible needs to be done to protect underperforming learners from practices of ill-treatment.

In light of all the above information, it is my belief that this study will be of value because it serves to give learners a chance to express themselves, stating clearly through dialogue interviews how academic underperforming learners experience and navigate schooling, taking into consideration that, as young as they are, they also have challenges that affect their daily lives which sometimes need adult attention.

The study also emphasized underperforming learners" resilience in their attempts to overcome the abovementioned challenges, considered their rights and how they could change the trend in the education system supported by Engelbrecht et al. (2009) where it stated that consequences of WP 6 (2001) inclusive education are beneficial for everyone. Furthermore, the study provided a stage towards further research in the area of discovering and understanding the dominant places and spaces within the schooling context.

1.8   Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation has five chapters altogether, which are divided as follows:

Chapter 1:   Gives a broader view of the research study against a general background of what has been understood by underperformance, and outlines the research questions that are a foundation to this study.

 Chapter 2:   Review of literature which is connected to this area of study is presented, drawing on international and national literature and provides conceptual and theoretical approach which frames this study.

Chapter 3:   Discusses and includes the description of research design and methodology, the sampling procedures and ethical issues, details the data generation and data analysis, and outlines ethical considerations and a model of ensuring trustworthiness.

Chapter 4:   Presents dialogue of findings and the analysis of the study, then outlines, interprets and discusses these findings according to the themes as they emerged from the raw data.

Chapter 5:   Concludes the dissertation by presenting finishing reflections and probable suggestions of the study for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1   Introduction

The purpose of the study was to understand the schooling experiences of grade six learners regarded as academically underperforming at Isizwesokuthula primary school. The semi-urban primary school is situated in a densely populated area of low-cost houses in kwaZulu-Natal, north of Durban under the Pinetown district. This chapter reviewed the literature in the field and discussed the theoretical framework of the study. It began with discussions of debates regarding the key concepts that were relevant to the study. These included: underachievement and underperformance; factors affecting, as well as effects of underperformance in primary schools; and participation and development, including a review of related research studies conducted internationally and nationally that raised key debate around the phenomenon of academic underperforming learners in the schooling contexts. Finally the chapter presented children"s geographies and used the New Sociology of Childhood Studies as the underpinning theoretical framing of this study.

2.2.   Underachievement and underperformance in schooling context

Educationists are divided regarding the definition and causes of underachievement. Despite the fact that Barbara as far back as (2007) stated there is no exact meaning available for the term

„underachievement", yet the issue of underachievement of learners has presented a challenge to educators for many years. Wilshaw (2006) anticipated that several learners at the secondary and high school levels in western countries consequently drop out of school having been constantly categorized by teachers as underachievers, despite the fact teachers sometimes fail to establish whether such learners underperform in a specific subject or in all subjects. Wilshaw (2006) in seeking to understand this phenomenon later developed its definition of a distinction between learners who were „low attainment" and those who were „high ability" underachievers. Herein Wilshaw (2006) defined „low attainment" as essentially referring to the „cohort of learners who achieved significantly far below their expected level of performance in growth-related anticipations in subjects or specified skills due to a lower aptitude".

However Wilshaw (2006) stated a major percentage of schooling populations fell into this category and predicted that they were extremely unlikely to ever achieve the expected academic levels of achievement and performance in crucial subjects, such as English and Maths at their school leaving stage. However recognizing and following low attainment and learning underachievement was important at school level as was necessary for educational specialists (from class teachers to school managers) whilst also putting into place strategies and practices to support the teaching and learning of identified low attainment learners. In further definition of „high ability" underachievers these were learners understood according Wilshaw(2006) to be able learners of performing at a level corresponding to their aptitude, whereas such „learners obviously failing to recognize their academic potential", thus scheming or blaming on delaying factors as obstructing their performance.

Jyotsna (2008) on other side defined underachievement as „inability to or failure of a single or group of learners to accomplish in compliance with their age or discouraged possible and learning expertise". However Montegory (2009) defined underachievement used when „projected possible performance of individual not comprehended in their performance, in the pre-school period, in further schooling or later in an individuals" life."

Hence my reason for choosing to refer to this phenomenon as „underperformance" rather that „underachievement" therefore, reads: After my thorough research and observation I understood the term „underperforming" as an ongoing act or a performed series of assessed study results obtained, and sometimes available, on either a daily, weekly, monthly, termly or even yearly basis, but an ongoing assessment which has not been completed and which is accomplished within a stipulated period of time or before its final conclusion.

In contrast I further understood the term „underachieving" as an end-result of a completed course of study obtained at the end of stipulated time whether it be the end of the week, month, term or even years of study. Nonetheless Sausa (2012) perceived underachievement as „actions and not an attitude nor set of work habits." However this was opposed by Barbara (2005) who argued a straight forward definition of underachievement is not yet available even though assessment tools are available for educators and existing researchers of today.

I therefore opted to use the term „underperformance" in my study after clearly understood the above detailed interpretations with the reason that my participants were grade six learners who were still within the intermediate phase (grade four to grade six), having spent more than the

expected three years in the phase as stipulated within the policy of assessments and promotions (DoE, 2008). Their continual assessment results had been regularly checked throughout the phase on their academic performance repeatedly rated as „underperforming‟, reflecting the lack of notable improvement in their study /working capabilities. I examined how underperformance and underachievement is understood by these learners in terms of psychological emotional and social relationships. Their primary education experiences will be shared and debated through this study with more focus on what hinders good performance and progress relating to their primary schooling lives. Jansen (2010) asserted the choices young people make crucially depend on their experiences of schooling, including the understanding others within the school context.

2.3   Factors affecting underperformance in schooling contexts

Research shows that most schools in South Africa witness the existence of academically underperforming learners because they experience difficulty in their learning Clarke (2011). The contributing factors are normally referred to as „barriers to learning‟. Such factors including ethnic group, language, gender, age, geographical belongingness, marital status, income, socio-economic status (SES), education level of parent, religious affiliations and school background, all of which contribute towards the standard of learners‟ academic performance in schools (Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango, 2009); (Hlupo and Tsikira, 2012); (Chinyoka and Naidu; Hafiz, Tehsin, Malik, Muhammad and Muhammad, 2013). Barriers to learning embrace all systematic, societal, and educational factors that hinder the process of learning and development of a learner. However Bennet (2003) defined the term „barriers to learning‟ as a broad term that

covers a variety of conditions that damaged individual intellectual functioning". Therefore DoE (2005) acknowledged that barriers to learning could reside within the learner and may be permanent, transitory, intrinsic or extrinsic, and only sometimes noticeable. Nonetheless Ntombela (2006) agreed such barriers might create a block and hinder success on the performance of an individual learner. Hence my study seeks to expose factors affecting performance in a schooling context by seeking to understand the experiences of underperforming learners as highlighted under „barriers to learning".

Department of Education (2005) stated barriers to learning arise from the different aspects of the curriculum which might be: the language medium of instruction; the content; the teacher; teaching policies and methods; the pace of teaching and the available time to complete the curriculum; availability and non-availability of teaching and learning support materials; and assessment with highlight that these barriers are mostly experienced in the classroom environment. It is clear that curriculum, teaching and learning should be made flexible enough to accommodate different styles and across all bands of education so that it is accessible to all learners, irrespective of their learning needs.

The term „barriers to learning" in this study referred to any difficulty that hindered the learner from attainment of educational highlights, which might have contributed to failure and interruptions. The term assisted to the classification of groups of primary school learners that lack the societal support and superior educational services essential to assist carrying out normal ordinary tasks of everyday living Sebastian (2012).

2.3.1   Attitudes of discrimination

Discriminatory attitudes resulting from prejudices noticeable as barriers to learning when focused towards learners in the education system. Such negative attitudes manifest themselves in the labeling of learners and can result in stigmatization (DoE, 1997b). These attitudes can negatively affect and incorrectly inform any decision-making in educational practices. Swart and Pettipher (2010) and Bothma et al. (2009) state that inclusion of learners is an issue related to educators' attitudes. Thus revealed one of the participants in my study responded on a teacher"s action which resulted to behaviour that negatively affected him. Such actions and negative attitudes can be counterproductive and negate efforts to implement inclusive education. Furthermore, Bracely (2008) declared that underperforming learners often exposed to discrimination, aggression and isolation because they have a limited vocabulary in their second language and as a result fail to understand the tasks outlined by the teacher.

2.3.2   Overcrowded classrooms

Indeed, it is important for the classroom to reflect a constructive, welcoming and supportive teaching and learning environment within all opportunities for learning. Establishment of a welcoming school environment and orientation on inclusivity should be emphasized in schools in order to decrease levels of discrimination and negative attitudes towards underperforming learners, and thus promoting and building an „inclusive society and later achieving education for all UNESCO (1994). Resource issues addressed physical aspects such as classrooms being inaccessible to underperforming learners, due to overcrowding. It is certainly important that all

classrooms in schools provide a positive, friendly and supportive learning environment with diverse learning styles. This creates opportunities to provide individual attention especially to learners needing extra help. Overcrowded classrooms result to overworked teachers leading to poor overall quality of teaching and learning with an unavoidable increased number of failure rate of learners.

2.3.3 Language and communication

A further barrier arising from the curriculum is believed to be the use of the second language as medium of teaching and learning. Learners experiencing language difficulties is a problem that Mascher (2012) describes as one that confronts grade four learners coming from the foundation phase where learning content was taught in their vernacular language, Now exposed to being taught in first additional language (teaching becomes foreign to them). New experiences of the intermediate phase where teaching and learning take place in a language that is not their home language. These learners may be disadvantaged by linguistic differences and difficulties that contribute to learning breakdown.

Many second language learners find it difficult to understand the language of instruction and unable to communicate with the educator and their peers in classes often results in them being excluded from full participation in classroom activities. Furthermore Armstrong et al. (2010) agreed that learners who are not proficient in the second language are often subject to discrimination, experience a lack of interaction between cultural peers and, because of low expectations, do not enjoy adequate support from educators.

2.3.4   Socio-economic factors

Taylor (2012) elucidated the connection between education and socio-economic status as spherical to a greater extent that educational outcomes are determined by socio-economic status, Hence poverty is understood to be a serious barrier to learning and development (DoE, 1997). The gravity of this barrier stems from the fact that it cannot be easily addressed by schools and their communities as it is all too often tied up with the economy of the country. However if unaddressed, it can seriously compromise learners „opportunities to stay at school. Also it can negatively affect learners‟ academic and social performance as well as their future.

Therefore disadvantaged learners may be exposed to risky and life-threatening home situations such as lack of basic needs, the shelter and nutrition, and other common conditions such as violence, abuse, crime, unrest, migratory residency (domestic disruptions: painful divorce of parents), high levels of mobility (urbanization, eviction, foster care) (DoE, 1997b) which might therefore result to academic underperformance of learners.

Such learners due to sometimes depressing individual experiences often frequently be absent from school, or displays weak concentration span when they are at school DoE (1997b). The above is confirmed by Taylor (2012) that most learners born into poor families surface an educational weakness even from before birth and all over their education. This was further confirmed by (Antonow-Schlorke et al. 2011) thus such a disadvantage can unfavorably disturb underperforming learners even from the womb. Affirmed Jensen (2013) that nutrition plays a pivotal role in the development of any learner, and further stated that improper food balance to

an unborn child might cause ear infections as medical research proven that ear infectious children might have trouble with discrimination of sounds, which might negatively affects children‟s ability to track directions, do extremely demanding hearing processing, and later understand the teacher at school, which one at a time might influence on reading capability and other expertise. Jensen (2013) further stated learners who grow up in poor families are mostly exposed to food with lower nourishing value, which turns to be much harder for learners to listen, think, and focus to learn when experiences poor nutrition and weakened health practices.

However Basch (2011) mentioned that skipping breakfast for some learners is not by choice however unpleasant disturbing reasons resulting from economic situation which negatively affect learners' academic achievement. In accordance to different learner situations some schools nowadays make preparations to provide porridge as breakfast for learners at school in the morning before classes and therefore serve as a intervening coating which, influences the intergenerational message of socio-economic status.

Nevertheless Bracely (2006) believes that children from poor economic backgrounds are not afforded the same luxuries and opportunities as those from wealthy backgrounds, therefore mostly learners from low-income families are less likely to know the words a teacher uses in class or the words that appear in reading material, sometimes when children aren't familiar with words, they don't want to read, they sometimes feel like school is not for them. That might according to (Weeks and Errands, 2011 & Chindanya, 2012) sometimes be one of the explanations why changes in vocabulary and reading ability are associated with family income.

2.3.5   Lack of parental involvement

Lack of parental involvement is associated with lack of parental education. Believed Ngidi &
Qwabe (2006) hence specified education in South Africa as faced with several challenges
including those associated with learners, school and families, leading to poor home
circumstances that are not conducive to learning. Additionally, learner‟s negative self-image
might result from parents who do not recognize their child‟s abilities or fail to support them
which can contribute to being the cause of underachievement.

In addition to lack of parental involvement and according to Yeung, Linver and Brooks-Gunn
(2002) as cited in Chinyoka and Naidu (2013) that parents might become so poor and
unprivileged to provide learners with Maslows (1968) theory of hierarchical needs. Learners
might be living under circumstances with unsuitable ways of living, like no bed to sleep on or
even four to six persons sharing one bed, or sometimes merely living at residences unsafe for
even outside play such as congested squatter camps. The above challenges result to a learners
being less motivated to learn. Especially if accompanied with less influence of parental
involvement to learner‟s education and might result in learners having little or no interest to
pursue his / her career and eventually not achieving his /her dreams.

Jensen (2013) agreed regardless of the situation, however contribution and participation of
parents as well as the communal involvement in the teaching and learning is highly essential for
effective learning and development of their learners‟ education especially the underperforming
learners and those with special needs and barriers to learning. Taki et al. (2010) confirmed the

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absence of one or both parents affects the developing brain. The learner often becomes self-doubting, worried and can even be exposed towards early chaotic experiences. Hence disorderly home/school situations often create mistrust in learners, which they have already experienced at home. They believe that grown-ups at home have often failed them, and learners may undertake that even the grown-ups in school will fail them, too. Therefore acts of misbehavior in class and school are likely to increase because many learners simply do not have stability at home. On the other hand, learners are more likely to be inconsiderate, use unsuitable language, and act disrespectfully pending they are taught social and emotional responses more suitably.

It is important to note that labeling children as learners with 'special educational needs' tends to categorize them and promotes failure in them. This is referred to by Hay, Smit and Paulsen (2001) in the WP 6 (2001) which stated parents and society should cater for children living with challenges, and that society must change to allow for these people to play a full participatory role in it. Diversity must be recognized as part of a normal society, Risley & Hart (2006) agrees in so much so learners from poor households should commonly receive two times as many warnings as positive comments, when compared to positives to negatives learners from middle-class homes.

2.4   Support mechanisms for underperforming primary school learners

2.4.1   School/ teacher support

Human resources including strength in interpersonal relationships, in relations of power, and beyond, are assets that play a major role in the school (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006). This can be

applied profitably if educators show willingness to recognize, accept and respond to issues of identified underperforming and vulnerable individual learners at school especially in the classroom, which might assist learners to perform at their level best in order to gain the educator˝s trust, and therefore improve their academic performance. However, most teachers are not qualified to handle underperforming learners or those living with challenges. Learners from unbalanced house-home lives are particularly in need of strong, progressive and caring adults. The more attention received from the teacher, the better basis for interferences.

It is therefore ideal for the teacher to learn every student's name to acknowledge identity and individuality amongst leaners, sometimes to enquire about their families, their hobbies, and what's significant to them. It is also worthwhile to discontinue telling learners what to do but rather begin coaching learners how to do it; such situations generate opportunities for learners to assume responsibility. When dealing with learners it is much essential to introduce programs of physical education at every level to encourage and maintain levels to perform academically well. It is never logical for a teacher to withhold recess from students for a punitive issue because oxygen and glucose are two primary foods for the brain; which the schools can freely provide at zero cost. Winter et al. (2007) stresses school-breaks/ intervals and physical education contribute to a greater oxygen intake and better learning.

2.4.2   Government support

It is important according to Jenkinson (1997) for departmental support service personnel such as speech therapists, occupational therapists to work closely with educators in schools, assist by

developing programs and devising instructional strategies for underperforming learners and those experiencing barriers to learning and development. Also Corbett (2001) mentions that inclusive learning demonstrates to learners that they can learn and can be offered support in understanding themselves which can also build up and increase their self-confidence. (DoE, 2002b) put emphasis that all learners regardless of their disabilities should be actively engaged in classroom teaching and learning. However (DoE, 2002) further stated in designing an improvement plan, school were required to design and implement own intervention program as a formal improvement plan by the state however identifying deficiencies and demarcation plans to reinforce success. However, in some cases such development plans may address financial, management, and instructional practices, as well as set detailed academic goals. In summary, departmental support is highly recommended for better results.

2.4.3   Peer support

A positive school learning environment should be emphasized, whereby learners are encouraged to understand and respect each other, especially during times of trouble or need, as well as be able to assist each other, work together by sharing ideas and school work. Bearing in mind that all children learn in different ways, sometimes help from peers, friends or teachers works best, and should therefore be encouraged. Approved Muthukrishna (2013) that schools are places that accommodate and describe questions which are thoughtful of power-laden matters. Hence, inclusion is about providing the help learners need in order that they might learn and participate in meaningful ways. Otherwise the key is to give only as much help as needed.

2.5 Theoretical / conceptual framing of the study

2.5.1 Children's geographies

This study is directed under the framework of children"s geographies which politically and ethically explores the places and spaces of children's lived experiences Wyness (2003). Historically children were excluded from any decision-making whether at home or socially due to the fact that they are young person"s therefore innocent and immature, however the development of children"s geographies has been underpinned by the adoption of the concept of the sociological child that has gone some way to destabilizing dominant, common sense assumptions about children James et al. (1998).

However the book „Geographies of Children, Youth and Family" as an edited collection carries international specialist"s vibrant and growing field of geographies of children. Children"s geographers routinely draw on the central tenets of childhood studies: that childhood is a social construction, and that children are agents whose voices should be heard in research and societal decision making. The uniqueness of children"s geographies, however, lies in the centrality of space and place. Conceptually, this has meant attention to how social constructions of childhood are also spatial constructions. In other words, depending on context, spaces such schools, the home that may have been made as being „for" children, however others spaces such as the street, then children may be considered out of place. Similarly, children"s geographers argue that it is impossible to understand children"s agency without interrogating their experiences of place.

However research by Holt (2011) focused on geographies on inclusion and exclusion of disabled young people, with families, personification and uniqueness. However my interest in this study to understand exper relationships with peers and with adults at home or at school iences of underperforming learners at the intermediate phase in the mainstream school, with highlights on their places and spaces at school. As Van Blerk (2005), explained within children"s geography space is a key concept as it integrates the social, which includes relationship with adults (home) peers (school) and the surroundings. The child according to South African Children"s Act 38, 2005 is defined as a person or human being under the age of eighteen years; this incorporates with United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (UNICEF, 1989). The democratic South Africa since after 1994 primary education in South Africa is free and compulsory for children who leave in it South African Children"s Act (2005).

Just as in countries like England, American public education has taken on the enterprising task of not only educating children but wanting to engage with them. Geographers recently recording the experiential involvements and performs of young people sense of belonging, identity and education Jeffery (2010), as children offer a lens through which to understand a range of issues in their lives, for example. These geographies also involve children" spaces and places, where Cele (2006) explains spaces and places as interlinked, equally reliant on and involving real, intellectual and common aspects of located space. My study attempts to understand the geographies of underperforming primary school learners in the intermediate phase at the mainstream school.

Drawing on experiences of three groups of adolescents McPhail (2012): average-achieving, low-achieving, and those with learning disabilities, with the aim of understanding and clarifying how young people uniquely perceive living in the world. The result was conflicting views on the effects of labeling; more specifically that adolescents with learning disabilities experienced their school environment more positively than adolescents from the other two groups. The adolescents with learning disabilities experienced the resource room more positively than the self-contained classroom. As a result of the study, a more holistic description of adolescents" daily experiences emerged McPhail (2012) emphasized that phenomenological approach to describing adolescents" experiences created an opportunity to see the way meanings can be constructed in mind and behavior, in contexts that otherwise outside of our experience McPhail (2012).

Alexander (2001) conducted a similar study „five cultures" to South Africa, Russia, and the United States. In his project Alexander (2001) explored primary education levels of classroom and school in France, India, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The study focused on educational policies and constructions in classroom practices. Study method used included documented, dialogue, observational, video and photographic data collected at the levels of system. The study context was England, France, India, Russia and the United States. However the project was quantitative-qualitative in nature, with a qualitative component performed in an ethnographic manner. It included school visits, classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, as well as the study of official documents. The study discovered their teachings were formed by the nationwide culture and that country"s background history. However, teaching does not begin and end in the classroom. The study revealed that what was done in classrooms by teachers and students reflects the values of the wider society,

which was a practice located within societal circles including local and national, to the emergence of those core and abiding values, traditions and habits which shape, enabled and compelled educational development Alexander (2001).

However, similarities of human resource that were identified allowed cultural concepts in the classroom. Amongst others were creating a safe place for learning; teachers" focus on students learning; helping students become independent self-reliant individuals which were somehow similar to South Africa and was mentioned earlier as human resources playing a vital role in the education of underperforming learners hence, trying to improve self-confidence and sense of belonging and developing self-awareness amongst learners, Skelton (2007).

The students" need for love and relationship was noticeable by Alexander (2005) the power of talk to shape children"s thinking. It is therefore in the teachers" best interest to create a positive atmosphere in the class which is conducive to the child"s healthy learning, development and participation. This was further supported by Oreshkina (2011) who stated the common characteristic of these learners stemmed from the lack of attention from their parents. The breakdown in student-relationship with others is evident in their inability to communicate and ask questions. Oreshkina (2011) believed underperforming learners remain described as: underperforming and underachieving learners who cannot communicate, because they do not know how to ask for help.

Oreshkina (2012) recommended the psychological interference hence evident of impact suffered by underperforming learners. Most underperforming learners lack strengths and often not

confident about themselves. No one knows or cares about different difficulties they experience constantly in their everyday lives. Many of them are hyperactive and the spaces and places that they function within do not cater for them. Inclusive Education (2001) states „Every child can learn‟, which statement encourages educators not to give up on learners experiencing barriers to their learning. Additionally stating, as a way forward, early identification of learners with barriers as learning empowers them through development of individual strengths and hence encouraging voluntarily participation and improve active involvement in all processes of teaching and learning in classroom situation (DoE, 2005).

2.5.2   Critiques and ways forward: Geographies of children, youth and families

Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2011) outlined achievements and current issues facing geographies of children, youth and within families. Researchers investigating geographies of children perceived children as much more than adults-in-waiting. The book Alexander (2001) as a whole attempts to simultaneously overcome key limitations of the focus on children‟s relatively autonomous and reflexive agencies, and to retain the advances of emphasizing the centrality of a reconfigured children‟s agency.

Existing publications in the field of geographies of children and youth have tended to conceptualize children as „knowing‟ actors. However those opposing leading accounts suggest that children are not competent actors who can engage meaningfully in political, cultural and academic forums. Amongst other critiques of geographies of education Hanson (2009) elucidated firstly accommodating evidence that education permits fuller consideration by

geographers, though in contrast he argued that engaging with research on children, youth and families redesigns empathetic of what, and might ought to been talented.

Yet he Hanson (2009) further exclaimed education matters should be foregrounding instead of considering undeveloped individuals as the themes because if not it might be draining considering they might be remunerated for present and upcoming life-worlds. Nevertheless the agency focused upon young people"s experiences opposed their thoughts and has been working tirelessly essential to overcome leading societal perspectives of children and young people Olssons (2012). By contrast to earlier scholars and those which have not engaged with these critical studies, geographies and social studies of childhood have done much to incorporate the voices and experiences of young people; however there has been an exceptional accumulative of research focusing upon the emplaced experiences of children and young people.

2.5.3   Maslow's theory of basic needs in relation to school environment and education of a child.

The purpose of this theory"s relevance lies in developing an understanding of the school environment and its relationships to the underperforming child"s experiences of social relations at school and amongst people he/she lives with. For instance, a school is a system with different parts including educators, management team, peers and, the curriculum which a learner is exposed to everyday from primary school life Eloff and Ebersohn (2006) agree that a strong relationship within the essential abilities, talents and social resources found in each individual can be used to the benefit, survival and social functioning of the whole world. The working together of these parts towards acceptance of each individual learner might create a strong sense

of belief. There are many learners living in families that are so poor that they cannot afford their children‟s basic needs (Budlender, Rosa, & Hall, 2005). Maslow‟s hierarchical theory of needs (1943) reveals the fundamental needs of every growing child which might be influential in the development of a child if they are not met. Maslow (1943) further outlined a hierarchy of needs that we all must attain, those first needs being identified as basic physiological needs such as water, food, and sleep, with safety being the second need. Even at school, learners should feel as safe as promising in order to perform to their maximum ability. Love and belonging being classified as third need and thereafter esteem as fourth essential human need finally self-actualization which involves personal growth outlined as fifth and final human need in Maslow‟s Hierarchy of Needs (1943).

However helpful and participative behaviors to assist in the fulfillment of these needs was later recommended within the study as societal responsibility, nonetheless the study further observed some of the negative attitudes that might be causal influences on underperforming and underachieving learners at school including amongst others; unpopular choices with regards to curriculum; teaching and learning languages; non-involvement of parents unstructured communication; anxiety; distant and unsafely-built environments; unsuitable and insufficient support services; inadequate policies and legislation; incompetently trained educators and unapproachable managers.

Some of the highlighted key barriers arise from amongst others; socio-economic factors, negative attitudes, disability, unavailability and scarcity of teaching and learning resources, and the impact of HIV/AIDS on family life as another major concern, especially in poorer

communities, where even the rate of unemployment is higher than in middle class communities, and researchers Mandela (1994) has revealed that in these communities, the incidence of HIV/AIDS infection is higher for the reason that poverty has been regarded as a major cause of the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. However in accepting and making a difference to learners it is therefore essential to acknowledge child /learners need support especially those who are most vulnerable to barriers to learning and exclusion. Hereafter schools became a place in which all children are protected from harm, nurtured and helped to grow and develop to their full potential UNICEF (2004).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has covered a brief review of related literature which enabled to present a steady view of the study area also demonstrated fittings of the study amongst other research studies already done. Involving review of other literature done in countries of the North and South Africa, which also dealt with underperforming and underachieving learners in schools.

Followed by the next chapter, where the research design and methodology are discussed including the method used for data generated.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study sought to understand the schooling experiences of grade six learners who were regarded as underperforming in a semi-urban primary school (under the pseudonym of Isizwesokuthula), which is situated in kwaZulu-Natal at the largely populated area of low costs houses, north of Durban. The previous chapter discussed the literature related to this research study. In this chapter, I present the selected research design and methodology and further explain the reasons why I believe these are the best suited methodological choices for this research.

3.2 A qualitative, interpretative research design

A qualitative phenomenological design was adopted in this study using a methodology of understanding, interpretation, observation in natural settings, and closeness to the data Ghauri et al. (2008). Considering Smith (2007) who explained research design as a plan and structure of investigation, so as my study aim to explore and understand the experiences of underperforming primary school learners, primarily understanding how these learners navigate their places and spaces. This plan and structure was thus found suitable. Selecting a qualitative methodology seemed the best route to choose for my study. Hence Creswell (2010) believed such plan was good at bringing deeper issues to the surface and facilitating voices to be heard.

Dawson (2006) states that qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences as methodology which theorists and researchers believe develops a holistic picture of human social behavior. In agreement (Cresswell, 2009; Myburgh and Poggenpoel, 2010) stated qualitative research utilises flexible methods of data generation intended to evoke in-depth experiences, perceptions and opinions from participants. Selecting a qualitative research methodology allows flexibility in my data generation, this being especially suitable since my focus is on collecting descriptive and rich data and trying to understand learners" stories and experiences of life events both at school and at home Bell (2012). Nevertheless Cohen et al, (2008) stated the main feature of a qualitative approach places an importance on explanation and understanding the exceptional and particular individual cases rather than the overall and the worldwide.

The voice and agency was describe a crucial concept in the new childhood studies Morojele and Muthukrishna (2011) hence my belief that children are social agents who are able to tell their own stories if given a chance, is perfectly in accord with the aims of a qualitative approach to research. My methodological choices position my participants as storytellers in their own right, who have first-hand knowledge of their own lived experiences and are afforded the opportunity to have their authentic voices heard Peterson and Langellier (2006).

Researchers such as (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012; Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006) confirmed that qualitative researchers desires to make sense of emotional state, experiences, social conditions or phenomena as they occur in the real world. Research which sets out to create meaning of the phenomena under investigation is necessarily interpretative in character. This is further explained by Einsner (2008) that qualitative researchers must be able to express empathy

through scientific writing and through interaction with individuals in order to create a better understanding for the reader, which I have endeavored to achieve in this research study. An interpretative study provides me with the freedom to explore participant‟s unique experiences within the classroom and the interpretations of those experiences in much more detail.

3.3   Narrative inquiry

My study is a narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry according to Bell (2012) involves connecting stories of apparently separate events of an individual‟s life and interpreting those events in the light of how they relate to one another.   Narratives can be explained as acts comprising of somebody telling a story to the other person as to what/how it happened. This narrative inquiry was purposefully used in the study to draw out the voices of the participants thus capturing the originality of the story. In this research study there can be no right or wrong narrative, but narratives can be judged and compared against each other. There is, however, no standard by which to measure any narrative against the meaning of events themselves, because experiences of individuals will always be different, sometimes unique. Therefore, the meaning of narrative experience is established in its narrative appearance.

In „An Invitation to Critical Humanism‟ Plummer (2011) describes experience and life as a fluctual praxis and always in flow, disjointed, incomplete and sometimes ever messy. Hence the main focus of narratives was on the experiences of underperforming learners of how they navigate their places and spaces to understand the perception of self D‟amant (2013). Learners narratives discovered an excessive deal about them are holistic in that they encompass all facets

of humanity including the emotional, physical, social and cultural aspects of life (Bell et al. 2012; Clandenin, Pushor and Murray Orr, 2007; Golombek and Johnson, 2008). The concept of narrative inquiry is underpinned by the view that using participants to narrate their own stories was the only way I could directly capture another person‟s lived experience, hence I allowed them to share their own experiences. Hole (2007) further said individuals interpret their past in terms of their stories.

Children‟s stories are set amongst local activities and can be specific according to the spaces and places of their lives. I believe that children are social agents who are able to tell their own stories if given a chance. Narrators position themselves as storytellers talking about their lived experiences (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). This was confirmed by Alanen (2008) who highlighted the fact that as children are capable of engaging in social struggle, their stories can be generated in their local environment which can be homes, families, schools, and neighborhood communities. Adopting narrative inquiry for this study, therefore, will give the academically underperforming learners the opportunity to speak about their experiences of school and home and furthermore, will shed light on how they understand themselves and negotiate being labeled as underachievers.

Narratives of my participants were the essential outline for connecting activities of individual participant and actions into meaningful correlated structure into a whole Clandenin and Connelly (2006) confirmed narrative inquiry as a way of understanding and inquiring into experience. Nevertheless Bell (2012) further state that a narrative inquiry helps to bring clearer understanding of how the experiences and events of an individual‟s life relate to one another in

my attempt at analysing underperformance, hence I selected qualitative research approach as method of data collection in the hopes that narrative inquiry would provide learners with the opportunity to tell their stories. Though, considering the fact that each learner"s personal narrative is particular, and while the particularities of individualised experiences cannot be covered by generalisation, or otherwise abstracted, reduced, or characterised by totalisation Rapport (2007) they are all significant in this research.

3.4 Researchers' positionality

My principles as a researcher understood childhood as surrounded by social constructionism. I therefore agreed with Holloway & Valentine (2000) in support that children must be understood as important generating beings in their own right, hence reflected in the study that respected children as energetic and respected members of society. Critically imitated self as researcher hence essential to overall validity of an attempt which involved processes of human instrument. According to Richardson (2009), writing does not merely involve the copying of participants" realities, but involves a process of discovery - discovery of the participants, of the problem itself, and discovery of the self. As a researcher therefore I also became a storyteller, an investigator into the personal narratives of people. The researcher needs to be mindful of conducting subjective, yet disciplined interpretation, remembering that the goal is not to portray the facts of what happened, but instead to convey the meanings participants attach to their own experiences. Considering Plummer"s (2011) statement of meanings and truth never merely arrive, meanings are always being negotiated, and such a process needs to be critically reflected on from all angles and also on all levels, including the human factor of the researcher herself.

My intention to use narrative inquiry and focus group interviews with underperforming primary school learners was influenced by the need to capture the heart of how these learners understand academic performance, to learn more about them as primary school learners, their individual situation and the others with whom they inter act with Hemson (2011). As a researcher I conducted focus group interviews in a cautious and profound way as the purpose was not just the means of collecting data only but also considered a social mutual communication where language barriers may be clear. Furthermore, I took into consideration the availability of supremacy dynamics between the researcher and each individual learner participant. All interviews were recorded via a digital voice recorder and verified. My purpose was to safeguard a rich gathering of descriptive stories hence; there was a need for patience and understanding between the researcher and the learner participant.

My methodology was qualitative approach in a narrative inquiry which was selected in order to provide learners with the opportunity to tell their stories. The design of study referred to the choices and strategy regarding selection of research context of participants according to Mackenzie and Knipe (2009), the participants, and the method of data generation. Two methods were used in collecting data, namely: photo-voice and semi-structured interviews (to both individual and focus groups).

3.5   The study context

The study was conducted at Isizwesokuthula primary school, particularly with intermediate phase learners. This is a public school located in a densely populated semi-urban township of

low costs houses, situated more than 28 km away from the nearest town, northern part of Durban, under Pinetown district schools in kwaZulu-Natal. The community experiences high levels of unemployment and poverty, with most parents subsisting on old age pension and child support grants. At the time of the study, the school had a learner enrolment of 1,272. The age range of learners enrolled at school was between 5 and 18 years. The school offered classes from preschool (Grade R to Grade 7). The school had 15 over-age learners, who, according to the Education Departmental regulations for admission, should have been at secondary school.

Participants were from Isizwesokuthula primary school, the only primary school in the densely populated area of low costs houses. The community beliefs and practices followed were diverse because of the different communities of mixed cultures and ethnic groups, namely, amaZulu, amaXhosa, and a small number of Indian people in the area. Therefore from an early young age children in this community were exposed to a high rate of alcohol and drug abuse, such as „whoonga‟ which, statistically, leads to vandalism, house breaking, rape, robbery and theft. They were also exposed to „izinyoka‟, the stealing of copper in the area and the sorroundings.

Since constructed as the only primary school in the area, Isizwesokuthula primary regularly experienced break-ins, which were repeatedly reported to local police station. Amongst other most stolen items were electricity cables, aluminium chalk holders, metal window locks, water pipes and copper, which happened almost every weekend however more frequently during school holidays. Generally, amongst people involved in drug abuse and robbing were the big brothers, sisters and uncles of current learners, who were once learners of the same primary school. Having served 10 years as an educator in the community, I have observed how todays‟ youth generation exposed to drugs. Moreover, alcoholism amongst older men; substance abuse

(especially of „whoonga") which easily accessible amongst younger men, results in personal behavioural changes, including underperforming at school, which then effects a change in the community (Butterworth, Olesen, & Leach, 2012).

However the interview data confirmed that the participants experienced fear of expressing themselves freely, as described by Ingersol (2013). Conversely for this study, the approval from school principal was received prior to meeting with the participants because the interviews were conducted on school property ref: (appendix 2). Because the participants were still minors, before their interviews they were each given consent forms ref: (appendix 3) to be signed by their parents/guardians who read and signed to allow the study to continue. The transcribers and the members of the Applied Educational Psychology research team signed confidentiality pledge form ref: (Appendixes 9). The title of the research project in the forms is „The Geographies of underperforming learners in the intermediate phase: A Narrative Inquiry".

3.6   Research participants and sampling

The selection of learner participants was purposive sampling on participants who showed a willingness to participate as outlined by Durrheim and Painter (2009). Strydom and Venter (2012) assert that researchers prefer purposive sampling because it allows them to select participants that have the maximum characteristics compatible with the study. Many children demonstrated an interest in the research although I emphasized that participation was voluntary. As I decided to work with learners in grade six, the final class of the Intermediate Phase, I applied the method of purposive sampling in selecting participants amongst all underperforming

Grade Six learners at Isizwesokuthula primary school, set in a low cost housing area, north of Durban, in the Pinetown district of kwaZulu-Natal. The participants consisted of a total of six learners comprised of three girls and three boys doing grade six, who were between the ages of eleven to fourteen years. Using purposive sampling, I focused on the learners" academic performance from grade four, the first class of the intermediate phase, and selected those who had been labeled as underperforming or underachieving at school.

Purposeful sampling according to Schumacher et al. (2011) is a strategy to choose small group of persons likely to be familiar and enlightened about the chosen phenomena, and those who would be able to generate associated information. Voluntary participation was emphasized to all grade six learners who were willing to participate. Initially, I interviewed a total sample of ten participants from which group the final six were randomly selected. These participants were given a brief explanation to clarify the focus, aim and nature of the study. All interviews were conducted in the vernacular language of the participants (isiZulu), since it is the language in which they feel most comfortable expressing themselves. The recordings were later transcribed and translated into English. The method of purposeful sampling allowed me, as the researcher, to focus my efforts on a small number of participants and by doing so, produce a research of better quality (Strydom and Venter, 2012).

Table: A. Depict: The profile of my participants:

Participant	Age	Gender	Grade	Home structure (Guardians/Siblings)	Grade Repeated
Thabani (p1)	14yrs	Male	Six	Mother very sick. Two younger brothers: 10 years (Grade 4) and 6 months old. Uninformed he was conceived out of rape in Swaziland.	Grade 4
Njoh (p2)	11yrs	Male	Six	Granny, stepmother (aunt) and five cousins. Mother left him at door-step.	Grade 4
Sphelele (p3)	13yrs	Male	Six	Granny and two little cousin sisters, Never knew mother who left him with father who later gave him to granny and never returned.	Grade 6
Thulile (p4)	13yrs	Female	Six	Lives with twelve siblings in a child-headed home. Granny recently passed on. Father lives in Johannesburg with new wife.	Grade 5
Xolile (p5)	12yrs	Female	Six	Lives with great-grandmother, uncle and six cousins.	Grade 6
Philile (p6)	12yrs	Female	Six	Lives with mother and step-father. Has little brother in Gr.1 in an inclusive special school, Baby sister of 2 months.	Grade 5

Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of my participants.

3.7 Data generation

More than one instrument of data collection was used including unstructured one-on-one interviews, picture drawing and photo-voice within a focus group. Greef (2012) states that interviews are story-telling processes where the involved parties actively engage in a meeting and making process. Hence many sources and levels of participants" narratives are investigated

through a cyclical series of generating narratives, through reflexive writing, visual methodologies and conversational interviews.

3.7.1 Individual interviews

During the first week of data generation I started to conduct individual interviews using a semi-structured interview guide in order to explore and understand the participants" experiences as underperforming leaners. I selected semi-structured interviews as mentioned by Niewenhuis (2007) because they capture the participants" views of their own world. According to (Cohen Manion & Morrison, 2007) semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, also allow for clarification of a question in case the participant did not understand, and serve as a dynamic process of gathering information.

The same questions were asked of all participants. Interviews were conducted in their home language of isiZulu which is their language of preference as they are able to answer all questions freely and with ease. This process was done at varying times during the day, such as school intervals/breaks and after school. The duration of each individual interview was between twenty to thirty minutes depending on the clarity sought Naidoo (2012).Type of questions asked during interviews were: „What do you like about school?" and „What makes you happy to be at school?" These are the most favourable types of questions to produce authentic responses. Greeff (2012) asserts that open-ended questions allow participants to express themselves freely.

I conducted individual interviews for the purpose of having face-to- face contact with each participant. This provided more opportunity to establish confidence and trust between myself and each participant. It also enabled me to assess other dynamics such as eye contact, tone of voice and body gestures during the interview process, enrich my understanding of the participant‟s point of view, as well as interpretation of the data collected. The rationale was to discover and understand the experiences of underperforming learners in the intermediate phase at primary school and how they navigated their spaces, within schooling context.

3.7.2   Drawings

An activity of self-drawing was done in session two of the data generation. In this very simple drawing activity, participants were each given an A4 page and asked to draw the answer to the question, „Which place makes you feel unhappy at school?‟ As a researcher, I emphasized to my participants that all drawings are important and there would be no right or wrong drawings, and that pictures were open to individual creativity and appearance. The drawings were intended to be used to generate data. Storytelling is culturally relevant to the African culture and knowledge, so, working with the researcher, learners were encouraged to speak about their drawings in a group situation. This activity was conducted at school, where the drawings were used as starting points to access verbal explanations of the various depictions of the participants‟ vulnerable places. Participants were also encouraged to communicate in their first language if they did not feel confident in English, after which other learners in the group could translate for them.

The sessions where participants spoke to their drawings ranged from between one and two hours each. All participants‟ verbal reflections were recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions comprised participants‟ personal narratives which were investigated and interpreted. Participants‟ drawings were scanned and stored on computer disks in order to insert them at relevant points in the thesis later on. These seasons or cycles of story-telling and reflection were designed to give participants the opportunity to reflect critically on the broader social implications of their individual narratives, and served to get them thinking about inclusion and inclusive education in relation to their identities. The application of this visual methodology of self-drawings and depictions can be assessed as participatory, in that participants were actively involved in the data generation. This exercise also provided a useful entry point to working symbolically Mitchell et al, (2005) something that would also be critical in the planned photo-voice activity.

3.7.3   Photo-voice

Another method I used for data generation was a photo-voice exercise, where two groups of three learners were given a disposable camera and asked to take photographs of areas around the school where they feel most vulnerable, fear to be, where bullying takes place, or where they feel dishonesty, mishaps and mistrust happens. Since most of my participants had never had any experience with cameras, they were very excited to be given permission to even hold it let alone to be taught how to use it. I therefore I spent time showing learners (participants) how to use the cameras and allowed them to practice using them. Participants were given about a period of two days to plan and take their photographs, after which I collected the cameras and had the rolls

developed. Morojele and Muthukrishna (2012) explained photo-voice as photographs which reflect the ways in which social reality is constructed. Hence I used photo-voice in my study because it is believed to be child-friendly.

According to Young & Barrett (2001) pictures drawn during data collection served as instrument for discussion. Hence I asked my participants to take photos in order to express their activities of their everyday lives and explained that these would later be used for discussion in our interview sessions. We only discussed pictures they selected for discussion, but if they were not comfortable to share in a group, then individual sessions were provided where needed. Photographs were scanned and stored on computer disks to be inserted at relevant points in my thesis later on.

3.7.4 Focus group interviews

In the second week I used a semi-structured interview guide to conduct focus group interviews. These interviews were informally conducted in order to accommodate even the most anxious participant to freely share ideas of their experiences. This proved to be valuable to the study. The focus group consisted of three girls and three boys. A tape recorder was used to transcribe and analyse the data. The participants shared their thoughts and, where necessary, explained the causes of their behaviour. The tone of the group interview was purposefully kept informal, rather than formal, to encourage communication between participants. Open-ended questions were used, such as: „Tell me more about what you have drawn/depicted here" or „What does this picture mean to you?" by so doing, it gave each participant the opportunity and the freedom to

describe his/her drawing and the group"s photographs in his/her own words. The main role of the researcher/interviewer was to introduce the general theme upon which information was required (in a relaxed atmosphere), thus merely providing interviewees with the opportunity to speak for themselves (Denzin and Lincoln, 2010).

As a believer that children are social agents, my intention was to listen to these learners" geographies as they narrated their experiences using the photographs that they themselves had taken. My ultimate goal was to understand how each participant, using pictures of the drawings and photos they had taken, had made sense of their experiences at school, and explain what might be influencing their underperforming. When the six participants were together as a focus group, the questions posed were amongst others: „Why did you take this photograph?"; „What does it mean?"; „What is happening in this area?"; „How does it affect you?" They looked at and spoke about, describing according to questions asked. Because some participants were reluctant to talk, I acted as a passive facilitator, bringing clarity where necessary but keeping a low profile. These verbal responses were recorded and transcribed, becoming part of the participants" personal narratives which would be analysed and interpreted. Photographs were scanned and stored on computer disks to be inserted at relevant points in the thesis later on.

3.8   Ethical considerations and research procedures

A strict code of ethics was observed and maintained at all times in order to respect the privacy of the participants and protect their identities. Most researchers such as Hopkins & Bell et al. (2008) have respected children"s rights by explaining and maintaining these ethical issues, and adhered to this by seeking permission from all gatekeepers of participants including the school

principal, and parents/ guardians or caregivers. A written application, together with a covering letter stating the purpose of the research was sent to school principal seeking permission to conduct the study from the school. The principal was informed of data collection in the research involved using individual and focus group discussions, aimed at understanding the experiences of the academically underperforming learners in grade six ref: (Appendix 2)

Covering letters were sent to parents/legal guardians of selected learners, ref: (Appendix 3 and 4) requested permission for the learner‟s participation in the study and covered the issues of confidentiality, privacy, and voluntary participation. Voluntary processes were carefully explained to all selected participants with an emphasis on their freedom to withdraw at any stage should they feel too uncomfortable to continue. All grade six learners who had repeated any grade in the intermediate phase had been briefed regarding the purpose of the study and the interview structure. All participants willingly took part, and were interviewed both individually and later in group over the course of two weeks. Participants were assured of privacy to safeguard their identity in the research report, hence the use of pseudonyms in this dissertation. Further permission regarding the use of an audio-tape recorder was obtained ref: (Appendix 5 and 6).

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) stated the necessity to recognise the ethical and legal responsibilities of conducting research when educational research deals with people. Therefore in order for the study to be conducted it was necessary to think through subject of ethical clearance. The dissertation serves under the umbrella of a larger project titled, „The Geographies of Children‟s Schooling Experiences in six Southern African community (SADC) countries:

Therefore, ethical clearance was obtained from both the University of KwaZulu-Natal and including consent from the department of Education through the University of KwaZulu-Natal ref: (Appendix 1 and 12).

3.9 Validity and reliability

Validity and trustworthiness are foundations of qualitative studies, as stated by Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2007). The participant"s interviews of individual and focus group were audio-taped, and the researcher made plentiful written explanations during the course of interviews. This strategy prevented unnecessary inaccuracies or the threat of incomplete data which Maxwell (2006) considers the highest risk to a valid description of what the researchers saw and heard. Information was obtained from participants during individuals as well as focus groups interviews, using diverse sources, cross checking and verifying sources of information (Cresswell, 2010).

I also considered recommendations by Guba (2010) who detailed four issues of; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, all of which warrant attention in any genuine attempts at qualitative research. He further explained the concern of such matters with in cooperation whether or not research outcomes represent a trustworthy, abstract understanding of the information, and measuring how well data generation is supported by findings (Lincoln and Guba, 2010). Therefore, with the intention of adding validity, dependability and credibility to my research, I utilised a number of techniques to generate data for my research. These included

visual documentation through photo-voice exercises, audio-recorded conversational interviews to ensure the accuracy of the findings in this study, as well as semi structured interviews.

I ensured confidentiality for my participants as the „importance of validity in the qualitative research is trustworthiness‟ Shenton (2008). Furthermore, the validity and reliability of the research is measured by its honesty, richness and scope of data achieved Maree & Van der Westhuizen (2009) who also identified transferability and dependability as measurements which increase honesty in qualitative research, and according to Cohen et,al. (2007) legitimacy/validity is the key to real research. The thinking behind using more than one method of data collection here was to generate multiple layers of data, thus providing a richer, more multifaceted and more trustworthy data.

3.10 Trustworthiness of qualitative research

Measures of trustworthiness were applied to qualitative, interpretative research to ensure the rigour of the research. Hence Mauthner and Doucet (2009) emphasized reliability of findings and explanations, as being dependent on being able to demonstrate how they were reached. However Henning (2007) confirmed suggestions that qualitative researchers establish the trustworthiness of their findings by demonstrating credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Even so Johnson (2009) highlighted the above same four criteria that can be used within qualitative studies to assist researchers with the production of trustworthy data. The criteria for generating trustworthy data are outlined in the following paragraph.

3.10.1   Credibility

In order to ensure the authenticity and trustworthy of my data, I used field notes as evidence to support the voice recordings of the informal interviews. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) state that convincing and believable findings are produced by credible research. Research text draws on the voices of participants, critical subjectivity (self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher), and reciprocity (the extent to which the research relationship becomes reciprocal rather than hierarchical). These authentic voices of participants are apparent and represented in the text through the use of learners" narratives.

The mere use of authentic narratives allowed my participants to speak for themselves in representing their personal realities and experiences. The extensive use of learners" voices, namely the narrative voice, will be used in the presentation of the research. Whilst the researcher"s analytical, interpretive and reflexive voice will certainly be included the voices of the participants will be used quite often in this thesis. Confirming personal narratives of participants will be largely free of academic terminology, thus preserving their authenticity. I have referenced all the sources used in this study accordingly.

3.10.2   Transferability

In this instance, the term „transferability" means that research needs to ensure that obtained findings can also be functional to other frameworks of a similar nature. Krefting (2011) exclaimed if the discoveries fit into situations outside the study context, also determined by the

degree of similarity, or goodness of fit between the two contexts then the study meets the standard of transferability. Krefting (2011) further noted that scholars deliver solid contextual information about the participants, the research context and location to allow others to measure how transferable the discoveries are. Hence this research study is intended to be used in a close context, that is, for reflection of teachers teaching in similar contexts and experiencing similar realities. I have therefore provided rich and detailed descriptions of participants and the research context.

3.10.3   Dependability

In order to establish dependability, I included the use of clear research questions, and ensured rich and detailed descriptions, which according to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) refers to the researcher being able to convince the reader that the findings indeed occurred as stipulated by the researcher. However, in adding validity, dependability and credibility to my research, a number of techniques were used to generate data. These included a self-drawing exercise, a photo-voice exercise, and conversational interviews. The intention here was to generate multiple layers of data, thus providing a richer, more multidimensional and more reliable information set. I have therefore used participant‟s direct quotations as evidence that the findings are a true and accurate reflection of the learners‟ experiences.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability explains to the degree that discoveries and conclusions depend on the participants rather than on the researcher. Therefore confirmability was addressed by applying an audit strategy which involved an external audit. According to Krefting (2011) confirmability suggests that any other researcher could easily arrive at similar conclusions given the same data and research context. I have used triangulation, which according to Cohen, et al. (2007) in the study of a certain aspect of human behaviour may be defined as using two or more methods for collection of data. Hence I have used individual interviews, focus group interviews and observation within this study.

3.11 Data analysis

According to Schurink (2008) in qualitative research, the data analysis has no right or wrong approach. Similarly, no particular tradition has a monopoly on text analysis of an inquiry exploring to personal narratives. There is, however, consistency between the overall openness and flexibility of the research design and the methods of data generation, therefore methods of explanation and scrutiny of the data needs to show the same honesty and flexibility.

I compiled my data through listening and recording. The data generation techniques and exercises provided me with drawings and photographs which participants had drawn and taken earlier, but I did not directly include this data at the interpretation and analysis stage of my research. The participants, themselves, engaged directly with these pictures where necessary

during the period of speaking to their drawings and photographs (which could be understood as a part of giving more clarity and analysis). Their spoken thoughts, answers and descriptions, including the conversational narratives, became the recorded data of conversation and interview. This was later translated and transcribed from its original narrative data. I and then carefully and repeatedly read through all the personal narrative texts. The genuine voices of participants were created using direct quotations from their personal narratives, which is also known as thick description of the data generated.

It is clear that participants were engaged on some level with interpretation and analysis. This enabled me to become absorbed with the data and therefore familiar with it. The method used in this analysis was influenced by the work of Taylor-Powell and Renner (2013) with the involvement of reading, re-reading and proof-reading the data several times to understand my key-topics, and following the huge volume of collected data. Osman (2009) believes this carries instruction, structure and gives meaning. The next stage, namely, „Composed interpretations of data analysis required me to lace together identified themes, similar concepts, structured categories and interrelationships from the different sources of data. These themes were then analysed, altered and compared to support or oppose current literature that relates to the area of research. Rubin and Rubin (2005) believes that when you reach to a stage of feeling like sharing your interpretation means with others, for policymakers, for theory, and for understanding the social and political world then it only means the analysis is complete and final.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter outlined and clarified the research problem, the research procedures, research design and research methodology that were implemented. The data collection and analysis also explained what measures were used to ensure trustworthiness, as well as the techniques of narrative inquiry, visual methodologies and conversational interviews that were incorporated into the research design. The chapter concluded with an explanation of ethical considerations which protect the confidentiality of participants in qualitative research study, and the limitations of the research to acknowledge areas that can affect the credibility of the study.

Nevertheless the next chapter focuses on the interpretations and discussions of the findings of the explored data.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study was initiated in order to understand the experiences six primary school learners who were regarded as academically underperforming at Isizwesokuthula primary school, the challenges they encountered in their effort to achieve a better and satisfactory performance at school, and how they actively addressed these challenges. This chapter offers the dialogue and investigation discovered in the study. Illustrations of the study findings are given in the form of quotations of the recorded data, observations, discussions and evidence of pictures taken by the participants. Attempts have been made throughout this data analysis chapter, to recognize the voice and agency of children in line with children's geographies and the new sociology of childhood studies which were adopted a theoretical frame works for the study.

The chapter was structured to explore these children's awareness of their social categorization as underperforming learners, and how they navigated the spaces and places in which they experienced schooling (both academically and socially).

4.2 Learners' experiences and awareness of being referred to as an underperformer

The data revealed that the effects of labeling on natural character are well known to impact negatively to underperforming learners hence they are aware of the labeling/ name-calling attached to them. Hence labeling a learner as an underachiever ignores the positive outcomes of those areas in which the student does succeed as since discouraged by Delisle and Berger (2014). Conversely Rogers (2011) encourage for every individual be given a chance therefore further maintained every individual has the potential to do well if favourable conditions are provided. viz(extra- curricular activities such as sport). Some children drop out having been labeled underachievers at levels as early as primary school. Some are even forced to defend themselves in order to prevent being bullied by peers and even teachers.

[Image: 1]

Thulile: [Girl aged 13] "*Almost every day there''s mistreat in this path just outside the school fence, same spot used by school drop-out big boys, who demands for our monies to buy „whoonga".*"

The above excerpt demonstrates children's experiences were constructed on things done to them as individuals as well as together as groups while on the way to and from school, and even at school itself. Such experiences also occur while using public transportation, sitting, playing, walking, or sharing. It was also discovered that they had all had different abusive experiences without involving an adult.

Data analysis also revealed that not all encounters were experienced in the same way, meaning that although most encounters were personal, others were observed experiences, as well as things that the participants had heard about. (Parveen, Noor-UL-Amin, and Nazir, (2013) alluded much research has proven the importance of strong family-school relations to the education of a learner. Likewise Blake (2011) revealed how essential it is for a parent to be aware of the daily experiences of their children while they are at school, refer to data below:

> **Philile**: [girl age 12] *"Sengihamba nabantwana abancane bangakithi uma siya noma sibuya esikoleni, abangani bami bahlala besiqhatha emgwaqeni." (I've decided to join little children to and from school because girls like to pick on me for a fight).*

Sadly, the above data reveals Philile's daily experience of being forced into a fight by her peers because they know she is weak and underperforming at school. The result is that she is scared to be friends with them. These power relations amongst children has been noted by Ni' Laoire, (2011) as influenced by many aspects of social identity. Evident situations may also feature underperforming learners as unconfident or unbalanced situations often leading to emotional pressure and dropping out of school. The way Philile decided to handle the matter was to

distance herself from her peers and to protect her by walking with the little children as if she is the one who protects them.

Other girls fall into relationships just for protection from the incessant teasing from peers at school. This confirms what Halatsis & Christakis, (2009) mentioned as the behaviour of having romantic relations at school which have negative consequences if correct guidance not given.

> **Thulile:** [girl age 13] *Zoleka a big grown up girl at school couldn"ttake what has been going on for years in her life. Teachers and learners knew & teased her as an underachiever until she decided to be involved with a new grown up big boy at school (Sandile) for protection. Zoleka and Sandile are well- known as grade seven hot couple at school yet both famous to be extremely underperforming with schoolwork.*

Analysis of the data in Thulile"s responses reveals that sometimes the reality is that underperforming girls make conscious, bad decisions in order to seek protection. Thulile had witnessed that because Zoleka"s experience of being called names had been publicized, she shielded herself in the arms of the new boy at school so as to gain confidence. Relationships such as these normally results in girl learners leaving school, because they are exposed to sexuality at a very young age. Sandile is always busy with all kinds of work at school except classwork. He is very handy and assists with several duties at school. Because the school has no security staff, Sandile was made to carry a school gate remote which he controls while seated in class.

4.3   Spaces and places of underperforming learners' schooling experiences

4.3.1   Classroom as a space for underperforming learners' schooling experiences

In this sub-section, I focused on these children's stories regarding their school curriculum. Each participant expressed his or her feelings about issues pertaining to the school that impact on their daily lives, particularly with regard to how they experience teaching and learning in the classroom. Bearing in mind that individual learner's schooling experiences may vary, I focused on a central theme that explored negative and positive experiences encountered in their lives in class.

It is important to note that whatever a learner experiences in the teaching-learning context can either hinder or promote his/her progress. It is important, therefore, for the educator to value the differences in each class in order to consider, accept and promote learning to the underperforming learners or others with barriers to learning Corbett (2008). If the educator sets an example, the priorities of learner's peers might differ as well. Some succeed on the idea of gaining fast information, performing well and achieving their academic goals, others are happy at the thought of socialising and being part of the group while others strive towards excellence and with ease regardless of circumstances.

One fact that many researchers mentioned, is the crucial role played by a school in the development of every primary school learner. School life impacts on learner's social,

emotional and academic adjustments (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Den Besten, 2010; Rodriguez, 2009).

[Image: 2]

Xolile [Girl aged 12]: "*Mostly our choice of sitting arrangement will be boys together and vice versa, often teachers separate us. Although I befriend these classmates girls but they laugh at me when I read. I feel like I am being punished when I am forced to read out loud in class. However I feel good when my English teacher calls me separately for oral reading because she understands I have stammering"ˌ am afraid to read in front of the class. Why can"t other teachers do the same?"* [Individual. interview, Aug. 2014].

The above extract evident of a participant, who expressed positive experiences of being in class because of the teacher"s conduct towards her hence, developed positive attention and confidence towards a subject that she used to be scared of. The participant mainly attributed these to the special care and attention received from certain educator, and felt cared for. However the following comments exemplify some of such experiences:

Thabani [Boy aged 14]: "*Educator for isiZulu frequently encouraged me to read. I feel important when she addresses me by my name, which is different from other teachers*

who know me as „darkboy". Although I like the isiZulu teacher but I do not like to read and write the subjects because I do not understand it, hence I cannot read isiZulu". [Individual Interview, Aug. 2014].

From the above excerpt, it is evident that the understanding of the subject is sometimes encouraged by the teacher"s attitude towards the underperforming learner. Therefore a teacher is an important part in the education and success of each learner whether both in and out of the classroom at school. Even just knowing a learners" name can uplift his/her spirit and motivate them to work to gain more attention and avoid disappointing the teacher.

Dolmans (2012) illustrated several learners that enter higher primary and lower secondary school, where a second language is the medium of academic instruction, experiences major problems in their schooling. And have gained neither the necessary knowledge nor developed the necessary skills through their mother tongue to learn anything educational.

Thulile [Girl, aged 13]: *I don"t understand Maths but teacher helps me to do more sums on the board during breaks and shows me how to solve the problem. I enjoy when I am taught on my own and given special attention. Maths teacher gives me support assistance with my work when I am left behind* [Individual Interview, Aug. 2014].

Sphelele *[Boy aged 13]: My library teacher takes time to read with me alone, she helps me with phonics and spelling words even to take extra work home. I would like to read*

like her because she reads very well.… mmhh (laughing.. I feel important)!!. [Individual Interview, Aug. 2014].

With reference to the above data, it is clear that teachers play a critical role in providing positive experiences for underperforming learners in school Tierrney (2006). With teachers being the custodian of order, discipline and authority in the school, it stands to reason that any such positive and helpful behaviours from these teachers could have a huge impact on not only enhancing the quality of the school experiences of these learners but also to help these underperforming learners to improve their schooling experiences academically Christiana (2009).

However, many students recounted stories of negative experiences they had had in their interactions with teachers. These stemmed from the feeling of being excluded, isolated, ignored, and sometimes just being made to feel as though they were not important members of their classmates or the schooling community. As the excerpts from the focus group interviews below illustrate, in agreement with Melton (2014) some of the learners reported what they considered to be deeply harmful effects of being excluded, not participating in the peer group, or being isolated from the rest of the class and excluded from tasks and activities assigned in the classroom.

Njoh [Boy aged 11]: *mhla ngiqala ukufika lapha esikoleni eminyakeni emibili edlule uthisha akangiphathanga neze kahle, ubengibiza ngevondwe ngoba amazinyo ami angaphambili makhulu avela ngaphandle (two years ago when I first came into the*

school my form teacher did not treat me well, she gave me a strange (animal) name,
children always laughed at me, when I try to answer any question in class, so, I stopped
participating in class. [Individual interview, Aug. 2014]

Philile [Girl aged 12]: *learners say I'm fat and funny. They call me „funny bunny‟ when I*
talk, they laugh at me. Children at school even outside the classroom during breaks they
laugh when I pass by showing one another, teasing me for being obese. (crying……) as a
result I am afraid to walk alone on the verandas and corridors at school especially the
grade 7 block. I am very shy!! (crying.…) [Individual interview, Aug. 2014].

In light of the above, both participants spoke of discouraging behaviors practiced by a dominant group which they experience almost daily and impacts negatively on their lives and leads to the development of a negative attitude towards life itself. Both participants spoke of being disliked and, at times, deliberately excluded from reading activities and group work as is expressed in the following statements.

Xolile [Girl aged 12] : "*I don't feel part of the group and I prefer to work alone because of*
my stammering; They do not like to choose me as part of the group, I can't read well, and I
feel left out; In group work I just stand and watch others; I long to be part of them." [Focus
group interview, Aug. 2014]

The above findings are in line with the views of Ballard (2009) who cited Blatt (2007) in stating that to be excluded can mean that one is treated as less than human and reinforced by „name-

calling" and „labelling".   In this context, exclusion means that the underperforming learner has to seek permission for access to some part of education. Exclusion can preclude one from learning opportunities, from friends and the community, as further illustrated below.

> **Sphelele** [Boy aged 13]: *"I did not get English workbook this year, my English teacher told me books were finished and besides it is useless to give me because I cannot read it, I felt so disappointed and humiliated in class."* [Focus group interview, Aug.2014]

The abovementioned type of behavior was cited by Ware (2009) as the exclusionary practice whereby underperforming learners do not receive attention equal to other learners. The English workbook might be the very thing that the learner needs in order to improve his weaknesses.

> **Sphelele** further declared: *"As a result I don't like taking part in oral work in front of the class or assembly because children from my class are aware I cannot read, and immediately they start laughing at me. I am afraid to attempt anything!"* [Focus group interview, Aug. 2014].

The abovementioned behaviours are extremely disappointing, especially when practiced by an adult who is using their position of authority negatively. As Ballard (2009) observed, discrimination of learners in mainstream settings, based on their performance, was found to make underperforming learners feel miserable and isolated from peers as this created a perception that they were different, deficient and unaccepted. This was reinforced by Michael (2012) who stated that the physical and emotional insults experienced by these learners has the

potential to further relegate them to a deeper vicious cycle of underperforming with likely unwanted consequences. Data revealed this could pose as a major challenge to such learners to the extent of being a barrier to their learning and schooling experience, as some of them may opt to abandon school as a result of being bullied by a person who is supposed to be protecting them.

More dispiriting behaviours of educators was discovered in the focus group interview below that further illustrated the painful experiences experienced by underperforming learners in their interactions with teachers:

Thabani [Boy aged 14]: *"Izingane kanye nabanye othisha babiza ikilasi lethu ngezidomu." (Some teachers and learners say all of us in our classroom are called [dom] slow learners), "Angikuthandi lokho."(I don"t like that). "Bathi siyobe siphelezela nje thina esecondary school?" (I feel scared even to go to secondary school.)* [Focus group interview, Aug. 2014].

The above data demonstrates that the educators" attitude towards school organization, teaching, learning, communicating and the school environment have a really danger of producing underperforming learners. In line with this, Nind, Rix, Sheehy and Simmons (2008) also noted these kinds of exclusions. As the excerpts below further exemplify, these negative experiences may lead to the learners" self-esteem being tarnished and adversely affected from the humiliation they encounter and some of them have reported resorting to mischief as recourse to dealing with their misery.

Thulile [Girl aged 13]: *"I was very humiliated the other day when I was chased out of the Library class of reading because I was late to join the class. It was just after break and we were eating very hot cooked samp. It was so painful!! I wish teachers can sometimes just listen."* [Individual Interview, Aug. 2014].

This excerpt, by Thulile, is important because it is in line with the conceptual framework of this study as well as the new sociology of childhood studies, which underlines the necessity of listening to children‟s marginalised voices. Children are often confused by actions of those in authority who wield their power without examining the cause of the situation.

Sphelele [Boy aged 12]: *"At school sometimes I get blamed for misbehavior and mischief as I am very playful, however I like to laugh even when I am sad, other children quickly tell my grandmother at home and she scolds me."* [Individual interview, Aug. 2014].

The above findings confirm Naicker (2012) his statement that labeling, isolating, ostracizing and devaluing underperforming learners, contributes to a lack of self-worth and of confidence. This is highlighted in the ELRC Document HRM. No: 8 of (2003) report on Discrimination, where it is stated that the labelling of learners is linked to the negative attitudes towards different learners. Labels such as, „slow learners‟, „drop-outs‟, and „disabled learners‟, are described as promoting negative associations between the learner and the system. Such labelling not only impacts negatively on the learner's self-esteem, but also seriously impacts on the learner's placement in the educational institution in that it can result in his/her exclusion. With reference to a study in

the United States of America, Ware (2008) observes that students in mini-grant schools in New York that offer inclusive education are labelled and excluded.

As the brief biography of Thabani, below, illustrates, some of the underperforming learners are burdened by other socio-economic ills of their society. As such they require assistance, not labeling from teachers.

[Image: 3]

Thabani [Boy aged 14]: *"Almost all weekends I find piece jobs from neighbourhood houses in order to buy formula for my youngest brother (6mnths). My mother can no longer breast feed due to severe ill-health. I sometimes bring food from school every afternoon for my family to eat. ..mmhhhm!!" (hesitating..)* [Individual interv. Aug. 2014]

The above excerpt confirms that reality kicks in no matter what the age. This proves that home-situations can hinder a learners" progress. Thabani requested this photograph of himself because he was not shy to talk about his life and experiences both at school and at home. Thabani is a fourteen year old boy, born at Swaziland. He came to this country in 2011, enrolled in grade four which he repeated because of his lack of proficiency in English. (He could not understand

isiZulu either). His mother, who was the sole bread winner, was sick and bed-ridden. He has two little brothers aged nine years (grade four) and six months old.

These findings merely show that while they are still learners at school, home circumstances are not forgotten and overshadow their school life. Educators, therefore, need to understand their role sometimes stretches to be caregivers, overseeing development in a sensitive way. Sams (2011) approved extending the scope of the lesson to meet the diverse needs of the class and attempting to understand others whilst learning. Such supportive conditions in the learning environment can assist learners in understanding their own skills and abilities. The above was confirmed by Flavell (2008) who mentioned the ethos of the educational establishment must include a positive attitude that one makes the learning environment suitable for all learners.

A classic example of what underperforming requires is illustrated below by what Philile regarded as a supportive and helpful experience with her classroom peers. The underperforming learners seemed to take pleasure in being accepted by their peers.

> **Philile** [Girl aged 12]: "*I feel comfortable and wanted when my classmates finally treat me with care and love. I feel good when other children asks me to help with the drawing, and colouring in the group work, they know l can draw well.*" [Individual Interview, Aug. 2014].

The data in Philile"s response proves how important being accepted into a group means to underperforming learners. It is interpreted as sense of belonging Reddy (2010).

Such actions might sometimes be positive and affirming while others could be regarded as negative and devaluing. For instance, some participants spoke of how they enjoyed special care and attention from their classmates. They also mentioned how their classmates made them feel included and sometimes helped them with the subject matter they struggled with. The significance of recognition and individual attention in class, as recommended by Cornett (2009) that different needs require different approaches, and that positive re-enforcement through communication, listening and valuing differences, cultivates positive behavioural patterns. Observation in these classrooms indicates that learners feel safe, secure and cared for if given attention and it boosts their morale.

4.3.2   School-home interface as spaces for underperforming learners' experiences

The study believes the parents are the child's first educators so as data identifies the school-home interface as playing a critical role in the lives of underperforming learners. Hence the home surroundings have been predictable as having a lot of influence. (Threlfall, Seay and Kohl, 2013) believes family being the first and major agency of socialisation has a great influence and bearing on the development of the child. Hence the child's first place of contact with the world is the family Adeyemo (2006) as cited in Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) further explained therefore the child acquires initial education and socialisation from home (parents and other significant others in the family), the study established that home circumstances are often not conducive to the learning of underperforming learners in semi-urban communities.

Thulile [Girl aged 13] lamented: "*We are twelve in our family and our two bedroomed - house cannot give us enough space to share; it can no longer accommodate all of us since we are growing. The challenges we face is that of learning space especially in the evening and there is no confidentiality in the rooms.*" [Indiv. Interv. Aug. 2014].

The data discovered that certain learners reside in outsized families ranging from eight to fourteen people in one house, which provides no spaces for privacy when studying and sleeping. The problem of restricted space at home is believed be resulting from low income. This was evident when participants recounted stories of how schooling tasks sometimes interfered with their home environment and responsibilities, especially for the orphaned or those staying with step parents or elderly parents. In support of the above extract from Thulile, other learners described sharing this limited space at home, with excess number of family members and extended family especially not having any privacy or room to be alone, easily caused quarrels and pressure, therefore disturbing family relationships, which in turn affect individual academic performance. As such, either the educators at school, guardian or parents at home put these learners under unnecessary pressure, which compounds their feelings of insecurity initially established as a result of being labeled as underperforming.

Some of this pressure comes from parents being intolerant and impatient with their children. Most of the participants expressed the view that parents often became impatient with them, even at home as the following statement reveals.

Thabani [Boy aged 14]:"*I was raised by mother as a single parent. All her three children are boys at home. "When she is happy, we have a good relationship at home and in front of everybody, but when she is angry and sad, you won"tlike her either. She shouts, calls us bad names, insults and swears a lot even in front of friends and neighbours. She calls us sluts just for not sweeping the floor, not washing dishes, and not assisting her with any house chores. „This is my house and my rules", she says."* [Focus group inter, Aug. 2014].

As indicated above, Thabani"s mother seemingly transcends prevailing discourses of gender when she asks her boys to help her sweep the house and so forth. This data confirms what authors such as (Gallagher 1991; Sousa 2012; Reis & McCoach 2010) described as a shortage of inspiration from either educators or parents that could have a harmful impact on the academic performance of underperforming learners from struggling families. It is interesting to note that Thabani might be inspired by the societal discourses that discourage boys from doing domestic chores, and therefore uses the school duty as a basis to refute his mother"s request to help at home. Clearly to be excellent at school does not mean that one does not have to assist with home chores and responsibilities, even though Thabani is using this as his excuse as to why, perhaps, he is not doing well at school. Is it possible that Thabani"s weak performance at school is a way of contesting his mother"s expectations for them to help? Certainly, no one can claim this, but given the gender socialization in these communities, there is a sense in which we may think Thabani"s underperforming at school was some form of contestation of his mother"s expectations. More research is required in this field to understand if there are any relationships between gender socialization and boys" and girls" academic performances in school.

The study also draws attention to adults, both at home and at school, as dominant group who have little or no interest in the learner's thoughts, feelings, capabilities, and interests, and absolutely no understanding of their environments. According to learners, the attitude of the school authorities, ranging from the principal to the teachers and the SGB, is that they (the learners) are at school to learn only. The unique challenges that the learners bring from home due to their varying circumstances and responsibilities are disregarded. Sometimes even educators display negative attitudes and intolerance towards underperforming learners, which can contribute to learners with learning barriers being mistreated at school. The child then goes home to parents who show little or no interest in knowing about each day's experiences at school.

Philile [Girl aged 12]: *"I like sports however both my parents are not aware how good I am in playing netball hence they don"tallow me to play even in the neighborhood., mother becomes impatient and angry with me when I don't cook. She calls me „idiot"."* [Individual interview, Aug. 2014].

The study revealed that the female learners are sometimes losing out on education and then being labeled as „underperforming" because their families require more of their support with household chores and labour.

Xolile [Girl aged 12]:*"Some family members only see us as their baby sitters. My big sister from high school forces me to look after her child every afternoon while she talks to her*

boyfriend. She hits me, and say I am a 'good for nothing' if I don"tlook after her baby."

[Focus group interview, Aug. 2014].

The above data confirms that poor, underperforming learners may possibly face home situations that give them little or no time for their studies because chores and other home responsibilities become their priority at the cost of learning. Although, this extract might sometimes create the impression that early motherhood is a good idea so that your partner can spend more time with you, but the consequences are clear. It was also evident that these learners encountered many challenges and were more possible to be surrounded by less educated parents, family members and neighbours. However such learners are less able to get much assistance and proper guidance for their education at home.

The little speeches from experiences of girls below during interviews of focus group discussions explain some of the challenges they are faced with almost daily at home and how these experiments affected their school involvement:

> **Thulile**[Girl aged 13]:*"Even at home we are disadvantaged. As girls compared to boys at home we occupied with so much work such that we cannot study and do homework. We expected to do all domestic responsibilities including cooking for the whole family after school, washing clothes, cleaning the house, feeding little siblings, sometimes even to care for the sick relatives."* [Focus group discussions, Aug.2014].

It is important to remember that Thulile is a girl from a child-headed family. In child-headed homes having a mother is just like a dream therefore all house duties sometimes to be shared amongst all of us households are our responsibilities and, in most cases, it is the elder girl-child

who assumes the character of the mother as they fight for survival. Such situations replicate the conditions put forward by Lacour and Tissington (2011) as well an experimental study performed by Otieno (2012). Voices of discussions with underperforming learners that took place during focus group interviews describe some of home and school challenges encountered.

> **Philile** [Girl aged 12]: *"I agree with her. Household chores and responsibilities are never ending. Sometimes even an adult cannot handle. Therefore sometimes I loose concentration in class and my academic performance gets affected."* [Focus group interv, Aug. 2014].

The data above, just like in the cases of Thulile and Thabani, demonstrates some degree of abuse that many of the underperforming learners go through from their families. There appears to be a discrepancy between what parents expect of their children and what the school expects. In this instance where children claimed that being at home means that their parents will ask or even coerce them to do domestic chores, arriving late at home might be a simple strategy that would provide them with ample time to do their homework as well as socialize with other children.

It is clear that parents and family members do coerce these learners to perform domestic chores to the extent that they impact negatively on the learners" home experience which, in turn, affects their academic performance at school. Given the gender aspect of the tasks that these learners were required to perform, it would also be interesting to understand how gender factors in learners" underperformance in school. Given the purpose and scope of this study, it

was not possible to establish this, even though it can form an interesting and valuable insight into the dynamics of learner underperformance in schools.

> **Thulile** [Girl aged 13]: *"I become hurt when aunt says, I will not make a good wife. "Daaaahh!!! I am only a child. Who needs a husband at 12years?... laughing... I bet she does not even care about that too.....!!" (laughing out loud*) [Focus group interview, Aug. 2014]

The above extract also confirms what Okeke, Nzewi and Njoku (2012) had mentioned as greater focus and attention is directed to a girl-child's domestic workload as it is viewed as preparation to serve a future husband which often appears to be, subconsciously, more important to the family than the child's education. With the above given extract one can reasonable conclude that lack of family support indirectly promotes underperformance for girl learners in particular, and may sometimes lead to poor performance and failure in the grade which can result to poor self-confidence more over dropping out of school.

Yet, what is not disputed is the fact that parental involvement plays a critical role in the education of a child, and they must be involved in order to make sure that their engagements with learners at home do not interfere with school performance, or provide the learners with an excuse for their lack of performance in school. As illustrated by Sphelele below, these learners need support from their parents while at home to assist them with their school work.

Sphelele [Boy aged 12]: "*I live with my grandmother who is too old and very sickly. I don"tget assistance at home with school-work not even get a chance to do homework with friends after school. All that is expected of me is to help grandmother with cooking after school.*" [individual interview, Aug. 2014]

Evidence of data seems to have proven the importance of family-school involvement and relations towards the child"s future. However researchers like Parveen, Noor-UL-Amin, and Nazir (2013); Threlfall, Seay, and Kohl (2013); and Hafiz, Tehsin, Malik, Muhammad, and Muhammad (2013) have noted although some parents would like to take part and be involved as fundamental responsibility however they did not go to school themselves therefore unable to read, write or count properly.

Njoh [Boy aged 11]: "*Whenever I ask for homework assistance from my grandmother she always tells me to go to neighbours because she is tired but I know she did not go to school herself therefore unable to help me. Granny and aunt often come back home very late every day from work… and they say teachers are paid to do their job, therefore it is the teacher"s responsibility to help with my homework. As mothers they only provide food.*" [Focus interview, Aug.2014]

There is truth in above data which seems to sum up the sentiments of all other parents in that the school and home work comes last to them, all they concern about is providing food daily. The data indicates that not having a parent, sibling or anybody to assist with school work is clearly one of the major contributors to learners" underperformance in school. As stated, the excerpts

above point to the significance of parental participation and involvement in the education of their children. However a Canadian study by Beazley (2012) stressed the need for the availability and involvement of parents as important partners for their children‟s education in schools.

As indicated in this study, there are many disadvantages associated with lack of parental involvement in their children‟s education at school. Therefore, the study discoveries points to the parents critical need for participation and involvement in the education of their children, and as a strategy to alleviate or mitigate the challenges faced by underperforming learners. With non-involvement in their children‟s education, it seems to be rather unrealistic to expect the parents to figure out what is expected of the children. This contributes to parents seemingly being abusive to the children based on their lack of understanding about the school requirements. The above findings clearly show that some children are easily disappointed by the same people who are supposed to be protecting them, listening to them, expecting to perform good in their studies and even serve as role models in their lives.

4.3.3 School-based peer interactions as spaces for underperforming learners' experiences

The concept of children‟s geographies was appropriate for this study as learner participants identified and provided evidence of uncomfortable spaces at school. The mere spaces as denoted Holloway & Valentine (2010) withdraw happiness and contribute to entire vulnerability. Hence it was established in this study that social interactions amongst learners sometimes had implications on how learners felt and how they performed at school. This is also obvious when

learners like Philile (funny bunny) recounted stories of their interactions with other peers while within the school environment.

Normally, petty teasing and joking can merely be regarded as lack of discipline amongst learners, but the fear that some of these experiences evoked, caused learners to lose concentration in class. Generally spaces and situations such as queuing for food during lunch, going to the toilet, walking to and from school, and so forth, were cited as places which the participants in this study claimed to have a bearing on their performance at school because they would actively worry about the painful experiences they had encountered and would encounter again when returning to those spaces. All participants were questioned about their first encounter with negative experiences at school. Narratives from the participants show some of the challenges they have faced in their primary school lives.

Njoh [Boy aged 11]: *"One day during lunch break just when I finished dishing up, my food fell down when my so-called friends were forcing their filthy hands on my plate. I ended up with nothing to eat, they soon ran away. I got angry, just \sat down and cried. I was scared to confront these children who were troubling me; I just smile and pretend everything is normal while hurting badly inside."* [Indiv. interv, Aug.2014]

From the above excerpts and according to Yurtul et al. (2007) boys are more bullied and therefore retaliate bullying behaviors more than girls, which indicated that bullying behaviors sometimes are gender based. According Due and Riggs (2010) boys play very rough in order to establish dominance over vulnerable learners. When the other boys took Njoh"s food they

seemed not to be bothered about what happened afterwards, instead they just ran away not even realizing how a friend might have felt about their actions.

> **Thulile** [Girl aged 13]: *"Every day during breaks I struggle to get food because I have to use too much energy just to get a meal for the day at school. Our feeding area is small and always congested during breaks, we sometimes end up fighting for food. I am always sent to the office after fighting and be scolded."* [Individual Interview, August 2014].

The above testimonies by Njoh and Thulile highlight the unfair acts, misbehaviours and dissatisfactions which form part of their daily experiences as underperforming learrners at a primary school. Underperforming learners find such experiences extremely challenging and this hinders their academic progress, especially when it happens continuously, preventing them from enjoying the benefits as learners in school.

[Image: 4]

Researcher: Tell me why did you take these pictures? (….*All laughing)*

> **Sphelele** [Boy aged 12]: *"Hhey.. ma'am, this place is „survival of the fittest" because even if you finally get your food. I doubt if you freely enjoy eating, other children quickly bring their filthy hands to grab your food without even asking."* [Focus group interv, Aug 2014].

[Image: 5]

Researcher: Please further explain about this picture below: (All laughing out loud..):

Thabani [Boy aged 14]: "*These are my friends. Me and friends always assist aunties to carry big pots in the morning and afternoon so as to avoid joining queues and come straight to aunties for dishing. Sometimes we sail down the retaining bricks rushing to dish up in front, sometimes we fall down or play very cruel by pushing one another down the passage rushing for food, especially if it"s the school"s favourite meals on the menu like Samp, breyani, etc"* [Focus group, Aug. 2014].

In view of the above data, it is evident how some of their friends survive at school. They opt to offer their services in exchange for first serve from the aunties, and this kind of idea enables them to survive in variety of situations. However, some of my participants raised the issue of this act of cutting the line as a major concern because they sometimes end up not getting food for the day. Some of them mentioned that service is better and faster if educators are there during breaks. In agreement with Ballard (2009) the impact of peer bullying on learner underperformance during lunch breaks, cannot be underestimated as learners spend most of their time amongst their peers and away from teachers" surveillance, making the underperforming

learners vulnerable to intimidation. This also reflects negatively on school management, as it exposes a lack of teacher-support and proper supervision within the school context.

Findings form the above narratives clearly indicated conflict between friends resulting in physical fights. Since the feeding area mentioned is known as the place where it is the „survival of the fittest", it stands to reason that physically weak and vulnerable learners end up not getting food and therefore not eating because they are afraid to be confronted by violent situations. It is a major concern to me, based on my own observation of congestions within the feeding area during breaks, that there is insufficient monitoring while learners struggle to get food on time. This is because of the multi-grade arrangement for getting food which, because of the disparities in their ages, is a system which allows the older learners to bully the younger ones.

According to Roberts (2008) children are also exposed to more images of violence these days than in the past. The influence of power is also evident in the way learners practice control of play over those children who are weaker. Riggs and Due (2010) confirmed that those in control of power decide whether to include or exclude amongst the powerless, and the Media"s influence on children"s attitude towards superheroes. Martin (2007), stated the tendency of a child to imitate their screen heroes through violent games at school, for example, wrestling, video games and heroes who have powers, brought about „ownership" of school playgrounds and school equipment, as illustrated below.

> **Sphelele** [Boy aged 12]: *"I remember a boy „name S'yanda" only allowed his friends to play swings at school. Showing off his super powers (pretended to be Ben Ten) he jumped*

from swing to the pole while it was up on top, but unfortunately while we were all watching his magic, he missed and fell right down straight to the concrete floor, I will never forget the pool of blood in that place, He couldn"t move thereafter was rushed to hospital, he came back from Hospital after six months." [Focus group int. Aug.2014]

[Image: 6]

Herein, the data confirm that sometimes even the physical resources at school can be unfavourable for children. This is evident in the way participants mention different places and spaces for enjoyment and entertainment at school which then turn out to be a source of unhappiness. In the following data most of my participants raised concerns of safety around school premises, especially during breaks.

[Image: 7]

Xolile‟s drawing further identified unsecured places around school premises mentioned injustices happening at school.

Njoh [Boy aged 11]: *"I prefer visiting toilets only during break/ intervals because bullies boys bunk classes to stay outside and demand all your belongings including money, pen, and even force themselves on your pockets, sometimes forcefully take your shoes just to prove that they own the places."* [Focus group interview, Aug. 2014]

The given evidence illustrates areas at school where discrimination and bullying takes place. However according to underperforming learners, name-calling is a painful form of rejection and can stay with a learner for long periods of time, also according to Klewin et al (2008) name calling could also result in shame and embarrassment. The shocking evidence of fighting which happens mostly behind the Grade Four classroom is depicted in the picture below.

[Image: 8]

(hheee…. Heee…they spoke as if they were singing……)

Xolile [Girl aged 12]: *"Bushes behind Grade Four classes: Fights take place during breaks and after school. However, one day a boy from the class shouted „inyoka‟(snake)!!‟ suddenly everybody screamed and all boys ran outside for an attack, immediately they*

discovered two snakes. They beat both snakes unto pieces within a wink of an eye, without calling an adult." [Focus group interview, Aug.2014]

The above data confirms what Xolile witnessed. As most of learners in class were traumatised by the event, teaching and learning was disrupted beyond control of the teacher. This place is full of huge snakes (python) especially in summer. Snakes from the bushes are often found inside and outside classrooms.

[Image: 9]

Philile's drawing [Girl aged 12]: "*Discrimination and bullying happen in these bushes just outside school gates, where big „whoonga"boys wait targeting small learners for their money to buy „whoonga" and sometimes hit those bigger ones while trying to defend their little brothers and sisters.*" [Individual interview, August 2014]

Confirmation of the evidence shown through Philile"s drawing was established in chapter three where it states that many of the youth in this community are exposed to a high rate of alcohol and drug abuse (particularly „Whoonga") from a young age. This abuse leads to vandalism, house breaking, rape, robbery and theft. „izinyoka", the stealing of copper, was experienced at school from the beginning of the year. I believe there are many learners who are afraid when approaching the school gate because of pick-pocketing and being forced to give away spending

money as well as their lunch. Of course a learner might be traumatised when thinking about the incident that occurred on the way to school.

[Image: 10]

(All said… woohh!!! ..hee!!!) Trophies displayed on awards day to those identified as deserving learners at school, for their competency in subjects as well as in sports throughout the year.

[Image: 11]

Thulile [Girl aged 13]: "*Assembly area at school. We conduct special events/occasions for the whole school, furthermore teachers announce for learners achievements both in and out of the classroom activities, for the whole school to know and acknowledge individual success*" [Focus group interview, Aug. 2014].

Although the assembly area is a space where a variety of invited guests share good advice and bring awareness of new activities, the abovementioned findings reveal that it is viewed as a space where learners who are doing extremely well at school are celebrated. This kind of action downgrades the existence of underperforming learners, as they are not recognized in any of the selected activities at school. Such practice establishes an obvious division of learners according to their capabilities.

[Image: 12]

The above evidence demonstrates large group of learners at school standing, watching and witnessing while selected few others awarded for obtaining first, second and third position in their academic performance. The idea behind ceremony and the selective programme is to encourage every learner to perform at their very best with hope that one day the entire school will witness them receiving a trophy.

4.3.4   Underperforming learners navigating spaces and places within a schooling context

Studies have shown that a child's experiences of schooling is sometimes shaped by the multiple factors which include experiences of social change, abuse, bullying, discrimination, isolation,

and the use of a new language in teaching and learning context. Sometimes, even the teacher can be a contributing factor. The data also reveals that school is an additional community where children are exposed to different conditions, and where they learn to adapt to a variety of agreements and disagreements within shared connections. Mayall (2002) suggests that children create meaning for themselves and others, through customs of friendships at school. As a researcher, throughout all focus group interviews with my participants, I observed that they appeared to have difficulty with the fact that the teasing from their peers and friends played such a dominant role in their lives that it resulted in them being distracted in the classroom. Later, they were comfortable to be themselves which possibly indicated they had accepted themselves as being unique individuals.

This study found that it is not true that underperforming learners are ignorant of circumstances happening around their lives.

[Image: 13]

Thabani [Boy aged 14]: "*As a prefect I have observed this little girl (Zinhle) always the last one to dish up sometimes will not find anything left but will go for left overs in the pot. Most of the time children take her food, then she decided to dish after everyone has been fed, just to find piece.*" [Individual Interview, Aug. 2014]

The above unhappy evidence witnessed by Thabani while on duty as a prefect reveals how he was powerless to control the situation to make it fair for Zinhle. It is evident that participants were aware of their own vulnerability in the face of dominant students and opted to keep to themselves rather than challenge them which could have resulted in unfavourable and abusive situations.

The findings indicate that underperforming learners dealt with unfavourable situations in different and creative ways, as the picture below illustrates.

[Image: 14]

Njoh [Boy aged 11]: *"Me and my friend Qaphelani, we climb on a tree, pretend to be on top of the world during breaks just to avoid „friends"boys who always take our food. We prefer to be safe and away from trouble."* [Focus group interview, Aug. 2014]

The evidence above shows a common element between the two friends, Njoh and Qaphelani, in that they are both shy and afraid of the hostilities and spiteful behaviours practiced by bullies. Such acts of violence pushed them to think of creative ways to keep themselves safe and avoid conflict situations.

Findings revealed that more learners‟ especially young underperforming learners were exposed to experiences of violence in school however they had to find means to survive at school.

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[Image: 15]

Sphelele [Boy aged 12]: "*Little boy"s sits patiently in groups while waiting for queues to subside then carry on their turn to dish up during breaks for food. Although they hungry as well but afraid of stampede.*" [Focus group Interv. Aug. 2014]

The above findings depict the patience of those who are powerless, and how sometimes situations can lead to unfair practice. This study found that while there may have been some initial incidents of discrimination, alienation and exclusion in the form of bullying, name calling and teasing on behalf of the perpetrators, the resultant unfair practice was accepted by the victims in that they hesitated to interact with their peers (as supported by Adedayo, 2010; Osman, 2009; and Nnadozie, 2010). However according to Yurtul et al. (2007) as mentioned earlier boys are mostly exposed to bullying behaviors more than girls.

[Image: 16]

Njoh [Boy aged 11]: *"mmmhh! I love girl fights (smiling)… Today witnessing a group of girls fighting in grade four block. No teacher or prefect visible, watching clearly while seated in our favorite spot on trees during breaks, while everyone concentrates on dishing up."* [Focus group interv. Aug. 2014]

The above excerpt confirms what was made obvious by Peters (2008) & Gallant (2013) in that the school yard has many corners, certain spots where learners know they are not being watched when mistreating others. Some vindictive learners see fights as a way of resolving issues.

The study also cited Maslow"s Hierarchical Theory of Needs (1968) as a blueprint for the basic requirements of every growing individual at school. However should there be a disruption in the pyramid then learners might experience scholastic underperformance. While Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecosystemic brought along model of child development, stresses the importance of acknowledging learners" individual differences and diversity.

The findings of this study revealed that learners do experience positive feelings such as, appreciation, friendship, happiness, satisfaction, and acceptance, as well as negative emotional feelings such as, sadness, fear, rejection, anger, anxiety, and confusion, and that all of these influence their academic performance that also was confirmed by Mafumo & Litmanen et al. (2012).

This study affirms that in the education process, teaching and learning is an emotional exercise involving all stakeholders concerned in the education of a child. All stakeholders are associated

with the expression of emotions, and the findings emphasise the importance of working together and supporting one another for the success of learners both at school and at home. For this reason it is valuable to understand and address the various emotions expressed by learners in schools. This study, however, only tackles their emotional responses to challenges. Future study needs to further explore an attempt to solving these challenges in schools.

4.4   Conclusion

From the previous discussions, Bronfenbrenner (2008) emphasised home support as the source of basic inspiration. Hence the absence of home involvement create a great negative influence on learner‟s financial, communal and emotional well-being, and thus affecting learners‟ academic performance. Hence the importance, of the home or family involvement on children‟s academic performance can never be underestimated.

It is helpful parental attitudes towards school that will lead to a high level of support for their children; however underperforming learners coming from underprivileged homes and communities are easily at risk of danger. Nevertheless some learners are able to accept their difficulty and still benefit from school whilst living in terrible home background situations. *Flexibility* is an ‚individual‟s ability to make progress from dysfunction and to rise above odd situations‟ Tugade, Fredrickson and Barrett, (2004).

 It is also true; however, that mostly learners understood to have lacked educational goals (Dixon, Roman & McArdle 2013) been from underprivileged families. However for some

learners having been raised under fragile families of, single parenting families or child-headed families can be sometimes created emotional problems which may hinder good academic performance Chindanya (2012). Thus, the family upbringing of social influence plays essential role in the construction the learner's character and in improving academic performance.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

This research study set out to understand the geographies and experiences of grade six learners regarded as academically underperforming at Isizwesokuthula Primary School (Pseudonym). The study discovered factors affecting these learners" schooling experiences and how the learners actively engaged and constructed their personalities through these dynamics. It was conducted under the following key research questions:

1.   What are the schooling experiences of six academically underperforming learners in one semi-urban primary school in KwaZulu-Natal?

2.   What are the geographies of academically underperforming learners in this primary school context?

3.   What are factors affecting academically underperforming learners in this school?

4.   How do academically underperforming learners navigate and negotiate the spaces and places of their experiences within this schooling context?

This chapter has been structured, to present, firstly, a short summary of findings from the study; secondly, theoretical and methodological reflections; thirdly, the additional highlights of my personal and professional academic reflections; fourthly, the limitations of this study; and finally, the study implications, both for policy and practice, and for further research in this field.

5.2   Summary of the study findings

5.2.1   Schooling experiences of six academically underperforming learners

The previous chapter presented the discussions and the findings of the results in accordance to the specific questions of the research Mouton (2011).   In understanding experiences of academically underperforming learners, the study mentioned overcrowded classrooms amongst other principal causes of underperformance, especially in the lower grades of primary schooling Jansen (2012) where this has been proven to have had a negative impact on teaching and learning. Similar notions are stressed by various theorists and researchers – (Carrim 2012; Mattson and Harley, 2011; Soudien 2012; Soudien 2009; and Wearmouth et al. 2010).

The findings presented from the previous chapter stated that most of the Isizwesokuthula primary school learners who participated in this research study have repeated at least one grade in the Intermediate Phase. They have also experienced bullying and isolation, and had therefore developed mistrust that had affected their schooling career and impacted on their educational and socio-economic needs. Our findings also suggest that issues affecting home-life and environmental safety have an impact on grade repetition rates.

5.2.2   The geographies of academically underperforming learners

In this study it is evident that underperforming learners were not happy at school and appeared not to enjoy learning because they were often teased both inside and outside of the classroom. This complete lack of joy at school developed into a negative attitude towards the subject or even towards the teachers. All too often they missed lessons because they would be sent out of the class by the teacher. Even if diverse educators attempted to be creative and developed stimulating, yet at the same time enjoyable, lessons, these underperforming learners were unable to work individually. Sometimes they got support during group lessons.

5.2.3   Factors affecting academically underperforming learners

The study recognised that different home circumstances have a profound influence on learners, including situations of unbalanced home background which regularly lead to demonstrated stress and school drop-outs especially amongst underperforming learners. This corresponds with discoveries made by Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010) who proclaimed poverty is mostly associated with a variety of home background variables that affect academic performance, in so much that Dixon-Roman, Everson and McArdle (2013) also noted parental income and other indicators such as socio-economic status are related to various negative outcomes in education. However Manuel (2012) maintained that poverty has major long term influences on a child's development and that the devastating effects under nutrition last throughout the child's life. Poverty, was claimed to be hugely related to parental unemployment leading to poor nutrition, and affecting learning incapacities.

Although underperforming learners do have positive experiences, the world of school is not perfect. In some instances even friends distract underperforming learners from their learning in the classroom. The study revealed that most educators were aware of the bullying in school hence they made use of prefects to be amongst learners most of the time.

The study also found that no strategies were developed and no structured formal support existed for academically underperforming learners at the school level as well as home level. However an awareness of this can assist educators to cater to their learners needs and ensure that they are in a safe and comfortable learning environment. As per the recommendations below, it is imperative that schools understand the importance of developing collaborative relationships between learners, educators, parents, specialists and professionals within the school and the broader community. The benefits of these relationships were clearly highlighted in this study, showing that teamwork fostered healthy and supportive relationships.

5.3   Theoretical and methodological reflections

5.3.1   Usefulness of theoretical frameworks used in the study

This study was informed by both theoretical and conceptual frameworks including: ecological theory Bronfenbrenner‟s (2008) that proposes a person‟s backgrounds including their home, and surroundings of background school, church, neighbourhood, culture and government have an influence on the way a child develops (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2010; Woolley & Kaylor, 2006). With reference to Children‟s Geographies and the New Sociology of Childhood, this

theory studies experiences affecting learners" performance within within the context of the school environment. The child according to Bronfenbrenner (2008) matures under nested home circumstances. However his ecological environment consists of the following five nested structures including: microsystems, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Rathus, 2006; Berk, 2007; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010).

Children's geographies and the new sociology of children shaped this study and made it possible to explore learners" understanding of their actions. Nonetheless the key was understanding learners developedment and what factors lead to their underperformance at school, understanding the interactions of these systems was therefore. These researchers are interested in examining how academic achievement was influenced by various situations and instruments, through focusing on learners" experiences at school and other environments such as family/home, neighbourhood, peers, school and government.

The theoretical and conceptual framework, methodology and research design were selected to collaborate with each other to understand underperforming learners" school experiences. The learners" voices and agency were conveyed through their narratives. These learners" narratives were based on their personal accounts of what they have seen and had experienced.

5.3.2   Usefulness of methodological frameworks used in the study

The study aim was to investigate and describe experiences of underperforming learners in a primary school, in which research design used was in agreement with Smith (2007) who referred

to as, the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer the study research questions. Therefore an inquiry approach of qualitative phenomenological design was adopted for use in this study to explore the central phenomenon; namely understanding underperforming learners" experiences at primary school. Therefore thorough views of involvement in the form of words and images were used as means of data collecting also described by McMillan & Schumacher, (2010) as gathered reports of learners experiences, feelings, approaches and behaviors. However Creswell, (2010) confirmed that the selected research design was worthy at developing profound matters and making participants voices heard, was also thus found appropriate to discover the home-based factors that influence the academic performance of these learners.

Therefore an inquiry approach of qualitative phenomenological design (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010) also allowed the researcher to increase understanding of participants" perspectives of social phenomena in their ordinary surroundings. The subsequent themes that emerged for data analysis were as a result of the critical incidents narrated and the discussions of pictures taken. The following themes were discussed in details: Spaces and places of underperforming learners schooling experiences with subdivision of classroom as a space for underperforming learners; School-home interface as space for underperforming learners; School-based peer interactions as different spaces for underperforming learners and lastly how underperforming learners navigate their experiences in these spaces and places within schooling context.

5.4   Personal - professional reflections

Engaging me with the study developed an opportunity to diverge from the original outdated principles that recognized children as immature, incompetent, submissive, and helpless young people who cannot take decisions on their own, especially as young people who remained passive under all circumstances and remain under the lead of an adult even in matters of decision making on their behalf. Compared to my previous knowledge of learners, uncovering this study in the context of Child Geographies and New Sociology of Children changed my socially constructed belief. As Brown (2011) principles I now consider learners as meaningful makers in their own right and since given the right to participate in this study in order to bring awareness to their challenges.

The adoption of qualitative approach and the use of narrative inquiry to gain a rich, descriptive and detailed data from the participants for this study worked at the advantage to me as the researcher Connelly & Clandinin (1990) further accommodated my gain to develop a true understanding of characters and stories of each participant since referred to as an underperforming learner. The environment allowed participants freedom to share their practices, individual opinions, feelings, ideas and statements through narrating their stories. I used individual, focus group interviews as well as photo voice for discussions, later listened to participant"s stories and speeches as an important feature of narrative inquiry Connelly & Clandinin (1990). My choice of methodology strengthened my belief, since interviews and discussions were conducted in a non- structured manner, therefore participants were open and willing to share their stories. I take it as my responsibility to change the attitudes of those

teachers whose focus is only on the assessment of learners" work performance. Teachers also need to consider learners" emotions and the social barriers that hinder academic performance. The study discoveries revealed that learners had bigger problems than we realized.

Naidoo (2011) believed programmes to support language acquisition for underachieving children were however critical, particularly in the foundation phase or their early years of schooling. Such programmes of educator professional development that allowed teachers to gain knowledge and skills when teaching vulnerable learners would also be beneficial as would a curriculum that promotes a positive learning experience for all learners.

Professionally enlightening policies and practices recommended being easily accessible and user-friendly for all stakeholders. As a researcher within the critical paradigm, one would be misled to believe that one is completely uninvolved or neutral. The research delves into deep-rooted issues such as race, class and gender and thus compels one to engage with them on a highly personal and sometimes uncomfortable level. As a teacher myself, I found that embarking on this research journey has forced me to be more reflective and reflexive on particular aspects of my teaching, especially concerning a subject that may lend itself to issues of oppression.

5.5   Limitations of the study

The study utilised narrative inquiry of six learners from one school a participatory research method and photo voice, for data generation. Although participants" narratives differ but then they share the same school environment, therefore findings are not easily comparable to other

learners who might have different experiences from different school environments and backgrounds. However my biggest concern, since I was sharing the same environment (place of my employment) with all my participants, learners somehow felt reluctant to confide in me, their teacher as well as the researcher.

Since the study engaged a narratives of participants I noticed that girl participants were much comfortable to work and talk on their own and were somehow very quiet and reluctant in the presence of boys especially during our focus group interviews as I could sense tension amongst them however Marcus (2007) noted narratives of nervous or restless participants could result to high levels of self-doubt and being unsecured. I could also understand that my presence as a researcher at school had an influence on their performance. Other factors that impeded my study included the fact that I am currently teaching in the same school as my participants and I teach a particular subject to some of them. Therefore I noticed that it was not easy for them to express themselves the way I would expect them to. Furthermore, I serve as one of school managers therefore participants were somehow reluctant. This nonetheless hampered the actual progress of natural data and feedback to my study; it was somehow challenging to frequently meet with my participants as regularly as I might have liked because of the demands of management duties and administrative office work.

The original work by Holt (1964) proclaims fright terminates intellect and makes clever children performance irresponsible, as a result some learners acted out of fear most of the time. Indeed furthermore I encountered resistance amongst some of the participants‟ parents who claimed this

research study was my own work effort and I should, therefore, not intrude on their children study time to gather data. This demonstrated challenging situations.

Finally I felt the study could have obtained more and rich data if it was not conducted by a normal teacher from another school. As the researcher was their school teacher, I found that they were sometimes reluctant to talk as I also appeal to them as one of the school‟s senior manager.

5.6   Implications of the Study

5.6.1   Implications for policy and practice

Based on the study findings, the following policy and practice recommendations have been suggested in respect of enhancing the schooling experiences of learners who are regarded as academically underperforming:

- The department of education needs to continue ensure that educators are equipped to cater for a diversity of learning needs within the educational setting.

- Educators need to be creative in their planning and ensure that they make use of a variety of resources while teaching different themes in the classroom. They should also be advised to acknowledge individuality and, in particular, ensure that those underperforming learners obtain some recognition and benefits (White paper 6, 2001).

- An ethos valuing difference should be fostered amongst learners and educators and society to ensure that all learners develop in a happy and welcoming school and home environment. The diversity among underperforming learners will imply that a wide range of learning materials, resources, themes and methods need to be incorporated to ensure that meaningful learning can occur for all learners. It is of paramount importance that classroom environment arrangements are made to enhance learning in the classroom for underperforming learners.

- Ironically, with regards to learners" progress, the study also found that Progress/ Promotion Requirement (DoE, 2009) stated a learner can only be held back once per educational phase (can only repeat the class once within the phase). Such authoritative powers forced schools to promote learners to the next grade even if learners have not become skilled at the essential subject knowledge and not competent enough as demanded by the curriculum in that grade and phase. Hence learners are already academically challenged with overcrowded classrooms at the primary school level. Research by Garrett (2013) stated learners exposed to being victims of overcrowded classes, experience bullying, experience anxiety, fear, and depression, are affected academically, and suffer lowered self-esteem.

5.6.2 Implications for further research

An increase of research in the field of children's spatial geographies in recent years has been noted, especially including investigation on presentation, tourism, self-governing mobility and

the factors supporting ecologically friendly openness. However further research on lived experiences of learners formerly declared underperforming in schools, now living as adults in the field of work or careers, might shed light as an extension of this study. Not so much is known about these relationships and how changes in the family structures, socio-economic status of families, and basic functioning in the neighborhoods might impact children"s academic performance in schools Holloway (2010).

The following are recommended for further research in this area:

- The experiences of underperforming learners at secondary and tertiary level in and outside the classroom.

- The experiences of educators who have taught underperforming learners.

- School and community structures working together to bring awareness and provide assistance to the upbringing of learners living under challenged home situations and especially in the environment of child-headed homes.

- More research is required in this field to understand if there are any relationships between gender socialization and boys" and girls" academic performances in school.

- Department of Education to further devise more useful strategies for planning and implementing successful intervention programs towards underperforming learners.

In conclusion, most of the underperforming learners were found to dread being confronted or disciplined in front of the class, and felt that certain issues were of a personal nature and should therefore only concern the educator and the learner. That is why sometimes they showed resistance when being disciplined. Most learners indicated that they respond well to reason, and that simply communicating with the learners in private was far more effective in maintaining and controlling their behaviour. Hence the behaviours of grade six learners mostly around their age highly values peer recognition, so educators as emphasized by Alberda (2008) have a duty not to single out or to humiliate learners in front of their peers. Therefore learning and understanding the impact of flexibility on the academic performance of underperforming learners from poor backgrounds is much needed for further research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:   Consent letter / form for district office: Provincial Education Department (kwaZulu-Natal)

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Ashwood

3605

22 August 2014

The Manager

District Education Department

Pinetown

To whom it may concern

Sir/ Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct research at your school .

I am a registered Masters" student with the school of education, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Student No: 213 572 882). I kindly request your assistance to grant me a permission to conduct my study in one of your schools under your district.

I am conducting a research project titled: „**GEOGRAPHIES OF UNDERPERFORMING LEARNERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY'**. I am interested in knowing and understanding experiences of learners in the primary school. I have selected „Isizwesokuthula Primary School to conduct my research.
Participants will be required to participate in individual and focus group interviews, that expected to last for 20 to 45minutes. These interviews will not take place during formal teaching and learning times, so will not disturb any lessons or school time.

Please take note of the following:

- The school and learner participants will not receive any material gains for participating in this research study.
- The school or learners identity will not be disclosed under any circumstances.
- Pseudonyms will be used (for learners and the school) no real names to be used.

- Audio-recording of interview will only be done if permission obtained from participant.
- All learner participants'' response will be treated with confidentiality.
- Data will be stored within the University storeroom for a maximum period of five years Thereafter it will be destroyed.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore participants will be free to withdraw at any time should they so wish without feeling intimidated.
- Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if permission of the participant is obtained.

Thanking you

Yours Faithfully

_____   _____

Thokozani Auctavia Ngidi   Supervisor: Professor Pholoho Morojele

tarzan55@live.com   morojele@ukzn.ac.za
Cell: 083 674 9494   031 260 3234

_____

Should you grant me a permission to conduct the research in the District school, please fill in your full name and sign the form below.

Consent form

I,…………………………………………… (full name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research at the _____ Primary School.
I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Signature:_____**Date: _____**

Appendix 2: Consent letter / form for school principal

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Ashwood

3605

22 August 2014

The Principal

Waterloo Primary School

P.O. Box 1264

Verulam

4340

Madam (Mrs. N. Ngcobo)

<u>**Re: Permission to conduct research in your school .**</u>

I am a registered Masters" student with the school of Education, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Student No: 213 572 882). I kindly request your permission to conduct my study at your school. I am conducting a research project titled: „**GEOGRAPHIES OF UNDERPERFORMING LEARNERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY'**. I am interested in knowing and understanding experiences of learners in the primary school. I have selected your school to conduct my research on the following dates [………………………..]. Learners will be participants in my study. They will be required to participate in individual and focus group interviews.

These interviews will not take place during formal teaching and learning times, so will not disturb any lessons or school time.

Please take note of the following:

- The school and learners will not receive any material gains for participating in this study
- The school or learners identity will not be disclosed under any circumstances
- Pseudonyms will be used (for learners and the school) no real names to be used

- Audio-recording of interview will only be done if permission obtained from participant
- All learners response will be treated with confidentiality.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore participants will be free to withdraw at any time should they so wish without feeling intimidated.
- Data will be stored within the University storeroom for a maximum period of five years Thereafter it will be destroyed.

Thanking You

Yours Sincerely

_____   _____

Thokozani Auctavia Ngidi   Professor: Pholoho Morojele

tarzan55@live.com   morojele@ukzn.ac.za
Cell: 083 674 9494   031 260 3234

_____

If permission is granted to conduct the research in your school, please fill in and the form below.

<u>Consent form:</u>

I,…………………………………………… (full name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the rsearcher to conduct the research project at my school. I understand that learners can withdraw from the project anytime should they so desire.

Signature:_____Date: _____

Appendix 3: Consent letter/form for parents (caregivers)

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Ashwood

3605

24 August 2014

Dear Parent

I am a registered Master‟s student with the school of education, at the University of kwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research project titled: „**GEOGRAPHIES OF UNDERPERFORMING LEARNERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY'**. I am interested in knowing and understanding experiences of learners in the primary school. I kindly request your permission for your child to participate in the research study that will be conducted at his/her school. The interviews will be conducted on the following dates […………………………..].

These interviews will not take place during formal teaching and learning times, so will not disturb any lessons or school time.

Take note of the following:

- There will be no material benefit that your child will receive for taking part in this research project.
- The identity of your child will be remain confidential and will not be disclosed under any circumstances
- Your child‟s answers and responses will be strictly confidential.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore your child will not be forced to disclose any information if so unwilling.
- False names will be used in conducting this research. They will not use their real names.
- Audio-recording will be done if only your child gave permission to do so.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore participants will be free to withdraw at any time should they so wish without feeling intimidated.

- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard at the maximum period of five years and will be destroyed thereafter.

Please tick whether you agree or disagree.

Activity	Agree	Disagree
Audio-tape		
Drawing		
Camera		

Thanking you.

Yours faithfully

_____

Thokozani Auctavia Ngidi   Supervisor: Professor Pholoho Morojele

083 674 9494: tarzan55@live.com   031 260 3234 morojele@ukzn.ac.za

_____

Consent form:

If you agree for your child to take part in this project, please fill in your name and sign the form below.

I, ………………………………….. (Full name) hereby confirm my knowledge and understanding of the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for my child to participate in the research project.

Name of the child: _____

Signature of Parent: _____   Date:_____

Appendix 4: Incwadi yomzali/umbhekeleli yemvume yocwaningo nomntwana

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Ashwood

3605

24 kuNcwaba 2014

Mzali

Ngingumfundi wase Nyuvesi yakwa Zulu-Natal. Ngenza ucwaningo ngaphansi kwesihloko:

'Abantwana basebangeni lesithupha abaqokwe njengabanezinselela nabadinga unakekelo olunzulu ekufundeni kwabo: Imibuzo esangxoxo'. Ukufunda kwami kuhlose ukwazi kabanzi ngezingqinamba nezinselela abahlangabezana nazo nezenza ukuba babe nokubambezeleka emfundweni yabo, yasemabangeni aphansi.

Ngicela imvume yokuba umntwana wakho abe yingxenye yalabo esizosebenzisana nabo ngocwaningo lwami. Kunemibuzo engizombuza yona eyedwa aphinde futhi ahlanganyele kanye nabanye sebeyiqoqo, bese bengibhalela badwebe ngokomsebenzi ozobe udingeka.

Qikelela nakhu okulandelayo:

- Yazi ukuthi akukho nhlawulo ozoyikhokha ngokukhipha umntwana kanjalo ayikho nenkokhelo ezotholwa umntwana.
- Umntwana akaphoqelelwe ukuba yingxenye kulesisifundo.
- Njengomzali unelungelo lokunqaba noma ukumkhipha nanoma nini umntwana kulesisifundo.
- Imininingwane yomntwana wakho angeke isetshenziswe, kodwa ingabonwa umuntu osebenza eNyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natali, onemvume kuphela.
- Ulwazi olutholakala kulesisifundo angeke lusetshenziswe ukuhlambalaza wena noma umntwana wakho. Kepha ngolocwaningo kuphela.
- Ulwazi luzogcinwa endaweni ephephile ebese lulahlwa futhi ngemva kweminyaka emihlanu (5years).

- Uma uvuma ukuba umntwana wakho abuzwe imibuzo ngalolucwaningo aphinde aqoshwe ngesiqophimazwi noma ungavuma.

Faka uphawu lokuvuma noma ukungavumi lapha ngezansi:

Okuzosetshenziswa	Ngiyavuma	Angivumi
Isiqophimazwi		
ukudweba		
Ukuthwebula izithombe		

Ngiyabonga
Yimina ozithobayo

_____

Thokozani Auctavia Ngidi   Umbhekeleli: Solwazi Pholoho Morojele
083 674 9494 tarzan55@live.com   031 260 3432: morojele@ukzn.ac.za

_____

Uma uvumelana nalokhu okubhalwe ngenhla ngicela ubhale lemininingwane yakho.

<u>Isibophezelo</u>

Mina, ……………………………………… (amagama omzali). Ngiyaqiniseka ukuthi ngiyakuzwa okubhalwe kulencwadi nohlobo locwaningo. Ngiyaninikeza imvume yokuba umntwana wami abe ingxenye yalolucwaningo. Ngiyazi ukuthi kuyilungelo lami ukumkhipha umntwana noma inini uma ngifuna.

Isignisha yomzali   usuku
……………………………..   …………………………

Appendix 5: Consent letter/form for learners

<div align="right">
University of kwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Ashwood

3605

26 August 2014
</div>

Dear Participant

I am a student of Master‟s in education at the school of Education in Edgewood Campus at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research project titled: „**GEOGRAPHIES OF UNDERPERFORMING LEARNERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY'**. I am interested in knowing and understanding experiences of learners in the primary school. I have selected your school to conduct my research on the following dates […………………………..].

I kindly request your assistance in this research project of being a participant in an individual and focus group interviews. You will be asked some questions, take photographs or do drawings. Please note that:

- There will be no material benefits that you will receive for taking part on this project.
- . Your confidentiality is guaranteed and your identity will not be disclosed under any circumstances.
- The interview may last for about 30-45 minutes and may be split depending on your preference.
- You will not under any circumstances be forced to disclose what you do not want to reveal.
- . Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- Participation is voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

Activity	Willing	Not Willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Drawings		

Thank You
Yours Faithfully

_____   _____

Thokozani Auctavia Ngidi   Supervisor: Professor Pholoho Morojele
 tarzan55@live.com   morojele@ukzn.ac.za
Cell: 083 674 9494   031 260 3234

If you agree to take part in this project, please fill in your full name and sign at the bottom.

<u>Declaration</u>

I,…………………………………… (full name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

…………………………………………   ……………
Signature of Participant   **Date**

Appendix 6: Incwadi yesicelo yomfundi ngocwaningo

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Ashwood

3605

26 kuNcwaba 2014

Mfundi

Ngingumfundi wase Nyuvesi yakwa Zulu-Natal. Ngenza ucwaningo ngaphansi kwesihloko:

'Abantwana basebangeni lesithupha abaqokwe njengabanezinselela nabadinga unakekelo olunzulu ekufundeni kwabo: Imibuzo ngxoxo'. Ukufunda kwami kuhlose ukuba ngazi kabanzi ngezingqinamba nezinselela enihlangabezana nazo ningabafundi nezenza ukuba nibe nokubambezeleka emfundweni kwenu kwasemabangeni aphansi.

 Ngicela ukuba ube yingxenye yalolucwaningo. Kunemibuzo engizombuza yona ngawedwa uphinde futhi uhlanganyele nabanye abantwana seniyiqoqo, bese ningibhalela, noma nidwebe ngokomsebenzi ozobe udingeka. Konke lokhu kuzokwenzeka esikoleni sakho ngalezizinsuku […………………………………………………]

Qikelela nakhu okulandelayo:

- Yazi ukuthi akukho nhlawulo ozoyikhipha noma inkokhelo ezotholwa ngokuzimbandakanya naloluhlelo.
- Akekho umntwana ozophoqelelwa ukuba yingxenye kulesisifundo.
- Njengomfundi unelungelo lokunqaba noma ukuphuma nanoma nini kulolucwaningo.
- Angeke kusetshenziswe igama lakho lempela, kuyosetshenziswa okungelona.
- Ziyokwamukelwa zonke impendulo zakho.
- Ulwazi oluyotholakala angeke isetshenziswe, kodwa ingabonwa umuntu osebenza eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natali, onemvume kuphela.
- Ulwazi luzogcinwa endaweni ephephile ebese lulahlwa futhi ngemva kweminyaka emihlanu (5years).

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- Uma uvuma noma ungavumi ukuba yingxenye yalolucwaningo kuphinde kuqoshwe ngesiqophimazwi.

Faka uphawu lokuvuma noma ukungavumi lapha ngezansi:

Okuzosetshenziswa	**Ngiyavuma**	**Angivumi**
Isiqophimazwi		
ukudweba		
Ukuthwebula izithombe		

Ngiyabonga
Ozithobayo

_____   _____

Thokozani Auctavia Ngidi   Umbhekeleli: Solwazi Pholoho Morojele
083 674 9494 tarzan55@live.com   031 260 3432: morojele@ukzn.ac.za
_____

Uma uvumelana nalokhu okubhalwe ngenhla ngicela ubhale imininingwane yakho.

<u>Isibophezelo</u>

Mina, …………………………………………………(igama lomfundi). Ngiyaqiniseka ukuthi ngiyakuzwa okubhalwe kulencwadi nohlobo locwaningo. Ngiyaninikeza imvume yokuba umntwana wami abe ingxenye yalolucwaningo. Ngiyazi ukuthi kuyilungelo lami ukumkhipha umntwana noma inini uma ngifuna.

Isignisha yomzali   usuku
…………………………..   **……………………..**

Appendix 7:   Interview guide questions

Key research questions
- What are the schooling experiences of six academically underperforming learners in one semi-urban primary school in KwaZulu-Natal?

- What are the geographies of academically underperforming learners in this primary school context?

- What are factors affecting academically underperforming learners in this school?

- How do academically underperforming learners navigate and negotiate the spaces and places of their experiences within this schooling context?

With questions above I wanted to explore and understand learners regarded as underperforming focusing on the intermediate phase at the primary school. The experiences and challenges encountered in their schooling life.

Probing questions

Individual Interviews:
i)   What do you like/ don˙t like at or about school?
ii)   Do you have friends, how many, who are they?
iii)   How do you feel about teachers and learners at school?
iv)   How do other learners treat you? Do you play together? (feeling of acceptability or otherwise).
v)   What subject(s) do you like or don˙t like most at school and why?
vi)   Do you answer questions in class? (do you get them right/ wrong?)
vii)   Do you participate in group activities? (how do you feel?).
viii)   Does the teacher give you homework? (do you do it? If not why?).
ix)   How do other learners react if you get it right /wrong? (do they belittle/ make you proud?
x)   What are the top five learners, what does the teacher say if it is you?
xi)   What do you think might be the cause for that?
xii)   How do you feel about them?
xiii)   Draw 5 things in the school that shows positive insctinct. (things that you like in a school & list them according to you favourites/ top to bottom).
xiv)   Draw 5 things that shows negative instinct at school? (can you remember what happened to make you not to like it).

Focus Group Interviews:

I will ask interview participants to take pictures of things they do during breaks, also what makes them scared in and around school. Two disposable cameras will be shared amongst three boys and three girls as per their agreement in groups.

Probing questions:

   a) Why did you take this picture?
   b) What do you think is happening in the picture?
   c) What do other children do to get food?
   d) Why do you think causes this chaos during breaks at school?
   e) How can It be prevented
   f) How do you feel about that?

Instruction:

Interview participants will be asked to take photo's of the places they fear most to be in and surrounding the school.

Probing questions:

   a) Do you play any sports at school?
   b) Where do you normally spend time during breaks when everybody is outside?
   c) Why do you isolate yourself from others?
   d) Who is dominant in the picture?
   e) Have you ever witnessed any mistreat at school, did you report? Why/ what happened thereafter?

In order to explore how they navigate schooling experiences. Children were asked to show and tell how they've learned to adapt to school life.

   i)   What happens if they don't agree on something at school?
   ii)   How does culture feature in and challenge their everyday lives? (concentrate on things you do to make the situation better/ what works for you).
   iii)   How does Religion dominates from what they believe in ?
   iv)   What or who do you think can make the situation better?
   v)   There are certain things they think teachers, parents, principals can do to overcome the situation or correct the wrong act.

Appendix 8: Imibuzo ewumhlahlandlela yocwaningo:

<u>**Imibuzo yabantwana ngesizulu:**</u>

a) Bazizwa kanjani esikoleni abantwana abadinga unakekelo olunzulu ekufundeni kwabo? Yiziphi izindlela abazizwa ngayo?

b) Yiziphi izindawo nemicabango yabo lapha noma ngesikole-nje jikelele emabangeni aphansi?

c) Bazivikela kanjani kulokhu okwenzeka azimpilweni zabo noma abangafisa kwenzeke.

Imibuzo yomntwana ngamunye

i) Yini oyithandayo noma ongayithandi lapha esikoleni noma ngesikole imbala?

ii) Unabo kodwa abangani, bangaki, futhi bangobani?

iii) Yiziphi izifundo ozithanda kakhulu? (kungani?)

iv) Uzizwa kanjani mayelana nothisha abafundisa lezozifundo?

v) Uyabezwa kodwa ukuthi bathini kuwe uma befundisa?

vi) Bayakunika kodwa umsebenzi wasekhaya, uyawenza? Usizwa ngubani?

vii) Uyaye uphakamise kodwa ekilasisni? Bathini uma uphendule kahle/ kanti uma kukubi?

viii) Uyasebenza ngokuzimisela uma nisebenza ngamaqembu ekilasini? (uphatheka kanjani ngalokho)? (*kumele ngijwayele ukubuza lokho)*

ix) Unaye umuntu okusiza ngomsebenzi wesikole, ekhaya?

x) Ngidwebele izinto noma izindawo ezinhlanu ezikwenza ukhululeke noma ungakhululeki ngazo. (zimise noma uzibeke ngendlela yokubaluleka kwazo).

xi) Ungakhumbula ukuthi yini eyenzeka neyenza ukuba ungazithandi noma uzithande kakhulu? (yisho isehlakalo).

Imibuzo yasemaqenjini

.

i) Bakhona abahlale bethola kahle ekilasini? Uthisha uthini kubo? Athini futhi uma sekunguwena?

ii) Ukhona umdlalo ovelele ngawo lapha esikoleni? noma P.E./ Library/Computer?

Abantwana bazocelwa ukuba bathathae izithombe zezindawo lapho bechitha khona isizungo nesikhati uma sebethatha ikhefu kancane esikoleni.

i) Banamukela kanjani abanye abantwana lapha esikoleni?

ii) Kungani nithathe lesi sithombe? / Kwenzakalani kuso, chaza kafushane.

iii)   Ubona ukuthi yinhle lanto eyenziwa ngabanye abantwana uma beniphuca ukudla, futhi bengawumi ulayini? Wena sikuphatha kanjani lesisenzo sabo?

iv)   Kuye kwenzakaleni ngalaba abangasakutholanga ukudla bephucwa? Nalaba abafika sekuphelile?

v)   Yini ojwayele ukuyenza noma ongafisa yenzeke ukuze isimo sibe ngcono noma siphele?

vi)   Yini ocabanga ukuthi uthisha wakho, umzali noma uthisha omkhulu angase ayenze ukuxazulula isimo leso?

Ezithombenei abazithathile bazophinde bachaze izizathu nezindlela zokwenza isimo sibe ngcono esikoleni kuwo wonke umntwana. (omncane nomdala).

Imibuzo uqobo.

a)   Ngubani ungqo shishilizi lapha esithombeni? (ohamba phambili)

b)   Kungani nesaba ukuceba laba abaniphatha kabi esikoleni?

c)   Nibona kukuhle yini abakwenzayo?

d)   Kuhle yini ukuba abantwana bahlale ngokwesaba?

e)   Niyayazi indlela yokusizakala esikoleni?

f)   Kukhona kodwa enivelelengakho noma umdlalo eniwuthanda kakhulu lapha esikoleni?

Appendix 9: Transcription validation form

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Ashwood

3605

28 August 2014

Dear learner

Thank you for your voluntary participation on my research project study entitled: **The geographies on underperforming leaners in the intermediate phase: A Narrative inquiry.** I have also learnt a lot from these interviews, personally and professionally.

In order to satisfy the trustworthy of this study, I again request your assistance in confirming and validating the authenticity of the interviews and the verbatim transcription thereof. This will ensure that the interviews were conducted in an ethical manner and no information was added or distorted in any way.

Please note that it is important that you read the transcript, information while listening to the recorded interview. You are free to alter information or sentence that you feel might have been interpreted or transcribed differently from your original statement.

Declaration

I, _____ (participant"s name) verify and validate that the information transcribed from my interview was verbatim, and that no information was included, excluded, distorted or altered in any way.

_____   : _____

Signature of participant   Date

Thanking you

Yours faithfully: _____   : _____

Thokozani Auctavia Ngidi   Supevisor: Pholoho Morojele

083 674 9494   031 260 3234

tarzan55@live.com   morojele@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 10: Incwadi eqinisekisa ngocwaningo

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Ashwood

3605

28 August 2014

Mfundi

Kube yintokozo kimi ukuba uvume ukuba yingxenye yocwaningo lwesihloko esithi: **'Abantwana basebangeni lesithupha abaqokwe njengabanezinselela nabadinga unakekelo ekufundeni kwabo: Imibuzo ngxoxo'.** Kuningi nami uqobo engikufundile nangalomsebenzi obe yimpumelelo.

Ukuqinisekisa ukuthemebeka kwalesisisfundo, ngicela ukuba uhlaziye konke owakusho ngokuthi ulalele indle esasibuana siphendulana ngayo mhla siqopha inkulumo yakho.

Ngicela ufnde konke okubhaliwe ube ulalele kwi siqophamazwi. Uvumelekile ukuthi ufake noma ukhiphe lokhu obona ukuthi kufakwe ngendlela engeyiyo bese usazisa ngoshintsho olwenzile. Lokhu kuzokwenza ukuba ucwaningo luthembeke.

<div align="center">

Ukuzibophezela

</div>

Mina_____ (igama lakho) ngiyaqiisekisa ukuth konke okubhaliwe nokuqoshiwe ngiyakwazi futhi akukho ukwengezelwe, okucashuniwe engingakwazi.

_____

Isignesha

Ngiyabonga

Ozithobayo

:_____   :_____

Thokozani Auctavia Ngidi   umcwaningi: Solwazi Pholoho Morojele

083 674 9494   031 260 3432

tarzan55@live.com   morojele@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 11: Letter from language editor

APPENDIX

LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

This is to certify that I read and edited the Masters Dissertation

"GEOGRAPHIES OF UNDERPERFORMING LEARNERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE: A NARRATIVE

INQUIRY"

by

Thokozani Ngidi

On 28th January 2016

Charon Williams-Ros

Glenwood, Durban 4001

Email: charon@wragency.co.za

Appendix 12: Ethical clearance certificate

Appendix 13: Confirmation letter from the research project leader

Appendix 14: Turnitin report