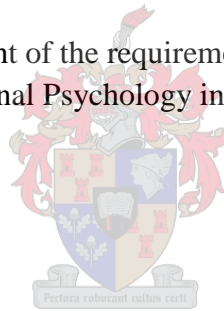# Primary school learners' perspectives on factors that impact their learning and wellbeing at school

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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Education

Supervisor: Professor Ronelle Carolissen

DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof, that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: December 2016

ABSTRACT

Primary school children's perspectives on wellbeing and learning are always heard from the teachers' or adults' perspectives. It is seldom that learners are asked about their perspectives when it comes to their wellbeing and learning at school. Research has suggested that children are marginalised and not given an opportunity to participate in matters that concern them. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, Article 12 maintains that children have a right to express their views and have them taken seriously in accordance with their age and maturity. It has also been found that it has been one of the most challenging to implement. This study aimed to gain insight from the perspectives of the learners to be informed on what they think affects their wellbeing and learning at school. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model was used as a frame. Qualitative research, using visual methods, focus groups and classroom observations were used as tools to explore and then describe the participants' perspectives. The study was conducted as a case study and purposive sampling was utilised to select the participants. Six girls and six boys from three Grade seven classes were selected. The participants gave their perspectives on factors that affect their wellbeing as they had been at the school longer than other learners. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings suggested positive and negative aspects that affected the learners at school. Play or sport and extra-mural activities brought happiness to them though extramural activities are practised minimally at the school. Corporal punishment and bullying also emerged as themes that brought fear to the learners. From these findings it was recommended that the school be advised on bullying and on children's rights in order to help them with drafting school policies that keep the children's perspectives in mind.

Key words: wellbeing, primary school learners, learning

OPSOMMING

Laerskoolkinders se perspektiewe oor welwees en leer word altyd vanuit die perspektief van onderwysers of volwassenes gehoor. Leerders word selde gevra oor hulle perspektiewe oor hul welwees en leer by die skool. Die navorsing dui daarop dat kinders gemarginaliseer word en nie ʼn geleentheid gebied word om deel te neem in kwessies wat hulle raak nie. Volgens Artikel 12 van die Verenigde Nasies se Konferensie oor die Regte van die Kind in 1989, het kinders ʼn reg om hul menings te lug en om ernstig opgeneem te word ooreenkomstig hul ouderdom en volwassenheid. Aanduidings is dat dit een van die mees uitdagende dinge is om te implementeer. Die studie het gepoog om vanuit die perspektiewe van die leerders insig te verkry oor hulle beskouings van wat hulle welwees en leer by die skool beïnvloed. Bronfenbrenner se bio-ekologiese model is as raamwerk gebruik. Kwalitatiewe navorsing met behulp van visuele metodes, fokusgroepe en waarnemings in die klaskamer is gebruik om die deelnemers se perspektiewe te verken en te beskryf. Die studie is as ʼn gevallestudie gedoen en deelnemers is deur middel van doelgerigte steekproefneming gekies. Ses meisies en ses seuns uit drie graad 7-klasse is gekies. Aangesien die deelnemers langer as ander leerders by die skool was, het hulle hul perspektiewe oor faktore wat hul welwees beïnvloed gegee. Tematiese analise is gebruik om die data wat ingesamel is te ontleed. Die bevindings het gedui op gunstige en ongunstige aspekte wat die leerders by die skool beïnvloed het. Speel of sport en buitemuurse aktiwiteite het hulle gelukkig gemaak – hoewel buitemuurse aktiwiteite weinig by die skool beoefen word. Lyfstraf en afknouery het ook na vore gekom as temas wat die leerders bang gemaak het. Na aanleiding van hierdie bevindings is aanbeveel dat die skool leiding kry oor die hantering van afknouery en oor kinders se regte om hulle te help met die opstel van ʼn skoolbeleid wat die kinders se perspektiewe in ag neem.

Trefwoorde: welwees, laerskool kinders, leer

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DoE – Department of Education

SASA – South African Schools Act

SGB – School Governing Body

UNCCR – United Nations Council for Children's Rights

WHO – World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

> *"You may give a voice to the children, even give them a very big platform, but if adults don't stop to listen to what the children are saying it is as good as no voice"* began a 14 year old Njabulo when she introduced a live radio broadcast one Saturday morning in March 2009 (Meintjies, 2010/2011).

There is a universal call from educational organisations and other children's organisations to give children a voice on matters that affect them. Despite those voices, children are seldom consulted and remain largely unheard. The call is to move towards the implementation of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) which was endorsed in 1989. The article emphasises the importance of listening to children.

Different researchers use different terms when talking about learners' voice or the lack of voice. The study will use the terms "participation" and "marginalisation". Participation elicits the positive effects of listening to children while marginalization elicits the negative effects. According to Lansdown (2005), participation allows children to develop independence and social competence and also learn ways in which to bring out social change.

Messiou (2013) notes the action of not listening to or not hearing children and refers to it as "marginalisation" or regarding them as "forgotten". She uses the terms to highlight the fact that children are marginalised because of their abilities or perceived lack of abilities and competencies. Again, Messiou (2012) explains marginalisation as a state of being disregarded which results in lack of equal treatment and denial of rights.

A number of reasons are provided for children not participating in their learning. It is notable that culture and pedagogy have a role in children not being listened to. For instance, in many Black South African communities, culture plays a big role in determining what children should be allowed to hear or say. Often many South African black children are trained to defer to adults and this prevents them from communicating confidently with adults. Their incapacity is seen as a sign of respect to adults (Martin, 2012; Mncube & Harber, 2013). However, my opinion from experience is that adults treat children in ways they see fit or according to what is beneficial to them as adults. For example, a child may be asked to stay home and look after his younger sibling or nurse a sick parent while the parent is sick, instead of going to school. Lansdown (2005) elicits another example of Ugandan belief about

listening to children. According to Ugandan custom, it is interpreted as disrespecting the family structure and the head of the household if adult authority is questioned.

This notion spreads to schools. In schools, culture tends to supersede rules and regulations and this is also true in many black South African schools. Sargeant (2012) suggests that many teachers continue to see children as unable to contribute positively. Primary schools, in particular, do not usually give learners a platform to give their views on matters that affect them. This is reflected in policy as well. The South African Schools Act (SASA) only considers high school children for participating in matters that affect them. However, it is observed that very often principals in South African schools manipulate the school governing body (SGB) to function while never disagreeing with the principals.

The aim of this study is to elicit participants' perspectives on what impacts their wellbeing and learning at school. Children's voices are not listened to and as a result there are few studies that capture children's voices on matters that affect them. Furthermore (Cortina, et al., 2013) suggest that there are a small number of published studies of children's wellbeing in Southern Africa.

Many policies have addressed the issue of children not being heard. Although policies are in place, there is lack of advocacy in executing what needs to be done in order to include children (Martin, 2012). Martin (2012) points out that the issue around listening to children is not new. He suggests that as early as 1996, the Department of Education Act No. 27 of 1996 states that children should be consulted in the development of school codes of conduct, disciplinary matters, school governance, education policies and family-level education (Martin, 2012).

Also in South Africa, in the Integrated School Health Policy of South Africa, the government has agreed to make children their main focus. It further explains that one of its goals (goal 24) of the Integrated Strategy 2012-2016 is to ensure that the school is a conducive environment for both learners and teachers. The policy further commits to reinstate health programmes in public schools. However, the policy does not give details on how it will deal with emotional well-being.

Messiou (2013) notes that most recently, a concern with students' voices has gradually moved to the centre of educational researchers' attention. Kanyal and Cooper (2010) recommend that children's perspectives on school and learning are important for their wellbeing. This is

evident when one looks at the Universal Foundation's initiative which worked towards the development of a tool that will assess how school impacts on learners' wellbeing (Awartani, Gordon & Whitman, 2008). The toolkit is called Voices of Children. Subsequently, a study was done in Palestine using the Voices of Children toolkit. The study showed that teacher-learner relationship results are the most important influence on learner-wellbeing (Awartani, et al., 2008 and Liberante, 2012).

There are also numerous positive and negative impacts of giving children a voice. The impacts are seen at schools, homes and communities. Children spend most of their time at school. Therefore learning environments have to be healthy. In this case, learning environment does not refer only to cleanliness of the grounds and classrooms but to relationships between peers and educators. Negative psychological impacts at school can be induced by poor relationships with educators, peers and not understanding the learning content (Booth and Sheehan, 2008). Similarly, according to the ecological theory the school is a system and members of a system affect each other's development (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010). Booth and Sheehan (2008), again point out that a conducive school climate is vital for learners' academic achievement. Conducive school considers the well-being of the learner.

It is important to let children express their opinions (Akengin, 2008). Policies that are designed with input from children are likely to be appropriate.

There is also evidence that children notice when they are marginalised and that it affects their well-being. For example, Messiou (2008) reports that children in a study complained that their teacher always demonstrated work of the same pupils because they were doing well in class and they felt that the teacher was unfair to them. Therefore, if children were given opportunities to decide how the process should be done, it would have satisfied everyone and not only those who are seen as high performers by the teacher.

Caregivers and educators should be aware of the fact that when children are listened to, they contribute to developing active citizenship and enhanced self-esteem among children.

The above overview suggests that although there are policies which give children a right to be listened to, they are still not listened to, especially if they are at primary school level. The literature suggests that children's views on matters that affect them can influence policy makers' decisions if they were to listen to children. Most importantly, the above literature

suggests that there is a correlation between learning and wellbeing. Similarly, a study done in Ireland (Roiste de Aingeal, et al., 2011) suggested that there are good relations between school involvement and healthiness and happiness. In this study I will explore primary school learners' perspectives of factors that impact their learning and well-being

1.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The current study wishes to discover primary school learners' perspectives on factors that impact on their learning and well-being at school.

The overarching research question is:

What can we learn about primary school learners' perspectives on their participation in their learning and well-being by listening to them?

These are the sub-questions:

What are learners' perspectives on their participation in learning?

What are learners' perspectives on their learning and well-being?

What do learners believe can be done to facilitate change and impact positively on well-being?

1.3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical overview that this study will draw on is Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. I will also draw on theoretical strands from Erikson's and Piaget's theories of child development. These will be discussed further in chapter two.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 1989, Article 12 on the rights of children was released at the United National Convention of the Right of the Child. Article 12 is about the rights of children. One of the points in the article is that it is children's right for their views to be viewed as important. However, even after the publication of Article 12 on the rights of children, some researchers noticed that

children were still not listened or asked about their experiences even though they were able to talk about their experiences (Daniels, Kalkman & Combs, 2001).

Subsequent research shows that researchers are now interested in engaging with children about their experiences. They also want to understand what children's views are about what affects their learning at school. Similarly, Madeleine, Goetz and Lipnevich (2014) posit that recently there has been a move to study students' experiences in the learning environment, especially with regards to academic emotions, and emotional and social skills. This then implies that children are slowly gaining recognition as active participants in matters that affect their well-being. This is what Atkins (2013) refers to as "research with children" as opposed to "research on children". Research with children is likely to give them some voice.

The school seems to be the ideal departure point for gaining insight into children's perceptions on school since they spend much of their time at school.

Furthermore, Adams (2013) postulates that school plays a role in contributing to the shaping of both childhood and adulthood.

The debate around school contributing towards learners' well-being, either positively or negatively seems to have gained recognition. Some researchers have noted the relationship between participation and well-being of school children. This is notable when it is mentioned that schools that foster supportive relationships between staff and students encourage participation and autonomy in students (Svirydzenka, Bone & Dorga, 2014). They further say that giving children autonomy promotes good mental health. There is strong suggestion that listening to learners and acting on their views, results in a stronger sense of themselves and a positive attitude towards learning (Lyle, Hendley, & Newcomb, 2010).

The above argument in the literature suggests that there is a need for learners' views to be heard. Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggests that it is important to draw on children's insights the world that they experience.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

- To explore how learners understand participation in their learning at school.
- To explore how learners' understand their emotional well-being at school.

- To explore what learners' perspectives are on the factors that impact on their   learning in school.

- To explore what learners' perspectives are on the factors that will enhance their learning and well-being at school.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Research Paradigm

Draper (2004) asserts that qualitative research focuses on individual experiences and the meaning that they have for individuals and societies. By listening during interviews, the researcher is able to analyse the meaning of children's lived experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A paradigm that is relevant to the latter is the constructivist paradigm. The epistemology that underlies the constructivist paradigm suggests that people's construction of their understanding of the truth is grounded on their interaction with their environments. The ontology inherent in constructivism suggests that there are many realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The methods that will be used in this study are based on and are informed by these beliefs.

1.6.2 Research Design

The study used a case study design. According to Mouton (2001) case studies provide a detailed explanation of a lesser small quantity of cases. Similarly, Yin (2009) posits that a case study is relevant when the researcher requires an extensive and "in-depth" description of some social phenomenon.

1.6.3 Sampling

The study used purposive sampling. Grade 7 learners were targeted for this study as they are the ones who have been at a primary school longest and may be better at responding to the questions. Twelve participants, six boys and six girls, were selected to participate in the study.

1.6.4 Methods of data collection

In keeping with the chosen paradigm and approach, drawings and focus group interviews were used to collect data. Interviews are likely to provide a rich description of the phenomena (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The focus group interviews also elicit rich descriptions

and often contribute a composite picture where views in the group may be similar but also contested among group members. This provides depth that may not be provided in individual interviews (Kitzinger, 1995).

In the current study, children were asked to do two drawings in separate boys' and girls' groups: one showing an example of a situation where they felt good at school and one showing an example of a situation where they felt bad at school. The drawings were done first as they are helpful in building rapport with children and acting as a catalyst for discussion in focus groups. Furthermore, Sewell (2011) argues that draw-and-write supports more inclusive and participatory research in that it gives access to a group who may be excluded as a result of their limited verbal skills and vocabulary.

After each group had been done separately, learners were immediately interviewed in focus groups methodologies. The focus groups were audio-recorded and drawings were photographed.

Lastly, classroom observations were done in the three Grade seven classrooms of the school. The researcher wanted to gain a general overview of the learners' participation during tuition.

1.6.5 Data analysis

All focus group interviews were transcribed and data were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is relevant to this study because it can be used to identify and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Further, it reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants (Braun& Clarke, 2006). Using the guidelines suggested by Braun and Clarke, data were coded by reading and rereading for themes that emerged from the data.

1.6.6 Ethical considerations

Following appropriate ethical principles when working with children is important. They should not be harmed in any way and should be treated as equals during the research process. Ethical clearance, number (HS1166/2015), was obtained from the Humanities Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University. Consent to conduct the research in the school was also obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and from the school principal.

The parents of the participants were also asked for their voluntary informed consent for the children to participate in the study. Similarly, the children were asked for their assent. The purpose and procedure of the study was first explained to the parents and the children in a language that they could understand. The researcher is Xhosa speaking, so could explain all the procedures to the participants and their parents in Xhosa.

Confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation were also discussed and that they could withdraw from the research anytime they wished to. Bless, Higson and Kagee (2006) point out that participants should know about their rights to discontinue at any time without being required to give an explanation.

A group of supportive teachers from the school's support team were available for assistance if a need arose for counselling if learners were distressed. The district's educational psychologist was also asked for assistance for more serious concerns, should this be necessary. In the course of the study no concerns that the researcher could not manage immediately, arose.

1.7 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.7.1 Learners' or students' voice

It is when learners' opinions are heard and contribute to formulating policy and contributing to secure provision (Rudd, Colligan & Naik, 2006).

1.7.2 Children's participation

Participation can be defined as children's involvement in decision-making in matters that directly affect them (Lansdown, 2011). This means that adults and children should respect each other's views and have the benefit of their views being considered.

1.7.3 Learning and wellbeing

There are different meanings attached to wellbeing. According to Rudolph, Monson, Collet and Sonn (2008) wellbeing includes physical and emotional health and safety. On the hand, Gough, McGregor and Camfield (2006) associate wellbeing with happiness and a sort of life that is good to lead. Similarly, (White 2009) explains that wellbeing entails satisfaction with life and participation by contributing positively to others' wellbeing. In all, these meanings all point to satisfaction of one by either being happy or contributing to others' happiness.

On the other hand, the Voices of the Children Toolkit define wellbeing as "an ongoing process of realizing one's unique potential through physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual development in relation to oneself, others, and the environment". The latter is the relevant definition for the study.

1.8 THESIS OUTLINE

This study will be subdivided into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study and states the study's aims and objectives, as well as the methodology and methods that are going to be used. In Chapter 2, the literature will be reviewed, and will be outlined. Chapter 3 will explain the research design, methodology and data collection process, followed by Chapter 4 that will provide the analysis and discussion of the research findings and interpretation of themes identified in the study. Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the results and conclusion. It will also discuss limitations and recommendations for future research work.

The next chapter will present literature on children's wellbeing and how it affects their learning and how school activities in the school environment affect learners' wellbeing.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter one provided the background and motivation for this study. It introduced the questions to be addressed in order for the research aim to be met. Furthermore, research design, methodology, research methods and data analysis techniques were briefly introduced. Lastly, ethical considerations were briefly mentioned and concluded with a brief outline of the structure of the chapters.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to gain insight into how primary school learners perceive factors that influence their learning and wellbeing at school. According to Gutman and Feinstein (2008), most children experience wellbeing when they interact with others in their immediate environment like the school. When talking about the school context, the researcher will explore the school climate which includes teachers, peers, teacher-learner relationships, learner-learner relationships, the curriculum, the infrastructure and other factors that may affect or influence the learners' wellbeing at school. This will be done by describing Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework, aspects of Erikson's and Piaget's developmental theories as well as drawing on social constructivism. The frameworks will serve as a lens through which to review important factors that impact children's learning and wellbeing.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory highlights how different levels of a system in the child's social context interact during the process of child development (Donald, et al., 2010). This is acknowledged by Hannaway, Steyn and Hartell (2014) when they state that an individual does not operate in a vacuum, but is surrounded by circumstances, events, timeframes and other phenomena. They further link it to Bronfenbrenner's (1995) hypothesis which states that human development is made up of interaction among processes, person, context and time. This is true when one explores factors that impact the child's learning at school. The school is a context, it also includes people, like teachers and peers and it can also be "time" because it presents a certain stage in the child's development.

Bronfenbrenner identifies four nested systems wherein the child's development happens. These are the:

- Microsystem (such as the family, school or peers)
- Mesosystem (interaction of two Microsystems)
- Macrosystem (includes cultural values, customs and laws)

- Exosystem (social systems which in which the child does not function directly in them)

It is appropriate that the researcher uses the bioecological framework as it explains how each system influences the child in his or her context.

An explanation of each system follows:

2.2.1 Microsystem

According to Berk (2000) the microsystem is the environment closest to the child. This includes the family, parents, teachers at school and peers. These people all have direct interaction with the child and may have an influence in the child's development through their interaction.

In this study active members within the school system, such as teachers, parents and peers were included as they are likely to affect the learners' wellbeing and learning.

2.2.2 Mesosystem

In the mesosystem, microsystems interact continuously and depending on the result of the interaction, the child is either affected negatively or positively (Donald, et al., 2010). The interaction can be between two or more microsystems. For an example, at a school where children bully each other, the victim may report the incident to the teacher and or to the parent. The parent and the teacher may meet to intervene and the perpetrator may be called in during discussions to resolve the problem (see Figure. 2.1).
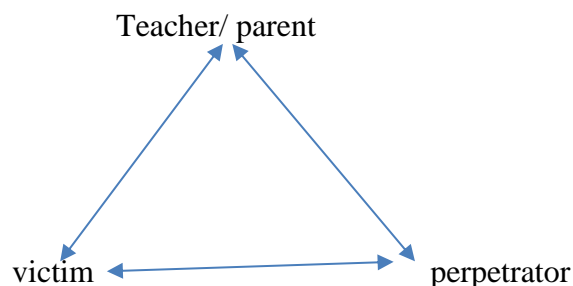
Figure 2.1 An example of microsystems' interaction

2.2.3 Exosystem

Unlike the previously mentioned systems, in the exosystem the child is not directly involved as an active participant (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). However, the child may be influenced by what happens in the settings and the relationships may be negatively affected. Swart and Pettipher (2011) provide an example of a parent who may be stressed by retrenchment and then the relationship at home with the child may be negatively affected. Going back a little to the microsystem, the emotionally affected learner may get solace from the teacher-learner relationship at school.

2.2.4 Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the dominant social and economic structures and the attitude, beliefs, values and ideologies that influence all other social systems (Donald, et al., 2010; Swart & Pettipher, 2011). According to (Donald et al., 2010) cultural values may include obeying authority and respecting senior members of the community. Although learners misbehave these days, culture still plays a primary role in how children and learners behave at school. It is noticeable that learners will agree or not voice their ideas for fear of being seen as disrespectful. For example, the school where the study was done was my previous place of work. Learners were once dissatisfied about a fundraising activity which they felt was done unfairly. Instead of communicating their grievances appropriately, they sang outside the hall implying that they were robbed and that they wanted their money back. This incident showed me that the culture which prescribed obedience to adults all the time, on the other hand denies learners their right to be heard.

In this study, the microsystem will be discussed according to how it affects the child's wellbeing and subsequently how it may affect learning at school. This is evident in many black communities where children are not given a voice or an opportunity to participate in matters that affect them.

If participation and voice is discussed, it is important to consider social constructivism as a theoretical lens in this study. Constructivism posits that an individual makes meaning of his/her world through interaction with other people in their context. I will consider constructivism in relation to learning.

Amineh and Asl's (2015) make a distinction between constructivism and social constructivism. According to them, constructivism describes the way that learners can make sense of the material and also how the materials can be taught effectively. This theory asserts that teachers should consider what learners know and allow them to put it into practice. Viewing the learner, this theory believes that learners make their own meaning to conceptualise knowledge. This takes place when the teacher creates situations in which learners will question their own and each other's assumptions (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

On the other hand social constructivism, according to Amineh and Asl (2015) assumes that understanding, significance, and meaning are developed in coordination with other human beings, constructed through activity. The learners play an active role in constructing knowledge and the teacher encourages the learners' own version of the truth that is influenced by his or her background, culture or knowledge of the world. Similarly, Kugelmass (2001) affirms that classrooms according to this theory address children's physiological, emotional, and intellectual needs through mediated interactions among peers. It also promotes self-regulation and responsibility for individual and group learning. In both theories the learner appears to be an active agent in his or her own learning.

Subsequently, both theories enhance the learners' independence and freedom which are important for wellbeing. Acceptance and self-worth is also evident in such classrooms and thus the learner feels happy and eager to come to school when they are allowed to actively participate in their learning.

Gilbert Christine (2006) reported on a group's report which was tasked to establish a vision of what personalised teaching and learning might look like in 2020. The group came to these conclusions which they agreed that this what parents and learners deserve and what the country needs if it is to meet the global challenges of the twenty first century.

The group further postulated that personalising learning means focusing in a more structured way on each child's learning in order to enhance progress, achievement and participation. One may notice that the latter points are all important for children's wellbeing. The group also indicated that all children and young people have the right to receive support and challenges, tailored to their needs, interests and abilities. However, they mention that this demands commitment from the learners, parents and teachers.

According to the group, reflective schools view 'pupil voice' as far more than establishing a learner council but engaging learners actively in shaping learning and teaching. This is in line with constructivism which has been mentioned earlier. They maintain that this can be done by enhancing learner-learner relationship so that they can support one another with learning problems. They further suggested that teachers can invite learners to contribute when designing their teaching schemes. This notion is in line with learner participation or giving them a voice in matters that matter in their lives according to the UNCRC. According to them assessment should be used as a tool of helping teachers to collect information about learners' achievement in order to adjust teaching to meet learners' needs more fully.

However, it is evident that in some cases learners' voice may be impeded by the teachers' attitudes towards learners. Friedel, Marachi and Midgley (2002) reported that learners who perceived their teachers as embarrassing them or their peers, avoided seeking assistance from those teachers.

Developmental theories also help us understand how children develop into adults. The following short section will discuss child development briefly.

Child development is deemed important for this study for it shows us how children's thoughts, behaviours and learning are shaped by their contexts and interaction with other people. Subsequently, all these systems shape many aspects of cognitive, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual development (Donald et al., 2010).

2.3 CHILD DEVELOPMENT

For the purpose of this study we will consider adolescence when discussing child development. Most researchers have divided adolescence into three developmental periods. These entail: (1) early adolescence (typically ages 10–13); (2) middle adolescence (ages 14–17); and late adolescence (18 until the early twenties), (Smetana, Campione-Barr & Metzger, 2006).

Using Erikson's psychosocial stages of development, it is easy to understand what children are faced with in each stage of development. Erikson delves more into crises a child must negotiate in order to successfully master that stage (Hardman, 2012). Eccles (1999) maintains that in each stage there are basic biological and cognitive changes, and changes in social surroundings where children's daily lives unfold. This statement resonates with Kosher, Ben-

Arieh, Jiang and Huebner (2014) when they assert that children's wellbeing is not static and is generally situated within developmental and ecosystemic conceptual frameworks. For the purpose of this study we consider the school to be the social surrounding. The school is expected to be a social and academic environment which is supposed to allow optimal development for children's social-emotional and academic skills (Kourkoutas, 2012).

Huitt and Hummel (2008) also illustrate Piaget's cognitive developmental theory which states that children actively construct their understanding of the world and go through four stages of cognitive development. These stages are the sensorimotor stage which occurs between birth and two years of age. In this stage children construct an understanding of the world by coordinating sensory experiences. The following stage is the preoperational stage, which lasts from approximately two to seven years of age. In this stage, children add words to their understanding of the world. The third stage is the concrete operational stage which lasts from approximately seven to eleven years of age. In this stage, children can perform operations that involve objects and can reason logically as long as reasoning can be applied to specific concrete examples. The fourth and last stage is the formal operational stage which lasts from eleven to fifteen years of age and continues through adulthood. This is the stage in which the participants of this study are.

According to Ojose (2008) individuals can think abstractly and in more logical terms. As they can think abstractly, they develop images of ideal circumstances. This may suggest that the participants have ideas of how a school should be or know what makes them happy or not at school. However, it should be noted that children may not be in the same stage because of certain factors. Vally (2005) and Berliner (2009) assert that cognitive development can be negatively affected by poverty and poverty may lead to violence and misconduct. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be aware of such factors and approach their lessons in ways that will benefit each learner's potential. This may be especially true in the low-income school where the current study was conducted.

This section has focused on theoretical foci central to the research: ecological approaches, constructivism and some aspects of Erikson and Piaget's theories of development. In the following section, the concept of wellbeing and its different meanings will be discussed.

2.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF WELLBEING

2.4.1 Definition of wellbeing

It is believed that schools may focus too strongly on academics and ignore the importance of essential human wholeness which incorporates emotional health and social wellbeing (Faupel & Sharp, 2003). Given that this study aims to explore learners' perspectives on their wellbeing, it is appropriate to define and explain the concept of "wellbeing".

The definition varies depending on the field and policy area. According to Wagstaff (2011) the concept of wellbeing has evolved over time and it naturally links to multiple notions and points of view. The World Health Organisation (WHO) posits that the concept of wellbeing encompasses the physical, mental and emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of health (Wagstaff, 2011). Furthermore, the WHO in 1946 determined that wellbeing was one of the principles basic to the happiness, harmonious relations and security of all peoples. The WHO's use of the term "happiness" in the previous statement befits this study's participants as young children who may not understand the term "wellbeing". The WHO's definition of health refers to social and psychological wellbeing.

Looking at health and wellbeing deeper, Konu and Rimpela (2002) suggest that the concept of wellbeing has been divided into four categories:

- School condition (having)
- Social relationships (loving)
- Means for self- fulfillment (being), and
- Health status (health)

According to Konu and Rimpela (2002) "being" applied to the school context, can be seen as the way in which the school offers means of self- fulfillment, they further explain that each pupil should be considered an equally important member of the school community. They further postulate that positive learning experiences enhance self-fulfillment.

They state that it should be possible for each learner to participate in decision making affecting his or her schooling and other aspects of school life concerning her or himself. This

resonates with what has been said earlier in giving learners a voice or letting them participate in factors that affect them.

According to Kosher, et al. (2014), wellbeing can be explored from the children's rights perspective which maintains that wellbeing is the realisation of children's rights and the fulfillment of the opportunity for every child to be all she can be in the light of her abilities, skills, and potential. As has been indicated in chapter 1, according to the UNCCR's article 12, children's rights are stipulated and every country has to adhere to them. The article stipulates that schools should consult learners on the day-to-day life of the school, and asks the school to develop learner participation and active citizenship in the school setting and as part of the school's development planning process. These democratic policies sometimes clash with cultural practices in specific countries. Moletsane (2012) shows how different cultures interpret childhood and how they monitor physical maturity. She gives an example where a girl had to start going to school at the age of nine because the family thought she had to develop physically to be able to endure the long walk to and from school. However, the girl had to start doing chores at the age of six, and those included sweeping and chores that increased in difficulty according to age. Someone from another culture may view some chores as adult chores where at eight the girl had to cook, and at nine she had to fetch wood from the bush. If there was a way of monitoring children's rights, some chores would be seen as child abuse and many parents would be penalised. There should be ways in which these rights are not just highlighted in documents but all the relevant people like parents should know about them and the consequences of denying children their freedom to play and to voice their views.

Furthermore, the case above depicts how sometimes children's wellbeing are affected by their immediate contexts. Depending on resilience, especially the girl child's self -esteem may be hampered when being the oldest in a class of young peers.

Furthermore, the above examples may imply that adults view children as passive participators because everything is imposed upon them when they are expected to execute these duties. Hence studies have suggest that children should be seen as active agents who are already contributing to their families and communities (Tisdall & Liebel, 2008).

Wellbeing also has to be understood in relation to individual preferences and opportunities. As such, the same level of commodities and resources do not produce the same level of wellbeing for all individuals (Ben-Ariech & Frones, 2007. This is true when we talk about

unique human beings. Wellbeing also results from the interaction the child has with significant others and the society at large and how they share resources. These factors are not static, and the children's developing capacities enable them to actively contribute to their wellbeing (Bradshaw, Hoelscher & Richardson, 2006).

The different definitions of wellbeing and the way in which contextual factors impact on definitions may suggest that wellbeing has not been clearly defined, especially when it comes to young people (Ben- Arieh, 2006).

2.4.2 Mental health: A state of wellbeing

Mental health is defined as a realisation of one's potential and the ability to handle pressures in order to work effectively. Furthermore, the WHO emphasies that health includes all aspects of one's wellbeing. This may suggest that if all these aspects are catered for and recognized as important, children at school may develop positive mental health. The following paragraph give hope that children are slowly gaining recognition and different stakeholders are becoming aware of how important it is to include children in matters that affect them.

According to Kosher, et al. (2014) children's rights and their wellbeing have gained attention at the same time. They suggest that childhood is a unique period of life which emerged during the 19th century. It came along with attempts to grant protection and provision of rights to children. In the second half of the 20th century, children began to be allowed participation for they were now recognized as legal persons whose rights were equated to adults (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008). They further assert that children should not be seen as their parents' or the state's property but as people who are entitled to the same rights as adults do. The current study explores how the school can allow children to practice their rights as equal active partners in their education.

Similarly, Boyden, Ling and Myers (1998) suggest that there are nine principles that can be applied in different contexts to guide studies of children's wellbeing, whether their purpose is to monitor their experience, explore their understandings, or to track the process that influences their wellbeing across their life course. In summary, these principles suggest that children are offered different rights and opportunities depending on the different perceptions of different cultures and communities or households. In some culture children are exposed to work at an early age. And from these principles it is evident that child work in some societies is regarded as important in strengthening family relations.

The above principles suggest that one should be conscious of the various components and dynamics of wellbeing. Some of the principles also show how Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory plays in child development, especially the microsystem as the family is mentioned in almost all these principles.

2.4.3 Wellbeing at school

Previously, wellbeing has been referred predominantly to physical health. Since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) document, wellbeing also focuses on children's participation in matters that concern them. In addition, ecological theory suggests that we could observe how the different systems influence the child's development. In this study, greater emphasis is placed on the microsystem and the child's immediate environment, which in this case, is the school.

According to Gutman and Feinstein (2008) most children experience wellbeing in primary school. In the same way, the school is regarded as the focal point for elevating children and adolescents' health (Konu & Rimpela, 2002; Yetunde, Aoife, O'Higgins & Gabhainn, 2013). For Pullman, Bruns, Dalyn, and Sander (2013) schools are central and critical locations for youth health and mental health promotion. These statements suggest that because school is where learners spend most of their time there should be measures in place to look after the wellbeing of the learners.

There is some evidence to suggest that factors like children's individual experiences such as bullying, victimization and friendships, and their beliefs about themselves and their environment, affect their wellbeing (Gutman & Feistein, 2008). According to them schools make a difference in children's wellbeing, but it is children's individual experiences within schools which are important. Children's individual interactions with their peers may result in different experiences within the same environment.

In South Africa one of the core strategies of the government-appointed 2020 Review Group for example, actively involves learners as the owners of their own learning. However, it has been found that some teachers see children as dependent on teachers for knowledge. For example, one teacher in Zahorik's (1990) study is quoted saying "I've never met students who could make decisions (about learning) for themselves." The previous quote and the year of the study in which the quote is extracted may compel one to think that the quote was inspired by the Children' Convention that was published the preceding year, 1989 and that the policies in those

articles were not yet practiced. The contrasting quotes may suggest that teachers have been and are still treating learners according to their own beliefs about children. In this quote the teacher indicated that "I'm flexible. I'll go with students' interests, I'll go with current events of interest and trash the curriculum." This also shows that this teacher respects the learners as humans who have their own interests and thus respects them. It may however be important to find a middle ground between the first and the second teacher's views because one cannot reject learners' views on learning. At the same time one cannot throw out all the positive aspects of the curriculum either.

One should consider learners' views in their learning as giving them the respect which Kourkoutas (2012) considers fundamental in order for studying to be meaningful. In the context of well-being and learning, it is important to consider school health in South Africa.

2.5 SCHOOL HEALTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Recent research in South Africa shows that school health concerns the health and wellbeing of approximately 12 million school going children (Shung – King, & Slemming, 2013/2014).

It seems as if South African school health has gone through several changes with the aim of improving the services. It is said that it has started since the 1920s with school feeding scheme and has evolved by including other aspects of health.

In Figure 2.2 is the framework which addresses children's wellbeing through nine key areas of intervention.

Figure 2.2. The care and support for teaching and learning framework for children's wellbeing (sourced from Department of Basic Education, 2012 as adapted from Bray and Moses, 2011).

The above diagram shows what is advocated by school health in South Africa which calls for all schools to become sites for health promotion for learners, educators and the broader school community (Shung-King, Orgill & Slemming, 2014). Likewise, Pullman et al. (2013) assert that school-based supportive programmes such as mental health, family and child support, and mentoring can influence school performance. However, they further indicate that it has been found that school-based mental health programmes have a relatively small effect on academic outcomes. This he discusses in depth by eliciting how learners are marginalized and not recognized as individuals who can be autonomous. When considering children, the latter postulates that wellbeing is no longer only about ordinary health issues but also participation or lack of it.

2.6 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES ON WELLBEING

As this study's aim is to explore primary school learners' perspectives on factors that affect their learning and wellbeing at school, I thought it may be interesting to compare perspectives

of children of different ages in the literature review. In a study done by Coverdale and Long (2015), 15 young people aged between 18 and 24 were interviewed to get their perspectives of wellbeing. The participants identified the school as valuable for promoting, supporting and managing emotional health issues. Their perspective resonates with many researchers who have been mentioned earlier in this study, like, Konu and Rimpela (2002), Askell-Williams and Lawson, (2015) and Gutman and Feinstein, (2008).

According to Coverdale and Long (2015) study participants said that peers and teachers played a vital role in their wellbeing. Views of young people are important for teachers and peers to hear and many researchers argue that teachers should have emotional training on managing children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health. It is in this context that it is important to discuss the development of well-being among children in the context of children's voice.

2.7 CHILDREN'S VOICE AND DEVELOPMENT OF WELLBEING IN CHILDREN

There are great expectations that education systems will take responsibility for the development of the whole person and his or her wellbeing. Due to the perceptions about children's voice, governments are looking at different ways of getting children's views about what affects them.

Young people need to be engaged in meaningful participation and not be marginalised and misrecognized as individuals who can be autonomous (Giroux, 2009). This may suggest that learners are not given opportunities to participate. Participation is an essential element in both children's healthy development towards responsible adulthood and citizenship and their wellbeing (Convention on the Rights of the child, 1989)

De Roiste, Colette, Michal, Gavin and Nic Gabhainn (2012) highlight that children are gaining recognition regarding the fact they can express themselves. They further posit that this change can be due to the Children's Convention's stipulation. In the same breath, it is noted that giving children a voice is not yet popular and Lansdown (2011) states that it is the adults' obligation to consider children's contribution, especially in aspects that affect them.

In South Africa, one such platform that allows learners to participate is the School Governing Body (SGB). The SGB is based on the South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996

(Mncube, 2008).This act is based on the concept that learners are members of the school community and have the right to participate in decision-making processes (Duma, 2014). However, learners are not offered full opportunity to participate in crucial decisions by the adult members of the SGBs.

Bray and Moses (2011) and Lodge (2005) observed that the gap between legislation and reality around children's participation in school governance illustrates the dilemma facing children seeking to influence public spaces which affect them. Bray and Moses (2011) further posit that principals are legally mandated by the South African Schools Act (SASA) no. 84 of 1996 (Government of South Africa, 1996c) to enable secondary school learners to elect representatives onto the School Governing Body (SGB), which governs the management of the school. Due to authoritarian attitudes towards children mentioned earlier, the adults in the SGB often present obstacles related to meeting times and the value and skills ascribed to children by the adults in charge. These actions often prevent learners from participating in meetings (Heystek, 2001). Bentley (2010) also notes that authoritarian practices within SGBs also lessen the democratic commitment of policy reform that encourages participation.

Learners subsequently present their dissatisfaction through protest which is sometimes regarded as violent. This may imply that the other stakeholders on the receiving end do not realise that children reach a certain maturity where they feel unheard or not cared for. It is also expected that the protest is coupled with anger which might affect emotions negatively and thus affect the wellbeing of learners and schools.

Mncube (2008) warns that silencing the voices of learners by school governing bodies contradicts principles of social justice and democracy. These principles maintain that learners or children should be given an opportunity to participate in matters, such as their learning, that concern them. It is therefore important to consider what the literature emphasises as affecting learners' learning.

2.7.1 What affects learners' learning

A number of factors may impact on a learner's learning. These include mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. Teaching related factors such as curriculum and extracurricular activities also impact on learners learning and wellbeing. Similarly learner sense of belonging and levels of violence at schools also impact on learning. These will be discussed briefly.

Mental health

Askell-Williams and Lawson (2015) suggest that 20% of the world's children and adolescents suffer from mental health problems. They also observe that half of mental disorders, including learning difficulties start before the age of 14. Both Australia and United States are reported to have similar problems where children and adolescents were identified as having mental problems. Similarly, South African children from low social economic environments are reported to suffer from psychological distress caused by violence (Mncube & Harber, 2013).

According to Burton and Leoschit (2012), depression and anxiety are the two common contributors to truancy from school. They further argue that depression and anxiety are sometimes caused by violent victimization. This demonstrates how the school as a system where the child resides can have an impact on his/her learning and wellbeing. It is said that the consequences of depression and anxiety directly relate to educational outcomes which may include a noticeable decline in academic performance, a lack of interest in school work, lowered concentration, school drop-out and truancy. Conversely, there is a need to move from focusing on treatment of mental problems to focus on prevention and early intervention (Merikangas, et al., 2010).

Curriculum

Many investigators proposed that school curricula must provide learning experiences that address students' development in the cognitive or academic, emotional, social, and moral domains (Cohen, 2006; Elias, & Arnold, 2006; Weisseberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). However, curriculum may add negative experiences to learners even though teachers mostly do not do it intentionally.

Awartani, Whitman and Gordon (2008) state that teachers who are required to produce good results from learners may ignore the children's wellbeing and focus on ways of producing good test results. They further indicate that the whole process creates nervousness for both teachers and children. They also note that this process of focusing mostly on good academic results induces high stress levels and more negative emotional symptoms.

Severe stress and feelings of hopelessness may be induced by other factors. For example, Faircloth (2009) suggests that learners may bring their own identities, community and cultural

wealth, skills and resources into the classroom. It is envisaged that this situation may also affect the teachers' teaching in the classroom.

Taken together, these statements suggest that there is a relationship between emotions and academic achievement (Zins, et al., 2004). It is important to tap into these experiences by acknowledging learners' participation otherwise students' voices will be silenced and they will be alienated from their educational experience (Faircloth, 2009).

2.7.2 Sense of belonging

According to Faircloth (2009) adolescents' sense of belonging within the school settings allows them to be motivated. Theory and research suggest that positive school affect which is due to "belonging" supports students' motivation, engagement and achievement (Faircloth, 2009).

Importantly, many psychological theories suggest that human behaviour and motivation are enhanced when basic needs are met. Thus, as mentioned earlier, in education "belonging" is imperative in order for learners to feel motivated and accepted. To endorse this point, the circle of courage theory developed by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Bockern (2005) claims that unfriendly schools and rejecting peers can contribute to a sense of alienation in children. This again reveals that belonging is important to all levels of education and not only to young learners. Research has shown that children who feel alienated at school are likely to drop out.

Given these observations, Faircloth (2009) suggests that identity is an opportunity to establish trusting connections where one feels appreciated. She argues that identity is not only a general social interaction but also about engagement in classroom activities. She introduces the identity of the "outsider" where there are low levels of engagement. According to her, this is when other learners' cultures are not considered when lessons are presented in class. A typical South African example is representations of Santa Claus and a sleigh in snow in readings done in black schools where I worked. These images are often something unheard of to many learners yet they have to develop mental pictures of phenomena that they have little idea about. These everyday practices have changed since the introduction of inclusive education which aims to include every learner and consider their different cultures.

From the above one can deduce that learners feel connected to class when they participate in activities that allow them to express their feelings and beliefs.

According to the above discussion, belonging or acceptance by peers appears to be important to learners. Likewise, acceptance by teachers is also an important factor to children (Friedel, Marachi & Midgley, 2002). They further suggest that support from teachers establishes a sense of trust and acceptance between students and teachers. This may propose that a positive relationship between learners and peers and between learners and teachers is an important factor for learners' wellbeing at school. This is echoed by Hughes and Chen (2011) when they speculate that supportive relationships between teachers and learners promote a sense of belonging and encourages cooperative classroom participation.

2.7.3 Violence

School violence is said to be one of the factors that affect wellbeing negatively (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). For example, the Human Rights Commission of South Africa report that the environment and climate necessary for effective teaching and learning is increasingly undermined by school-based violence. Furthermore, depression and fatigue are mentioned as those factors that result from learners being exposed to violence. According to Burton and Leoschut (2012) truancy from school is the result of these factors as learners avoid the school environment in an attempt to avoid the violence.

Violent victimization impacts negatively on the schooling experience resulting in difficulties concentrating at school, absenteeism and poor school performance.

There is evidence that children and youth who are subjected to violence are at increased likelihood of experiencing depression, social isolation and loneliness, anxiety and depression (Murris, 2012). Such violence includes corporal punishment and bullying. Murris further suggests that corporal punishment increases fear and shortened attention span which results in academic underachievement. However, Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara and Kernic (2005) in their study could not ascertain whether low achievement was the consequence of or preceded victimisation from bullying.

Teachers are often central to violence experienced by children at school. The worst violence reported by learners is that of psychological abuse from teachers (Awartani, Whitman & Gordon, 2008). This is contrary to what teachers are supposed to represent to learners. On the other hand it is noted that learners can behave unacceptably towards teachers too (De Witt & Lessing 2013; Marais & Meier, 2010). However, Vally (2005) argues that learners sometimes bring emotions from home to school. Vally (2005) further mentions that learners may come

from homes where there is poverty and marital turmoil which they express by misbehaving. Teachers are therefore urged to uncover the reasons for misbehaving because punishment is not a solution. Again, this relates to Bronfenbrenner's microsystem which states that the child's immediate environment influences the child.

Spilt, Koomen and Thijs (2011) add another factor to consider when exploring learners' misbehaviour. They assert that the relationship between teachers and learners is reciprocal and that learners' misbehaviour may affect teachers' wellbeing, in turn influencing their ability to form personal relationships with children.

2.7.4 Teacher-learner relationships

There is an assumption that education is likely to be more successful when the teacher knows about children's everyday lives (Phelps, Graham, Ha Thi Tuyet & Geeves, 2014). Hughes and Chen (2011) further assert that reciprocal effects of student-teacher and student peer relatedness have effects on academic self- efficacy. This is also echoed by Watson, Emery and Bayliss (2012) but they add that the relationship does not only impact academic progress but also social and emotional adjustment. They further posit that teacher-learner relationships seem to be critical in enabling children to feel playful while learning. One of the ways in which teachers may do this is to use age appropriate playful language as a way of engaging playfully with children and achieving meaningful problem-solving together.

A positive school climate is not only promoted by academic content and implementation of the curriculum but by every activity that involves the learner. This point brings us to extra-curricular activities. These extra-curricular activities form a very important aspect in school life (Shulruf, 2010. Shulruf (2010) further suggests that research shows that there is a positive relationship between participation in extra-curriculum activities and academic achievement.

It appears that extra-curricular activities are beneficial for learners' overall development. Research has shown that participating in extra-curricular activities positively affects scholastic performance, psychological state, interpersonal relationships and behaviours (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005 Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Shulruf, 2010).

Gould and Carson (2008) posit that sport develops life skills which in turn lead to positive outcomes like health and fitness, school achievement, psychosocial and emotional attributes.

Similarly, Stead and Nevill (2010) maintain that participation in sport enhances classroom behaviour. Tredeau and Shephard (2010) also emphasise that physical education has psychological and social benefits. However, it can be noted that there are factors within school environments that result in sport not being offered at certain schools. Harber and Muthukrishna (2000) endorse this view when they argue that massive racial inequalities in South Africa has left the majority of schools poorly resourced and therefore not able to have resources for sport.

Given the above research on learners' wellbeing and learning, it is important to consider interventions that focus on listening to children and associated interventions.

2.8 INTERVENTIONS THAT PROMOTE WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS

From the literature above, giving learners a voice or letting them participate in matters that affect them, may be one strategy to prevent challenges to well-being in the school context. There is evidence that some countries have begun to look at preventing mental health problems. According to Askell-Williams and Lawson (2015), the United Kingdom Department of Education promoted a National Strategy to develop student wellbeing and positive mental health through school-based programmes**.**

In short it is clear schools are central in the lives of youths and families. And, as such mental health promotion activities in schools can make a positive difference. This resonates with Gutman and Feinstein (2008)'s earlier statement that most children experience wellbeing in primary school. Between the ages of 8 to 10 years, there is an overall increase in levels of wellbeing. This therefore means that the school is the best place to prevent mental health problems. Having said that, following are factors which illustrate how the school can successfully prevent mental health problems and promote wellbeing of the learners. School climate has been highlighted as imperative in enhancing positive wellbeing of learners. According to Cohen (2006) school climate refers to the quality and character of school life. Similarly, it is suggested that three factors play a role in academic achievement (Van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, Swanepoel & Coetsee, 2005). For the purpose of this study I will mention two. The first includes the teaching process in the classroom and the class size. The second one includes learners' experience with the teaching or learning, their motivation, abilities, emotional aspects in the classroom and relations with peers. This is echoed by

Creemers and Kyriadikes' (2009) longitudinal study on learning as a dynamic process which revealed that factors in the school context have an effect on learner achievement.

Askell-Williams and Lawson (2015) point out that KidsMatter identifies components for active school-based intervention, that entails schools that are conducive for teaching and learning, catering for the learners social and emotional development, including parents by equipping them with parenting skills and support and make means to give support early to students who are struggling academically and emotionally. However, in designing programmes of intervention, health promotion initiatives by students and taking students views into consideration, are often missing. This is contrary to the UNCRC which states that children have a right to be heard in matters that affect them, meaning that they should be part of the decisions. The latter suggests that student voice and wellbeing are not mutually exclusive.

It is imperative to explore enhancing health promotion initiatives. This can be done by removing barriers like mental health, stress, poor vision and unsafe neighborhood and by thus empowering students and families to take active collaborative roles in education (Pullman, et al., 2013). However, Askell-Williams and Lawson (2015), caution that students should not be decision-makers in the same way as principals and teachers but that their perspectives should be considered as the intervention is for them. Furthermore, policy makers and educators can be advised if the researchers are better informed by listening to children's perspectives. Holfve-Sabel (2014) suggests that children as young as six are capable of expressing their attitudes towards school, teachers, peers and their wellbeing. This emphasizes the fact that children should not be left behind when decisions are made about them.

2.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has focused on theoretical approaches to wellbeing and learning as well as focusing on literature that highlights definitions of wellbeing as well as factors that affect learning and wellbeing, in addition to considering interventions that promote well-being in schools and that will enhance learning.

In Chapter 3 I will discuss the research method and design. It will also touch on ethical requirements that the researcher adhered to during the study.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research was to explore primary school learners' perspectives on factors that affect their learning and wellbeing at school. This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology that was chosen for this study. This will be guided by an overarching question and secondary research questions. The questions are as follows:

Overarching question:

What can we learn about primary school learners' perspectives on their participation in their learning and well-being by listening to them?

These are the sub-questions:

What are learners' perspectives on their learning and well-being?

What are learners' perspectives on their learning and well-being?

What do learners believe can be done to facilitate change and impact positively on well-being?

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a case study design. A case study design seemed appropriate for this study as it was done at a certain school with only twelve participants. Zainal (2007) suggests that a case study design enables a researcher focus a certain context and by thus enabling the researcher to closely examine the data. Braun and Clarke (2013) sum the above up by explaining that research design refers primarily to the goals of the study, research question that will guide the researcher, the theoretical framework, ethics and methods that will be used to collect and analyse data. Furthermore, Sapsford and Jupp (2006) indicate that the major concern in research design is with validity. This means that the design of the research should provide credible conclusions. So, this means that methods and methodology used in the research should be appropriate for the research question in order to be able to answer it sufficiently. These are core issues that will be discussed in this chapter as well as situating it in the context of the current study

.

3.3 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Denzin and Lincoln (2013) define a paradigm as a set of beliefs that guide action and are human constructions. Looking at paradigms further, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) explain that a paradigm has three dimensions, namely, epistemology, ontology and methodology. According to them, epistemology refers to the relationship between the researcher and his or her own knowledge. Ontology refers to how reality addresses how we come to know the reality and methodology helps the researcher decide how to go about studying what she or he wants to know.

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) assert that there are three paradigms, interpretive, constructivist or critical and the positivist paradigm. The research paradigm that informed my study is the interpretive research paradigm. Much qualitative research is based on a relativist constructivist ontology that posits that there is no objective reality but multiple realities constructed by human beings. The research will use the interpretive paradigm as the researcher would like to gain access to the meaning that well-being and learning holds for a group of primary school learners. This particular study was interested in the different meanings that the participants had about their school. The use of focus groups seemed to have allowed that opportunity when participants differed and sometimes agreed on certain issues.

Denzin and Lincoln's (2013) description of how participants relate in this type of research correlates with what I have observed during this study. They assert that intersubjective agreement and reasoning among actors, is reached through dialogue, shared conversation and construction. The researcher is also seen as a co-constructor of knowledge, of understanding and interpretation of the meaning of lived experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Similarly, Terre Blanche et al. (2009) suggest that interpretive approaches aim to explain the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social action.

3.4 METHODOLOGY

Alasuutari, Bickman and Brannen (2008) assert that qualitative research is part of a debate, not a fixed truth. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest that qualitative research has

no definite definition but rather a set of complex interpretive practices. Draper (2004) echoes the same by saying that qualitative research can be broadly described as interpretive and naturalistic, in that it seeks to understand and explain beliefs and behaviours within the context that they occur. It is assumed that meaning in qualitative research is embedded in people's experiences and that meaning is mediated through the investigator's own perception (Merriam, 1998). Thus, by using qualitative research methods one can witness the experiences of the participants as they happen in their contexts.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) postulate that qualitative research has a set of practices that make the world visible. They further posit that these practices include field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs and recordings. Similarly, Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) maintain that qualitative research data are collected in the form of written or spoken language, or in the form of observations that are recorded in language, and data is analysed by identifying and categorising themes.

This study used interviews, drawings and observations. I agree with Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) when they say that this makes the world visible because after I used all these methods, I gained some insight into the participants' school worlds. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe this as capturing the individual's point of view. The study was conducted in the participants' natural setting and it helped me, the researcher, to be able to observe how the participants make sense of their surroundings through their responses and their drawings (Berg, 2009). Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) definition also resonates with this study, they assert that analysing and interpreting texts and interviews are used in order to discover meaningful patterns of a particular phenomenon. Patterns or themes emerged from the research but specifically from each participant's subjective meaning and conceptualisation of their wellbeing and learning at school.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

3.5.1 Sampling and site selection

The site for the study is a primary school in the Philippi area in the Western Cape. This area is a low-income community. There are three Grade seven classes at the school and from each class four learners participated.

From the outside, the front of the school looks neat with a flower garden which looks well cared for. The outside walls have murals which depict water saving strategies and the car park is tarred and neat. Where one would assume there should be a sports field, the ground is uneven with pebbles and stones yet children play soccer there unmonitored.

After break one notices litter on the school grounds and next to the classrooms. The caretakers and cleaners usually start collecting the litter after break. The fence at the back of the school is broken at the bottom and the caretakers have to watch that learners do not leave the school through the fence holes during and at the end of the school day.

Emmel (2013) argues that sampling refers to defining the population from which a sample will be drawn and to ensuring that every person from a sample has the chance of inclusion. This is what the researcher did when noticing that some participants were quiet. They were asked to contribute but in a polite manner which was not coercive. The researcher purposefully chose to work with Grade seven learners as they have some experience at the specific school.

3.5.1.1 Purposeful sampling

According to Patton (1990) the purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases that will illuminate the questions under study. This resonates with what Kumar (2011) suggests. He suggests that participants are purposely selected because they can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. He further asserts that the researcher goes to people who according to the researcher's opinion are likely to have the required information and are willing to share it with the researcher. Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2013) affirm this notion by suggesting that the participants would have an experience to be able to engage in the study from a place of knowing.

Neuman (2011) also notes that purposive sampling is a valuable type for special situations and the researcher selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. For this study, the purpose is to explore primary school learners' perspectives on factors that affect their learning and wellbeing at school. From Neuman's (2011) stance of cases it will be appropriate to define a case or a case study briefly. For the purpose of the study, Grade seven learners who started at the school from Grade one were the ones who could participate. They were chosen because they would give account of their experiences at the school regarding whether they have been

given a voice or not over the years. Their responses will be taken as valid for they will not have had another school experience except for the one they are at.

3.5.1.2 Case study

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert that a case may be simple or complex and it can be a child or a classroom. They further indicate that the important thing in a case study is the case not the methods. Swanborn (2010) notices this when stating that a case study is a study of a social phenomenon meaning that the size is not important but what is important is the case as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) previously indicated.

Swanborn (2010) states that in a case study several data sources are used to enhance the data. Yin (2009) further postulates that the use of multiple sources allows triangulation of findings which Yin regards as a major strength of the case study design.

The case study of this study consisted of twelve participants. The 12 participants included six boys and six girls. The number seemed appropriate as Emmel (2013) notes that qualitative samples are invariably small because in collecting in depth information, produces extensive amounts of data. The reason behind choosing six girls and six boys was drawn from Kitzinger's (1995) argument that most researchers recommend aiming for homogeneity within each group in order to capitalise on people's shared experiences. In this study this was done by having interviews with the boys alone and then with the girls alone.

3.5.2 Generating data

Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue that qualitative research relies on four methods for gathering information. According to them the four methods are participating in the setting, observing directly, interviewing in depth and analysing documents and material culture. They also posit that these form the core of the inquiry. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) agree with the former when they argue that qualitative research uses multiple methods. In so doing, they reflect an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The current research used all the aforementioned methods and they will be discussed in depth.

Using more than one method for data gathering is called triangulation (Kennedy, 2009). Kennedy further notes that triangulation is about deepening and widening one's

understanding. This resonates with qualitative research which emphasises vigour and rich data. In the current study multiple methods were used. These were drawings, focus group and individual interviews, as well as observation. These will be discussed below.

3.5.2.1 Draw and Tell

The draw and tell technique is regarded as a creative research method that is widely used in research with children where a range of social and health-related subjects are explored (Angell, Alexander & Hunt, 2015). They further posit that the technique is used for its simplicity and easy availability of resources. As the study was done with children, it is always cautioned that children should feel comfortable and free. From that notion, Angell, et al. (2015) support the statement when they say that drawings provide children with a choice for imparting information in ways that might be familiar to them thus establishing rapport. As noted earlier, when researchers plead that children should be involved or allowed to participate in matters that concern them, this technique assists in the call to allow participants to talk about their drawings. It also prevents the researcher from interpreting drawings on her own without the children's comments. Ellis (2006) suggests that drawings provide a natural and coherent way which allows the researcher an opportunity of expressing sincere interest in the child's response. In this case the participants were given an opportunity to interpret their own drawings during the interviews. It is further noticed that the value of the interview relationship will depend on the child's perception of the researcher's unpretentious interest in him or her.

Sewell (2011), reaffirmed the value of drawings in his study on bullying. He concluded that this technique is used to capture participant voice in educational settings and to elicit bullying. However, the choice to use the technique was not specifically to elicit bullying but bullying emerged as a theme from the data.

Having discussed the draw and tell technique, the technique seemed appropriate for the study. The participants had to first draw a picture which depicts them doing something fun at school or something that interest them. The second picture was about something that they did not like. After the drawings were done each participant was interviewed about each picture and the interviews were recorded.

The drawings allowed the participants to talk about their perceptions of the school. According to Hinds (2000) non-verbal cues are also important to observe during interviews. As the participants were chosen according to their years spent at the school, the interviews allowed them to reflect on their experiences and in turn the process encouraged interaction with the researcher (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006).

Interviews are a better way of getting the participants' experiences because they help the researcher to get information on the experiences that cannot be observed like thoughts, feelings and intentions (Patton, 2002).

Denzin and Lincoln (2013) argue that both quantitative and qualitative researchers are interested in the participants' point of view. According to them there is a difference between the two approaches to researchers. The qualitative researcher thinks that he or she can get close to the participant's perspective by detailed interviewing and observation. And the quantitative researcher does not interact closely with the participant but is interested in comparing the numbers of different responses. This study was interested in the former that is interacting with the participants by interviewing them. Denscombe (2007) focuses on the use of open-ended questions, allowing interviewees to use their own words and develop their own thought. It was interesting to watch participants engage in the interviews and voicing their concerns and what they thought could be solutions to some of their concerns. Therefore I agree with Denscombe's (2007) statement. Patton (2002) suggests that the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is on someone else's mind. Similarly, Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) posit that interviews give the researcher an opportunity to get to know the people quite intimately, so that we can really understand how they feel and think.

What I think is also important is that interviewing is a natural form of interacting with people than making them complete questionnaires (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006). Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) and Barbour (2007) argue that using individual interviews allows the researcher to obtain in-depth information from participants.

3.5.2.2 Focus Group Interview

In qualitative research, focus groups are perceived as a method that saves costs and time (Liamputtong, 2011). Braun and Clarke (2013) echo the same idea by stating that data are

collected from many participants at the same time. Kitzinger (1995) further indicates that a focus group is a form of a group interview that capitalises on communication between the research participants in order to generate data. Kitzinger further notes that the researcher does not ask one person to respond but people are encouraged to talk to one another. This is done while the researcher takes a less active role in directing the talk (Barbour, 2008). This is how it was done in this study and it was interesting to see how the participants disagreed on some points.

According to the department of health and human services evaluation brief (2013) a focus group is a group interview of approximtely six to twelve peolple who share similar characteristics or common interests. In this study focus groups were constituted as either girls or boys who were 11-13 years old and who attended the same school and were done after the draw and tell activity.

3.5.2.3 Classroom Observations

According to Kumar (2011) observation is a purposeful, orderly and careful way of observing and listening to an occurrence as it happens. Similarly, in this study the purpose of observing lessons was to find out if learners are given opportunities to engage or participate in a lesson and other activities that concern their learning at the school. Kumar (2011) further asserts that there are two types of observations, participant and non-participant observation. The researcher chose the non-participant observation for she did not participate in the activities of the lessons but remained an observer. However, Kumar cautions that the researcher should note that when individuals or a group becomes aware that they are being observed, they may change their behaviour and depending upon the situation, this change could be positive or negative.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) assert that observation is the fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry. Observation entails the systemic noting and recording of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Classroom studies are one example of observation, often found in education, in which the researcher documents and describes actions and interactions that are complex. They further posit that observation is used in in-depth interviews, where the researcher notes the interviewee's body language and effect in addition to her words. In this study, the

participants were observed during a lesson in the classroom. The researcher explored if the participants are given an opportunity to participate during a lesson or not.

Recording of the observations was done by using narrative and descriptive notes common in qualitative research (Kumar, 2011).

3.6 DATA MANAGEMENT

3.6.1 Recording and transcribing

Interviews as one of the methods of data collecting, were audio recorded. Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) observe that recording interviews allows the researcher to keep full record of the interview without having to be distracted by detailed note-taking. They further suggest that the interview shows the interviewee that prefer to focus on their views with full attention.

After the data was collected the researcher transcribed the interviews in order to study the transcripts.

3.6.2 Data analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011) data analysis and interpretation in a qualitative research design seek to explore and describe relations and underlying themes in the data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data. Thematic analysis is a sense making approach and it is a tactic for reducing and managing large volumes of data, organising and summarising, and for focusing the interpretation (Sparker, 2005).

The researcher had to immerse herself in the data in order to be familiar with it (Kawulich, 2004). I did this by listening to the recordings repeatedly and transcribing it in order to identify themes.

Patton (2002) argues that there are no formulas or clear-cut rules in directing the performance of a credible and high quality analysis. She posits that the researcher has to make his or her best to make sense of things. Furthermore, a number of researchers appear to agree that data analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kawulich, 2004).

Comparing content analysis and thematic analysis, it is argued that thematic analysis is often seen as a poorly branded method in that it does not appear to exist as a named method of

analysis (Vasmoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013).Contrary to the previous view, Braun and Clarke (2006) maintain that thematic analysis has a guide for analysing data. This is shown in Table 3.1.

This method of data analysis that included generating initial codes, defining and naming themes was used in this study. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is a qualitative analytical method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data. They further explain that this helps to organise and describe the data set in detail. In this phase the researcher finds association between themes with a view to providing explanation for the findings (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000).

The following is the summary of Braun and Clarke's (2006) which guided me when I did this study.

The first phase is when the researcher transcribes, reads and re-reads the data and by thus becoming familiar with it. From that the researcher can generate codes. These codes are then collated to form themes. The researcher reviews the themes checking if they correlate with the codes. Extract examples are compared with the research question and the literature. Finally, a report is produced from this process.

3.7 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Findings in a study have to be of quality and trustworthy. Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that credibility does not just happen, it is something that has to be worked towards.

There are certain aspects of the research that have to be checked to assess its quality. Earlier in the research design section it was emphasised how important it was to have a framework of the study before starting collecting data. Within the framework the researcher has to make sure that the research will be valid even before one starts the research. The following factors such as credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability are central to discussions on validity in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

3.7.1 Credibility

Brown (2005) states that credibility requires demonstrating, in one or more ways, that the research was designed to maximise the accuracy of identifying and describing whatever is

being studied. According to Brown (2005) this can be enhanced by using one or more strategies like triangulation. Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) posit that triangulation involves using multiple researchers to interpret the data in order to minimise and understand any differences the researcher may have. Triangulation in this study was done by using different methods of collecting data such as drawings, interviews and observations.

Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) indicate that the credibility of a qualitative research is also established while the research is being undertaken.

3.7.2 Transferability

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008) transferability or generalisability (Durrheim, et al., 2006) relate to the extent to which the interpretive account can be applied to the other contexts than the one researched. Brown (2005) maintains that transferability can be enhanced by providing what is often referred to as thick description. One would agree with that because if another researcher is to use or compare the findings of your research, the information should be rich and in depth and make sense.

The aim of qualitative research is not to extend or generalise but to give insight into a specific case, unlike in quantitative research where the aim is to generalise.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability or what Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) refer to as reliability is the degree to which the results are repeatable. According to Brown (2005) dependability involves being able to account for all the changing conditions in any study that is being done and changes that were made to get a clear understanding of the context being studied. Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) support this notion when they note that it should be expected that individuals may behave differently and express different opinions in changing contexts.

Brown further asserts that dependability can be enhanced by using methodological triangulation like multiple data gathering procedures. This study has used drawings, interviews and observations. In summary, dependability is concerned with whether the results of a study are consistent with the data collated. This suggests that it is crucial to select appropriate data collecting procedures and also as Patton (2002) suggests that methods and measurement choices affect the credibility of findings.

3.7.4 Conformability

According to Brown (2005) conformability or reflexibility entails full revelation of the data upon which all interpretations are based, or at least the availability of the data for inspection. In other words, the reader of the research report should be able to examine the data to confirm the results. In this study, this was done by having verbatim transcripts of the interviews. In this way by allowing for external scrutiny, the research avoids bias.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers have to comply with relevant legislation in order for participants to be protected (Allan, 2008). The Health Professions Council of South Africa has also stipulated regulations which are to guide researchers before they start conducting research. According to Silverman (2010) ethics in research are necessary and important. The consideration of ethics starts with ethical clearance from the supervising institution. The current study's institution is Stellenbosch University whose ethics committee granted clearance to conduct the study.

Furthermore, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) claim that there are three ethical principles that should guide all research, namely: autonomy, no maleficence and beneficence.

3.8.1 Autonomy

This principle requires the researcher to respect the autonomy of the participant. Neuman (2011) further explains that a fundamental ethical principle is never to coerce anyone into participating but all research participation must be voluntary. Each participant has a right to autonomy, meaning that they have the right to know everything about the procedure of the research and what is being researched (Neuman, 2011). This is done so that the participants can make informed decisions on their possible involvement (Silverman, 2010).

In the current study, each participant was given information about the research question and how research was going to be done. They were also told that each participant had a right to choose whether to participate or not and also that they could withdraw from the study any time they wished to. They were also informed about their rights not to answer questions they did not wish to answer.

3.8.2 Confidentiality

Neuman (2011) argues that confidentiality should be protected even if anonymity is not possible. By this Neuman means that names may be attached to the information but the information should be held in confidence and kept secret from the public. Similarly, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) ethics guidelines insist that participants' identities and the research locations should be safeguarded. Silverman (2010) affirms that information supplied by participants must be respected. This requires that the researcher ensures that research data and its sources remains confidential unless participants have consented to their disclosure. The participants in this study were told that pseudonyms were going to be used and that the names in the drawings were going to be blocked out so as not to disclose their identities.

Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) confirm that confidentiality should be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure. They further assert that the source of harm is the disclosure of the participants' private knowledge which is considered damaging.

3.8.3 Non maleficence

Allan (2008) defines maleficence as the duty not to harm people or to minimise harm when it is unavoidable. Similarly, Silverman (2010) stresses that harm to participants should be avoided. This means that research should be conducted in such a way that it minimizes harm or risk to participants. He further states that participants' wellbeing and interests should not be damaged as a result of their participation in the research.

The participants were assured that the results of the study would be shared with the staff of the school, but that names of specific learners who disclosed specific information would not be made public.

3.8.4 Beneficence

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) argue that beneficence is the second ethical principle that is closely linked to research. Beneficence means doing good for others and preventing harm. This resonates with Denzin and Lincoln's (2011) argument that wellbeing of the participants should be secured by avoiding anticipated harm as much as possible. They further maintain that for researchers to maintain the principle of beneficence, they should oversee the potential consequences of revealing participants' identities. As mentioned in the above section on

nonmaleficence, the participants' names were erased from their drawings and pseudonyms were used in this study.

3.8.5 Informed consent

Children are regarded as vulnerable for they are young and they may be easily manipulated by adults. They often view adults as authority figures. Therefore I had to take cognisance of that fact as I communicated their rights to withdraw at any time.

Hardman (2012) asserts that it is the researcher's primary duty to protect the participant's welfare. Ethics therefore protect the child from manipulation and harm. Informed consent is another ethical principle which relates to giving the participants sufficient information about the research (Hardman, 2012). Similarly, Terre Blanche, et al. (2006) argue that informed consent entails informing the participant about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the danger, as well of possible risks and benefits from participation the research project.

It further involves obtaining voluntary participation in of the people involved, and to inform them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time they wish to (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Willig & Stainton, 2008). Silverman (2010) further posits that the information should be in a written form and signed off by the participants and that the primary objective is to conduct research openly and without deception. However, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) argue that obtaining consent from a participant is not merely the signing of a consent form. As the participants of the study are children, it was important to communicate all the information in a language that they understand and not use jargon.

The participants were also given assent forms. The researcher read the form together with the participants and they were asked to sign them if they agreed with the information.

3.8.6 Anonymity

Neuman (2011) asserts that anonymity protects the identity of specific individuals from being known. That is achieved by people remaining anonymous, or nameless. Neuman (2011) further posits that even if anonymity is not possible, confidentiality should be protected. It is said that the names may be attached to the information but hold the information in confidence or keep it secret from the public. Neuman further highlights the fact that researchers should never release information in a way that permits linking certain individuals to it.

3.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter described the research design and methodology of the study. The research design was planned in order to allow the researcher to get rich in-depth data from the study.

Reliability and validity of the study was also discussed by eliciting the steps that the researcher followed according to its transferability, credibility, conformability and dependability. Triangulation was suggested as also important to see to it that the findings of the study were reliable. The different methods used for data collection made it possible that the researchers' findings were likely to be considered.

The researcher also discussed the ethical considerations of the study. The following chapter will discuss the findings of the study by tabulating the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 the core research question was stated as:

What can we learn about primary school learners' perspectives on their participation in their learning and wellbeing by listening to them?

This chapter presents and discusses themes and processes that emerged during data collection and analysis. Themes emerged from the participants' responses from the focus groups and individual interviews, drawings and observations. I will also discuss some aspects of the focus group process that were important for the study.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The participants consisted of 12 grade 7 learners. There were 6 girls and 6 boys. Table 4.1 indicates the pseudonyms assigned to learners during the data gathering methods of drawings, individual interviews and focus groups.

To protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms will be used. In some instances <> will be used as identifiers instead of teachers' names that were used by participants. Participants were constantly reminded not to use names. This was to ensure that they were comfortable in saying whatever they wanted to say.

Table 4.1

Pseudonyms Assigned to Participants of the Focus Group, Individual Interviews and the Drawings

PARTICIPANT	AGE	GENDER
Phumza	13	Female
Nomsa	13	Female
Phumla	13	Female
Nomzamo	13	Female
Nancy	13	Female
Themba	12	Male
Sipho	13	Male
Zola	13	Male
Trevor	12	Male
Lolo	12	Male
Thuli	13	Female
Zethu	12	Male

4.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section will present the themes that were identified. The themes include those that emerged from interviews, observations and drawings. The themes will also be presented according to the research sub-questions posed. They give insight into what the participants view as an ideal school situation and what makes them happy and unhappy, contributing to their wellbeing and learning at school. It also provides insight into their views on their learning at school. Even though there are clear themes, the group interviews elicited some disagreements at times. This will be highlighted during the course of the discussions. The findings from data will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The sub-question "what are learners' perspectives on their wellbeing" elicited responses that showed factors that contribute to learners' wellbeing and learning at school. The sub-question also showed factors that detract from learners' wellbeing and learning at school.

In this section I will describe the learners' views of enabling and constraining factors in their experience of wellbeing at school. In the first section I will discuss enabling factors

4.3.1. Learners' perspectives on factors that enable their wellbeing at school

4.3.1.1 Enabling Factors

Learners identified a number of enabling factors. These included extra-curricular activities like singing, drama, and sports. I will describe each one of these in turn.

4.3.1.2 Extra-mural activities

According to the participants, the only extra mural activities they have at their school are music and sport. It was also notable that music is not done continuously but only on certain occasions, like when the school has visitors or when they have to do it for a Creative Arts lessons for marks. Traditional dance is usually also done on those occasions. They also indicated that sport has just been introduced because they used to play on their own during breaks with their own balls without being coached or trained.

The extra-mural activities seemed to bring out a sense of pride among the participants when given responsibility of leadership roles. It appeared that learners were given these opportunities specifically in sport and singing activities. In the discussion that follows, I will illustrate these findings in a detailed analysis.

4.3.1.2.1 Cultural activities

Responses to the first sub-question indicated that the participants like cultural activities. It was apparent that taking part in cultural activities brought pride associated with being given responsibility of leadership.

Even though there were some extra-mural activities, participants suggested that they would like the school to consider other extra-mural activities too. There was consensus among them that there were very limited extra-mural activities. To some of them it meant that they are in no position to represent their school in school competitions:

The following extracts focus on extra-murals:

> I would like us to dance and act on some days (Nomsa, focus group)

Is that something you do sometimes here at school? (Researcher)

[Yinto eniyenzayo ngamanye amaxesha apha esikolweni?]

No Miss, it is not done and I would like it to happen....you see Miss, maybe we can act on Mondays and then dance on Wednesdays....something like that Miss (Nomsa, focus group).

[No Miss ayikabikho and ndingathanda yenziwe....uyabona Miss, mhlawmbi kuthiwe siya act-a Mondays and then sidense ngoLwezithathu....into enjalo Miss]

Would that make you happy? (Researcher)

[Ingakonwabisa loo nto?]

Nomsa: Ewe, kakhulu Miss.

Yes, a lot Miss (Nomsa, 13, female, focus group)

Phumla shared the same sentiment of loving drama as Nomsa. This is how she depicted it in the drawings:
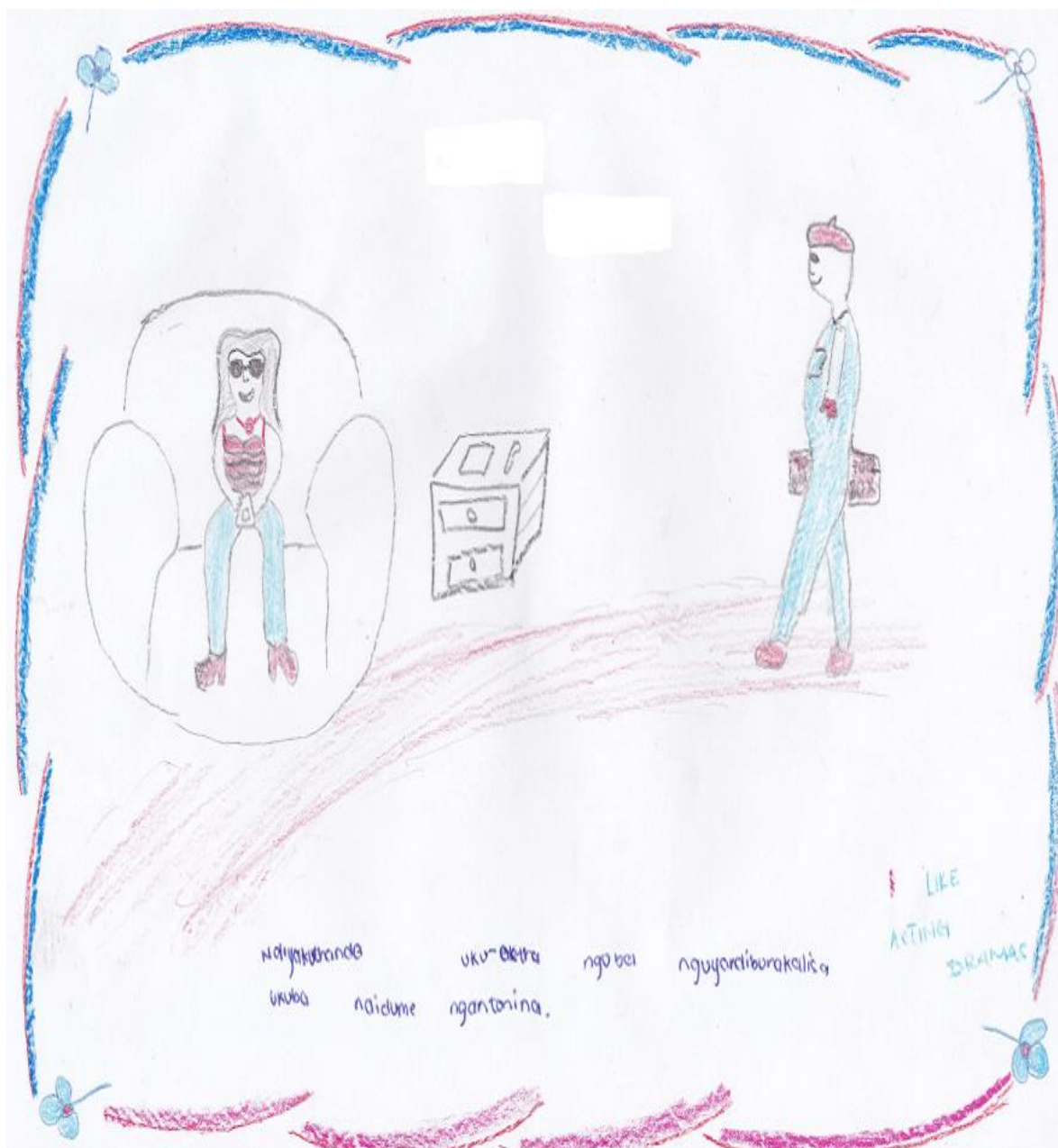
Sample 4.1. Phumla's drawing showing a love for acting

[Ndiyakuthanda   ukuacta   ngoba   ngeyondibonakalisa   ukuba   ndidume ngantonina]

English translation of the text in the drawing: [I like acting because it shows what I'm known for.]

[Thuli, 13, female, individual interview] also voiced her wish to have a choir at the school

The drawing below also depicts her wish to sing.

Here I like to sing and it is clear to me that singing is my talent. I wish that other learners would also sing so that we can sing as a big group and show our talent to interested people. [English translation of the text in the drawing]

Sample 4.2. Thuli's drawing showing a love for music and a wish to have a school choir

Sample 4.3. Another drawing showing a wish to sing at school   [Nomzamo, 13, female, focus group interview]

I have drawn this picture to show that I like singing. Singing makes me feel content.

> [Ndizobe lo mfanekiso ukubonisa ukuba ndiyathanda ukucula. Yindlela
> endiziva ngayo uba ndingumntu onjani]

As noted earlier, extra mural activities appeal to the participants but are not done and it is evident from their responses that they would make them happy.

Sport was the other activity that emerged more from the participants' responses.

4.3.1.2.2 Sport

Most participants indicated that they feel happy when they have an opportunity to participate in sport. Most importantly, it was noted that sport is something that has recently been introduced at their school and it excited them. The learners indicated that they used to play sport on their own but now they have soccer and netball teams which are coached and trained by their teachers.

Most of the boys indicated that they love to play soccer and three of the girls also expressed their love for netball.

> I am happy because sports is improving in our school…now we have   netball poles.
> I wish we could have a soccer field [Zola, 13, male focus group interview].

Following is an extract from the transcribed focus group that shows that learners like sport and that it makes them happy.

Tell me what you say makes you happy at school (pointing at the picture). (Researcher)

What I like is that Ms…... (teacher's name) lets us play netball. When we play the ladies who sell snacks during lunch also come and sell their goodies. Whoever wants to buy then buys and eats while watching the game. [Phumza, 13, female, individual interview].

Do you play matches? Is it during the week or weekends? (Researcher)

It is during the week….. (Phumza)

At what time? (Researcher)

It is in the afternoon just before school is out. (Phumza)

Do you play alone or against other schools? (Researcher)

We play alone and then teams are selected while we play. (Phumza)

Is playing netball something you have always liked? (Researcher)

It is something I have always liked…but we did not have it here at school we have just started playing sports. (Phumza)

Oh….you like it? Are you in a team or just playing? Which position do you play?
(Researcher)

Wing attacker…. (Smiling) (Phumza)

Oh….mhh…..Is that something you always knew or you have just learnt about it?
(Researcher)

 I knew it before. (Phumza)

How or where did you learn about it? (Researcher)

We played netball at Catholic Welfare Development (CWD)….there was a programme we
attended and they wanted children who were going to play netball….and then
we did not have any sports here at school so I joined. (Phumza)

So you were happy when it was introduced at school? [Researcher]

Yes Miss, I was (smiling)
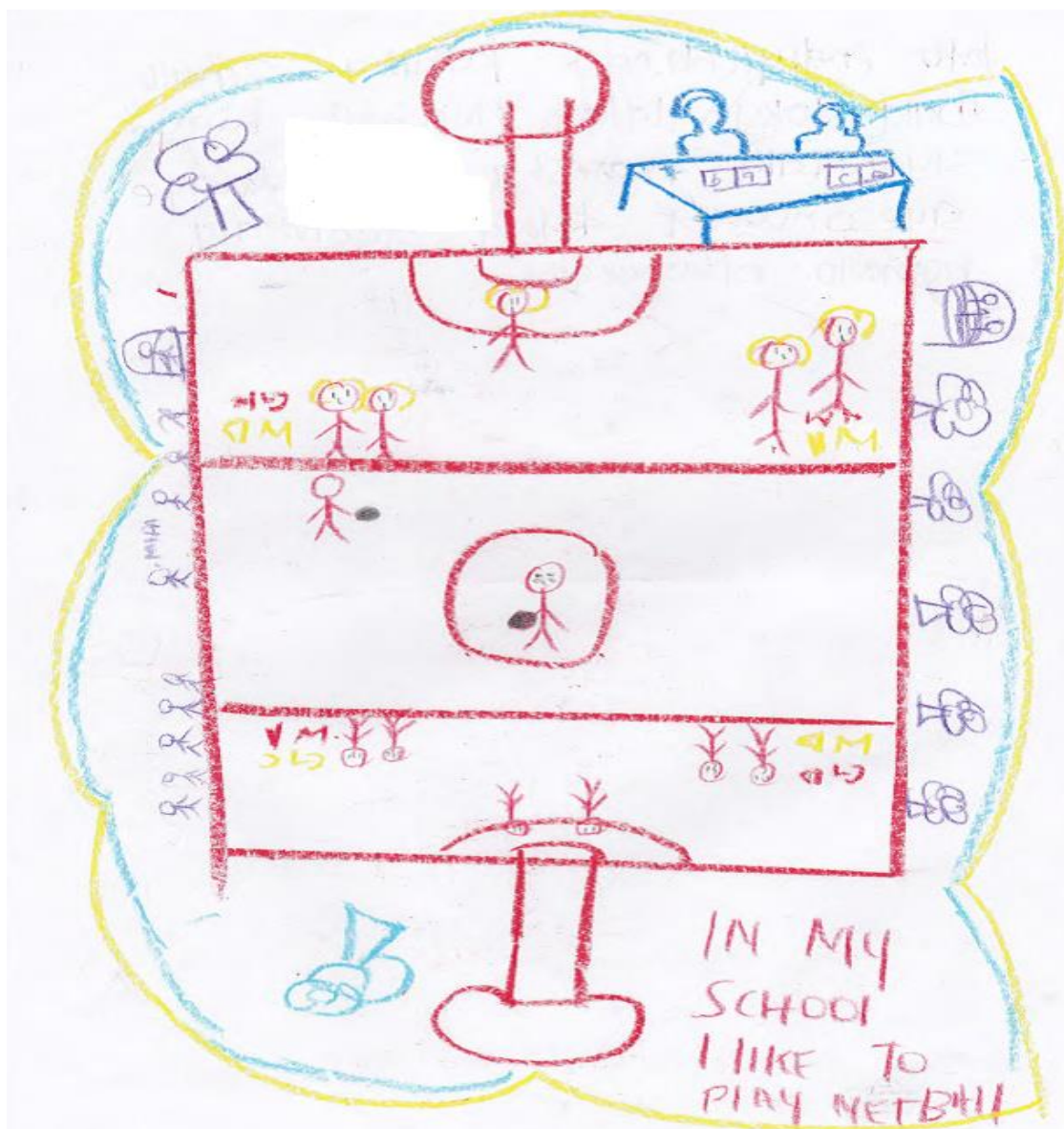
Sample 4.4. This drawing indicates the joy of having sport at school (netball) [Phumza, 13, female]

The children's body language also reflected immense joy when they were talking about these activities at school. They beamed with pride, talked excitedly and with great animation and could hardly wait their turn to get a chance to speak when talking about sport.

Two boys also voiced their love for soccer but indicated that they would like to have a proper sport field with scoring poles.

4.3.1.3 Educational activities

Educational activities had participants talking about what makes them happy at school. It was evident from their responses that to them fun during lessons was important. It was interesting to notice how they view their learning in terms of how teachers engaged with them during lessons.

4.3.1.3.1 Teachers encouraging learners' leadership roles

The following examples show reciprocity where the teacher teaches and the learners enjoy the lesson. This is where the teacher as facilitator also gives the learners leading roles.

If I am asked to lead a song for morning devotion and I can play netball during break. I feel happy when other learners clap for me after I have scored in netball.....that makes me very happy Miss. (Phumza, 13, female, focus group)

[Ukuba Miss kuthiwa masicule xa sithandaza nangebreak sidlale inetball....xa ndiqhatyelwa izandla xa ndidlala inetball naxa ndicula....iyandonwabisa loo nto Miss.]

I feel good when asked to read in front of the class, I enjoy it very much.

[Ndiyonwaba xa kuthiwa mandifunde phambi kwabanye abantwana]

In the example above, Phumza draws on formal curriculum and extra-mural encounters where she feels good about herself. These are simple acts by the teacher that recognises her strengths such as being asked to lead the morning song for devotion by the teacher, being applauded by her peers for scoring a goal in netball and being asked to read aloud in class.

Another example is taken from the classroom observation where learners seem to want to be included in their learning, which one may also view as learners expressing a need to belong. The example below depicts an example of learners desiring inclusion in lessons:

Hay <   > susoloko ubuza abantu abanye nathi siyafuna ukwenza kaloku

No <   > do not always ask the same people, we also want to do it (Lolo, 12, male, Classroom observation)

In the exclamation in class above, the learner suggests that the teacher should give all learners an opportunity to do the activity which he only asks certain children to do (in this case it was

a lesson where the learners were doing an experiment and the lesson was conducted by another learner. This suggests that the teacher asks certain children but because it is seen as an enjoyable activity, others also want to be given an opportunity and are prepared to make their feelings known.

The sense of belonging and leadership roles also emerged often when the question "What makes you feel that you belong at your school?" was asked.

Two of the participants indicated that they like to participate in their learning. This took place when they could assist other learners who do not understand or when asked by the teacher to assist those learners, they feel that they belong and feel good about themselves and their abilities. Another response that I did not anticipate was when one participant indicted that he feels he belongs because they are all in the same age group.

The above examples and quotes from the participants elicited their motivation to be included. It is also evident that they feel competent when they are asked by teachers to assist other learners who do not understand. Some teachers allow learners opportunities to participate in their learning by finding small but very meaningful ways to include learners in the learning process.

4.3.1.3.2 Teaching and learning strategies

There was also a sense of gratitude shown when they felt that they were being cared for by the teachers. Learning to them is not only about the formal in-classroom experience; fun and outings appeared to be other factors that contributed to their enjoyment of school. These are some of the participants' comments:

.....when we go on school outings without paying....we get sad when we miss out because of non-payment, our parents do not have money... (Nomsa, 13, Female, focus group).

[Xa kuthiwa sihamba free abazali bethu abazokhupha mali. Siyakhathazeka xa abazali benganamali size thina singakwazi uhamba.]

Sometimes I wish we could just talk about what we have learnt instead of just writing all the time. (Nomzamo, 13, Female, focus group)

[Ngamanye amaxesha ngaske sithethe nje eklasini ngalento besiyifundile…singasoloko

sibhala oko]

Some learners indicated that they like it when lessons are done in a fun manner or when the teacher jokes with them:

> I like it when teachers make jokes during lessons (Trevor, 12, male, focus group)

[Ndiyathanda xa iititshala zisenza iijokes ngexesha sifunda]

Another participant (Lolo, 12, male, focus group) described how he feels when teachers joke with them:

> I feel very comfortable when our teachers make us laugh....
>
> [Ndiyonwaba kakhulu ndibe comfortable xa ootitshala besihlekisa eklasini...]

Fun to other participants did not only mean to laugh but to be able to do what you like in class.

This is how Thuli described her fun in class:

> I feel good when asked to read in front of the class, I enjoy it very much. (Thuli, 13, female, focus group
>
> [Ndiyonwaba xa kuthiwa mandifunde phambi kwabanye abantwana]

It is very apparent from these numerous quotes above that learners do enjoy school in relation to the way in which they interact with teachers both in formal and informal settings. Trevor and Lolo described what fun meant to them in class in terms of humour as a central aspect to their relationship with teachers and their enjoyment of school. These interactions as well as teachers' general understanding of the financial challenges that some of their parents face, was much valued by the learners. Nomsa describes how they are filled with sadness when they have to stay behind because their parents could not pay for outings. She also describes the immense excitement that she feels when they are allowed to go in spite of their parents not having paid for them. It is evident that this must have happened before given her response. Thuli had fun when teachers asked her to do activities that she liked, like reading in front of

the class. Nomzamo indicated that fun for her meant participating in class and engaging with learning, not really just writing down work from the board.

4.3.2 Learners' perspectives on factors that are constraining their learning and wellbeing at school

Most of the learners' responses indicated that the school was not a safe environment, especially when it came to bullying and fighting among learners. Below are some of the responses that indicated that fighting is rife at the school. There was also a plea for better treatment from the teachers, especially with regards to corporal punishment and emotional abuse. These will be presented below in terms of learner-learner violence which includes fighting and bullying. Teacher-learner violence which includes teachers embarrassing learners and corporal punishment.

4.3.2.1 Learner-learner violence

<u>4.3.2.1.1 Fighting</u>

The topic on learners fighting at school seemed to be troubling the participants a lot and yet they have no platform to voice their concerns. The following examples show how concerned the participants are about fights at school.

Themba, Zethu and Lolo described the nature of violence that could be very physical and lead to injuries. Their examples centred on stabbings with everyday implements like spoons and scissors. Following are extracts from the interviews where they described how they experience violence in school.

> It is like they are practising what gangs do…they sometimes stab each other with spoons.
>
> [Ibangathi balinganisa igangsterism esikolweni…bahlabana ngamacephe] [Zethu, 12, male, focus group interview]
>
> Other learners use scissors to stab each other…one learner was stabbed on the face by another learner…
>
> [Abanye abantwana basebenzisa izikere for   ukuhlabana…omnye wahlatywa ngesikere ebusweni apha esikolweni] (Lolo, 12, male, focus group interview)

Andibathandi abantwana abathanda ukulwa…ngamanye amaxesha bayazonzakalisa]

Another aspect that emerged is of teachers who would not intervene in fights that happened after school. When such fights are reported to them they tell learners that they cannot interfere in fights that did not happen within the school premises. The learners indicated that they do not understand how teachers would not intervene.

4.3.2.1.2 Bullying

The presence of bullying also emerged from many children's drawings and their interviews. Even though the participants all said that they were never directly bullied, they indicated that it affected them emotionally even to witness bullying.
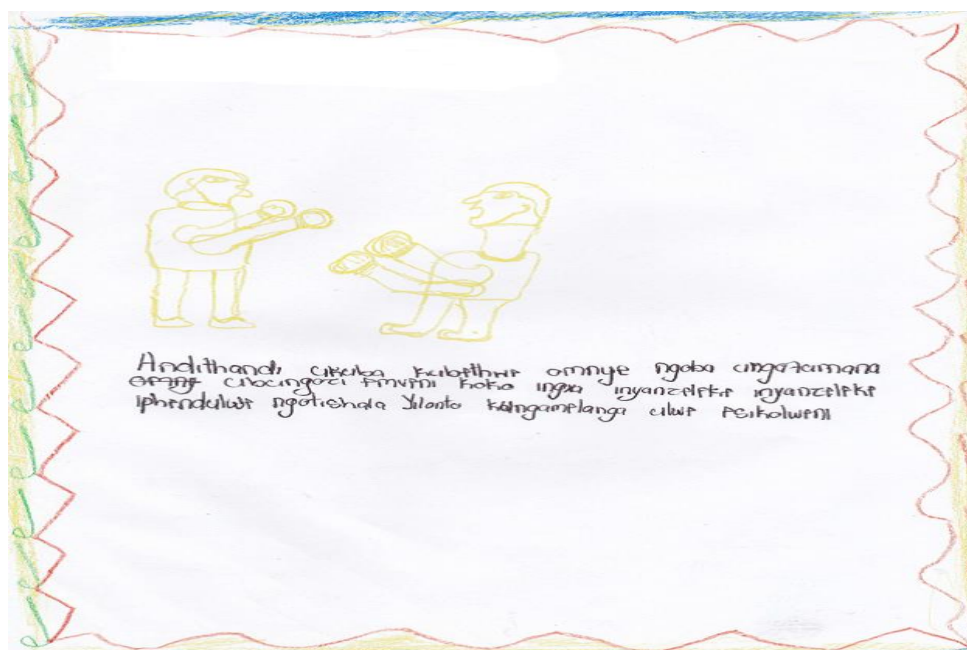
Sample 4.5. This drawing shows learner being hit by another one (Themba, 12, male, focus group interview)

English translation: **"I do not like it when another child is being hit by another child. The other one may get hurt and that may end up with the teachers. That is why I think it is wrong to fight at school."**

Sample 4.6. This drawing shows bullying: Learner taking another learner's lunch (Nomsa, 13, Female, drawing in focus group interview)

I do not like it when another child is abused. When I see that I feel the child's pain and my heart breaks. (Sipho, 13, male, focus group interview)

[Andithandi ubona omnye umntana ehlukumezeka ngobandiba nentliziyo ebuhlungu]

It is evident from learner responses that bullying takes place, that they perceive acts such as taking learners' lunch to flourish because there is little monitoring of the school grounds by adults during break. (Nomsa, 13, female) also describes how sad she feels when she witnesses a child being abused on the school grounds.

4.3.2.2 Teacher-learner violence

Other acts of violence that seemed to affect learners emotionally were the way in which some of the teachers treated children. It appeared that learners helplessly witness other learners being treated poorly by teachers. This is done by sometimes embarrassing them in front of the whole class.

4.3.2.2.1 Teachers embarrassing learners

The participants reported that watching other learners being maltreated cause them emotional pain. Zethu gave an example of a teacher who would always ask a learner to come to the front and do a presentation though the teacher knows that the learner will not be able to do it because he has a problem. He further raises his concern by saying:

> …he (the teacher) lets other learners laugh at him (the learner) and instead of helping him understand he embarrasses him more…I do not like it Miss. (Zethu, 12, male, individual interview).

> […uyabayekaabanyeabantwanabamhleke…endaweniyokubaamncedekungonaamenyis angayekwabanye abantwana…andiyithandi loo nto Miss

Phumza was more vocal about her feelings and this part appeared to make her sad. This is how she expressed her feelings:

> Please, Miss...I would like to say something.... (Her facial expression changed and looked sad)...Miss, I do not like the way other teachers treat us...no...no...(Shaking her head) other teachers make us sad and make us feel pain. Teacher ‹› grabbed me by my hair and shook me hard and called me names...because I fell asleep and I was not feeling well that day Miss...He did not ask me why I fell asleep. (Phumza, 13, female, focus group interview).

> [Uxolo Miss ndicela uthetha mna... (ubuso butsho butshintshaekhangelekaekhathazekile)...Miss, andiyithandiindlelaabanye ootitshala abasiphathangayo...ha...a... (atshoeshukumisaintloko) abanye ootitshala basenzasivekabuhlungusikahthazeke. Utitshala u ‹› wandibambangeenwelewandishukumisangamandlaendibizaamagamaamabingenxayob

awafikandilele.Ndandingaphilangangalaa mini kodwa yena zange andibuze...qha wasuka wandenza loo nto]

Watching and experiencing classroom situations concern the participants to an extent that they are saddened and perhaps even angry. They have clear ideas on how they should be treated by teachers but they appear not to have an opportunity to raise their concerns.

(Zola, 13, male, focus group interview) expressed his concern regarding this:

Teacher…I…me…Miss, I would advise teachers not to say our marks out loud in front of all the learners, especially for those who get a zero, that is very embarrassing Miss, the learner does not get comfortable and the others laugh at them

[Titshala…ndi…mna…Miss, ndingacebisa uba utitshala angabizi iimarks zomntu phambi kwabanye abantwana, especially uba umntu ufumene uzero ngoba uyahlekwa ngabanye abantwana. Loo nto imenza omnye angaziva ekhululekile kuba ehlekwa ngabanye]

The above revealed that many learners harboured emotional pain which they felt that they could not communicate with their teachers though they had their opinions on how they want to be treated by their teachers. The above comment may also suggest that learners may be aware of what is good conduct or not even from the teachers but again it suggests that learners are not given a voice on matters that concern them, especially their emotional wellbeing. Zola and Zethu described the sadness they feel when teachers humiliate others by shaming them in front of the class whereas Phumza describes how she was directly treated unfairly and hurt by a teacher who pulled her hair when she put her hair on a desk when she was not feeling well. Corporal punishment also emerged as one of constraining factors in learners' wellbeing and learning.

4.3.2.2.2 Corporal punishment

Furthermore, most of the participants had strong views about how they disliked corporal punishment. They do accept that some form of discipline should be in place but they stress that corporal punishment evokes fear in them.

The following drawings show how the participants experience corporal punishment at school.

The topic on corporal punishment revealed different views among the learners. Some learners felt that it should be used even though it brought pain to them.

> Teachers can hit us but not hard and not all the time (Nomsa, 13, female, individual interview).

> [Singabethwa…kodwa not qho and singabethwa kakhulu.]

Fear also seemed to be invoked by corporal punishment.

> Sometimes you fear that you are going to be hit by the teacher…because you do not know when he will hit you…you become afraid all the time (Nomzamo,13, female, individual interview)

> [Ngamanye amaxesha uyoyika uba uzobethwa ngutitshala…awuyazi uba uzobethwa nini…uhlala usoyika ke ngoku.]

It is evident from the former statements that corporal punishment may make learners feel anxious during a lesson which may affect their learning negatively. When talking about corporal punishment in the focus groups, learners appeared to talk more about their dissatisfaction about abusive relationships from the teachers. This was revealed by responses like:

When I am happy....I always wish that everybody would be happy, no one should be abused. (Themba, 12, male, individual interview)

[Ngaske nomnye umntu onwabe kungabikho mntu uhlukumekezayo]

Another response that showed dissatisfaction is experienced by (Nancy, 13, female, focus group interview).

Some learners are called names

> [Abanye abantwana babizwa ngamagama

abangawathandiyo

 Who does the name-calling? (Researcher)

[Ngubani obabiza ngamagama?]

Some learners do it to others, Miss (Nomsa, 13, female, focus group interview).

 .... and some teachers do too (Phumla added softly)

    [Ngabanye abantwana Miss

 (omnye esbeza ecaleni) ....nabanye ootitshala

bayayenza loo nto....]

The following are drawings that some of the discussions were based on with regards to corporal punishment are presented below:
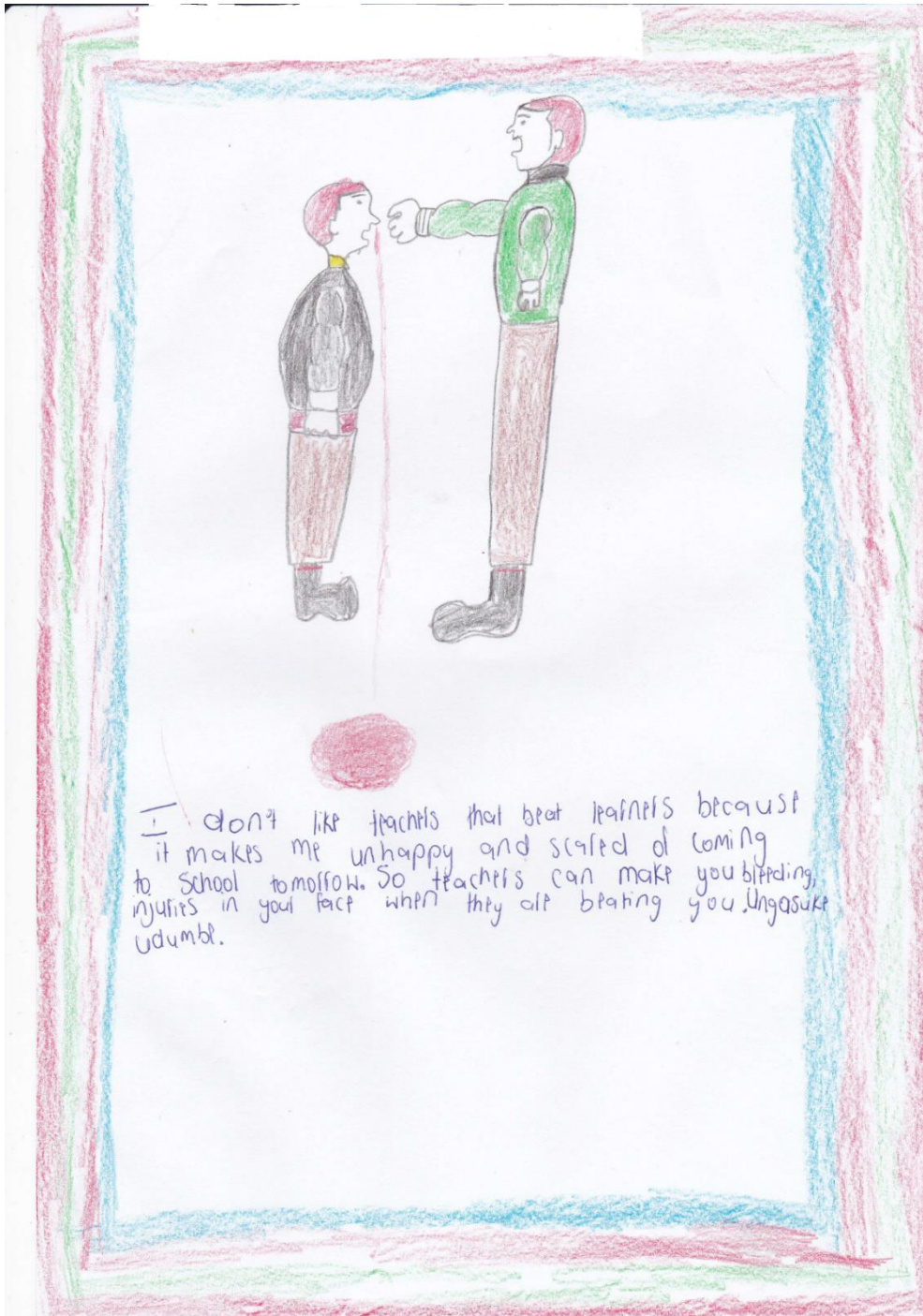
Sample 4.7. Drawing showing corporal punishment done at school (Trevor, 12, male, individual interview)

Sample 4.8. Drawing showing learners' unhappiness about corporal punishment (Phumza, 13, female, focus group interview).

Translation: **"**Our teacher likes to hit us when he finds us standing. He never asks why we are standing he just hits us though we are busy working on our class projects". **[**Sometimes when teachers are angry, they just hit learners for no apparent reasons- Phumza]

4.3.3 Not being listened to by teachers

In this section the participants expressed how they viewed their inputs towards their learning. It was apparent that they had different perspectives on this. Some felt that they were given opportunities to take part in their learning while others felt that they were not.

4.3.3.1 Taking part in class activities

Some of these responses overlap with the ones previously presented. For an example, this response was used for fun in the classroom but it also reflects on participation. The response below indicates that learners feel good when they participate in learning activities. Trevor indicated that:

Miss < >   listened to us and we ended up having extra afternoon classes for Mathematics.

 [UMiss < > wasimamela xa sicela iiklasi ze Maths, ngoku satsho sanazo emva kwemini nangempela veki.

4.3.3.2 Having your views listened to

The following reveals the different opinions the participants had regarding them being listened to or not by their teachers.

 The teachers have to listen to learners also.

 [OOtitshala nabo funeka babamamele abafundi] (Lolo.12, male, focus group interview).

 We do not have the opportunity…..but I think we are supposed to be listened to.

 [Asilinikwa ithuba….kodwa ndiyaqonda ukuba besifanele uba nathi siyamanyelwa] (Zethu, 12, male, focus group interview

 I think we can be listened to but we are afraid to ask.

 [ndicinga ukuba singamanyelwa qha siyoyika uthetha]

 For an example we can ask to be given more explanation on what we do not understand.

 [Umzekelo ngowoba singacela ukucaciselwa more xa singayiqondanga into] (Nomzamo, 13, female, focus group interview)

From the above it is clear that learners have an insight of what they are missing by not being given an opportunity to voice their opinions. However, this also shows their fear or lack of confidence to initiate discussions with their teachers.

4.3.4 Learners' views of processes that can impact positively on their wellbeing

This section highlights what the participants thought would make them very happy at school.

Teachers may not always listen to learners but learners have shown how they perceive their school and what impacts their learning and wellbeing. The following are aspects of their school that they wished they could change.

4.3.4.1 No corporal punishment

As mentioned previously, learners showed a yearning for teachers' recognition and care. Corporal punishment on the other hand instilled fear in them and they have raised their concern about it being done away with. Out of the twelve participants, seven felt strongly about it being used. Such responses emerged when they were asked what they would say to the minister of education or the principal of the school. One participant indicated that she would tell the minister that corporal punishment and calling children names by teachers should be stopped.

However, there were three participants who indicated that they did not mind being hit as long it was not done harshly and all the time. One even said that teachers should not show anger when they punish us because they may injure us.

4.3.4.2 Monitoring of the school

There was a request from the participants that there should be people who monitor the cleanliness of learners, to see if the uniform is worn correctly and if it clean or not. They also added that the school grounds should be clean and the classrooms should not have dirty papers on the floors.

OBSERVATIONS

The participants were drawn from three grade 7 classes. These three classrooms were also observed as a way of collecting data. The researcher was interested in the interaction of the teachers with the learners. Particularly, whether learners are given an opportunity to

participate in their learning or not. The classes ranged from 43 to 47 learners each. Lessons observed were Science, Mathematics and First Additional Language.

Classroom observations indicated that teachers differed in their teaching styles and in how they accommodated learners in their lessons. There was one of the three lessons that learners seemed to enjoy very much. It was presented by other learners and the teacher was there as a facilitator. It allowed learners' participation because learners could manipulate the teaching and learning material. It was as if they were learning through play because it was playful fun to them. I initially thought that my presence may have impacted on the teacher's class preparation for the day but it was evident that learners were used to what they were doing because when a group leader asked one learner to do an activity, the other commented:

Hay <   > susoloko ubuza abantu abanye nathi siyafuna ukwenza kaloku

[No <   > do not always ask the same people, we also want to do it]

The teacher intervened by reminding the leader to be careful not to exclude others. This was really a good example of including or giving learners an opportunity to participate in their learning.

The other two lessons in the remaining classes showed that the lessons were pre-prepared for the observation because the learners in one class looked at each other in a confused way when they were asked to do certain tasks.

I also felt uncomfortable when the learners in the other class would not respond to the teachers instructions. I thought of many reasons that would cause them not to respond; either they did not know the content, or they feared making mistakes which might be followed by punishment or that they were not used to participating in those teachers' classes. In this lesson, lesson two, the learners were asked to volunteer and do calculations in an activity on the board. They would not respond and that made me feel awkward and uncomfortable. It was only after the teacher called one learner by his name that things changed. The learner eagerly did the activity and the other learners applauded him after that. The learners showed willingness to do the activity on the board. Subsequently, the teacher had to be stern and ask them to behave because they just started running to the board when the other one was about to finish.

The other notable factor in this classroom was that there was no learners' work exhibited on the walls and the classroom floors were dirty.

In lesson three the learners were asked to read a text and then summarise it afterwards. The teacher sat on her table for the duration of the period. The learners worked quietly. It was notable that there were dictionaries next to the teacher's table and they looked unused and no learner went to fetch one. This classroom floor was clean in the sense that it was swept while the other two classrooms had litter on the floors. The cleanliness reminded me that the participants indicated that there were no people monitoring cleanliness even on the school grounds.

4.4 PROCESS ANALYSIS

This section will give an overview or a summary of the whole research process.

4.4.1 Responding to questions

Initially the focus group interviews appeared to present difficulty for the participants. No one wanted to offer responses until the researcher reminded them of confidentiality and that they had the right to respond or not to as they wished. The researcher even asked if they understood the question or not because of their initial silence. They responded that they understood it.

One participant volunteered to start and after that they were no longer reluctant to respond. Instead a good discussion developed and they responded freely.

4.4.2 Trust and safety felt

As the interviews continued, the researcher noticed that there was trust and a sense of safety felt by the participants. They talked about personal feelings and experiences. One participant described how she was grabbed and shook by her hair by a teacher. She explained how painful it was and also felt that teachers should not just hit learners without asking the cause of behaviour first. She even mentioned the teacher's name and at that point I reminded them of confidentiality and privacy, and that we should not mention any names during our interviews and that if one makes a mistake of mentioning a name they should know that I will not include the names in my report.

At one point another participant started to cry when he described how other learners make fun of his head's size - they said it is big. At that point the researcher felt that it was appropriate to remind all of them about the different forms of bullying and that calling others names is also bullying and that it is not fun to the one being bullied and they should not do it to one another and should report it to a trusted teacher if they witness it.

It was interesting to see that the participants knew more about bullying because one participant's drawing showed another who was crying because her lunch has been taken by a bully.

Subsequently, the interview took a form where the participants were off guard. In the focus group interviews they did not always agree; they would say how they felt about one another's views. For example, some learners felt that going to the computer lab took more of their lesson time and thought that it would be better if they had tablets or laptops readily available in class. One participant further supported her view by saying that having tablets would help when they needed to look at difficult words immediately or look for information while in class instead of waiting for their period at the computer laboratory. Some learners laughed at that thought saying that they did not think that something like that would happen. One's comment was:

> Yhoo…you have beautiful thoughts nhe? [Nancy, 13, female, focus group interview].

> [Yhoo…ucinga kamnandi nhe?]

This showed the researcher that the process was at a point where they all felt safe and free to say whatever they felt and thought. It did however also show how the dynamic in the group could potentially curtail creative thoughts as some learners may have kept spontaneous suggestions in check.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter's aim was to discuss the findings of the data. The data was analysed according to the different themes that arose. These themes include: factors enabling learners' learning and wellbeing at school. From these, sub-themes emerged and they included extra-curricular activities and teaching and learning strategies. Another theme entailed factors constraining learners' learning and wellbeing at school. The sub-themes involved learner-learner violence and teacher-learner violence. The data will further be discussed in the next chapter.

In the next chapter I will discuss the findings, limitations and recommendations of the research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research findings that were presented in the previous chapter. These will be discussed according to the theoretical frameworks presented in chapter two. The strengths and limitations of the study will also be considered.

As stated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, the aim of the study was to examine learners' perceptions on what impacts on their learning and wellbeing at school. This chapter also aims to provide answers to the research questions. The research question is:

What can we learn about primary school learners' perspectives on their participation in their learning and well-being by listening to them?

The sub-questions are:

What are learners' perspectives on their learning and well-being?

What are learners' perspectives on their participation in learning?

What do learners believe can be done to facilitate change and impact positively on their participation in learning?

The findings will be discussed by drawing on various theoretical strands pertinent to the study. Bronfenbrenners's bio-ecological framework was central to locating the study theoretically. According to this framework, there is connectedness between the different levels of social context within which the child resides (Donald et al., 2010). Other theories used when exploring learners' wellbeing at school are constructivism which describes how learners make sense of the material and how the material can be taught effectively in a specific context. Child development theory, with specific reference to Piaget's cognitive developmental stages, also assisted in understanding the thought process of the participants in the study.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings suggest that the things that learners experience as contributing to their well-being and happiness at school are cultural activities, sport, teachers encouraging learners' leadership roles and teaching and learning strategies. The things that made participants most unhappy at school are fighting, bullying, corporal punishment and humiliation of learners by teachers.

These themes will be discussed, in turn.

5.2.1 Learners' perspectives on factors that enable their wellbeing and learning at school

The participants' responses indicated that extra-mural activities and educational activities contributed positively to their wellbeing and learning at the school.

5.2.1.1 Extra-mural activities

Participants viewed participating in sport and extra-mural activities as highly desirable and fun. In this study the participants argued that they were given little opportunity for extra-mural activities. Some of them felt that this denied them opportunities of show casing their talents. In this section I will discuss learners' perceptions of various extramural activities such as cultural activities and sport.

Sport and cultural activities should form an integral part of the curriculum (South African Department of Education, 2009 and Shurluf, 2010). Similarly, according to the UNCRC' Article 31, children's access to play is a fundamental right. It would have been interesting to hear from the teachers why extra-curricular activities are not practiced as required whereas the South African Department of Education states that each learner should participate in extra-curricular activities. Participants did however, report that there were some sporting activities such as soccer and netball since 2015.

5.2.1.1.1 Cultural activities

According to Pitts (2007) extra-curricular activities may include sport, drama, music, debating societies, language clubs and other interest clubs. The participants in the study indicated that they would love to participate more in extra-curricular activities like music, dance and drama. One participant even made an example of how the activities can be spread out over different

days: "Miss, maybe we can act on Mondays and then dance on Wednesdays", Nomsa, 13, female, focus group). Another participant's drawing (see Figure 2) with her having a microphone indicated that "Here I like to sing and it is clear that singing is my talent. I wish that other learners would also sing so that we sing as a big group and show our talent to interested people", Thuli, 13, female, focus group). Nomsa and Thuli's response suggest that some of the learners show maturity which may be enhanced by being offered the opportunities they wish to have.

It is evident from the study that these activities are not given much attention by the school. The participants mentioned that they only sing during assembly and when there is a special ceremony. By not participating in these activities the participants might be missing out on benefits resulting from taking part in extra-curricular activities. Jiang and Peterson (2011) note the benefits as scholastic performance, prevention of risk behaviours, psychological and diverse interpersonal relationships.

5.2.1.1.2 Sport

Learners expressed how good they feel when they are asked to do things they like, such as playing netball, leading morning devotion with a song or when they are asked to read in front of the class. Sport, like netball and soccer are the only extra-mural activities that the participants enjoy at school and they have been recently introduced to them.

It is evident from the above that sport brought fun to the participants but most importantly, sport or physical activity can make an important contribution to cognitive development (Trudeau & Shephard, 2009). They further conclude that activities to enhance children's physical development can be integrated with the curriculum.

Coverdale and Long's (2015) study participants felt that participating in sport gave them a sense of belonging. Similarly, Faircloth (2009) posits that a sense of belonging is said to influence motivation, engagement, and achievement. For example one participant reported "If I am asked to lead a song for morning devotion and I can play netball during break, I feel happy and when other learners clap for me after I have scored in netball….that makes me very happy Miss" (Phumza, 13, female, focus group).

Using the Bronfenbrenner's micro-system's lens, it is evident that a child is influenced by his or her interaction with the individuals in his or her immediate context, which are the peers.

It is not clear why the participants are afforded little or no time for extra-curricular activities like sport. Lack or absence of relevant facilities might be contributing to the problem raised by the participants. Two participants (Zola and Sipho both 13 and male, focus group) indicated that they would like to have a proper sport field with goal posts.

On the other hand it is worth noting that the inequalities caused by apartheid have an influence on the South Africa's urban and rural schools. According to the 48th international conference on education in South Africa, measures aimed at improving schooling in these areas are underway. However, progress is very slow. Also from personal experience as a teacher until last year, the new schools are of poor quality and there are no adequate infrastructures which may enable learners to enjoy what they would like to have at the schools. This state of affairs contradicts the department of education's section on extra-curricular activities. It posits that extra-curricular activities should be done by all learners in schools. However, contextual factors in the microsystem do not afford children to be able to enjoy the opportunities consistently.

5.2.1.2 Educational activities

As mentioned earlier, learners' achievement is dependent on several factors other than the formal curriculum. In the previous section I have discussed how extra-curricular activities influence and constrain participants' happiness at school. This section will look at how learners perceive teachers' teaching styles to affect them. This will be done according to the findings of the study.

5.2.1.2.1 Teachers encouraging learners' leadership roles

The findings suggest that the participants appreciate leadership roles given to them. They indicated that it brought a sense of belonging and pride. According to Faircloth (2009) belonging is a positive school affect and that it supports learners' motivation, engagement, and achievement. The participants indicated that it makes them feel motivated and good when asked to assist other learners who do not understand. Elias (2006) agrees with this notion by indicating that even struggling students can help those who are less able than they are. He further argues that the chance to share their knowledge or skills builds confidence and leadership potential.

The educational activities included giving learners leadership roles at school and teaching strategies that appeal to the learners. One of the observed classes showed how leadership roles can be facilitated for learners. In one of the classes, a learner was conducting a lesson and the learners appeared to enjoy it. It allowed freedom to express themselves when the teaching was done by one of their peers. These educational activities appear to elicit a sense of pride among the learners. Hartas (2011) postulates that genuine involvement of young people in matters that affect them brings personal and social benefits. These include self-respect, competence, and self-confidence, trust in adults, and increased responsibility in taking over their lives.

Giving learners a leadership role allows them participate in their learning. Participation is a child's right (UNCRC, 1989) and the Convention of children's rights affirms the right of children to develop into autonomous adults and to have a voice in matters that affect them.

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's micro-level analysis, the child makes meaning by interacting with peers and adults in his or her context. Again, this perspective resonates with constructivism which suggests that the child constructs meaning with people he or she interacts with.

However, there is an observation made by certain researchers that giving children a voice is controversial (Cook-Sather, 2006; Mitra, 2006). This controversy is evident when comparing the two statements:

1. Giroux (2009) argues that many adults see children as incapable of contributing mature opinions about their education and future. Similarly, Lodge (2010) supports Giroux in his observation that many adults view children as incompetent to take active roles in shaping their own experiences.
2. Quinn and Owen (2014) posit that student voice is viewed as improving students' engagement and personal and social development at the primary school level.

In light of the above two observed views, one may also note that some adults deny children's rights to participation formulated in the UNCCR. This also emphasises the fact that views of childhood and its purposes are culturally constructed (Lodge, 2010).

Creemers and Kyriadikes' (2009) view that teaching and learning are dynamic processes that are constantly adapting to changing needs and opportunities. However, school policies and practices do not always match the changes (Rudduck, et al., 1996).

The findings of this study yielded both views. Participants reported that there are teachers who do not listen to them. An example was given where a participant explained that sometimes the teacher just punishes everyone in class without giving them an opportunity to explain themselves. A contrasting example was observed when learners negotiated to have an extra Maths class which was granted to them.

5.2.1.2.2 Teaching and learning strategies

Hopkins' (2008) study revealed that learners aged seven to eleven years indicated that classroom conditions such as learning strategies and learning climate as best conditions for learning.

Findings of this study elicited that participants have different perceptions of best learning conditions. There was almost a common perception when it came to teacher humour. Some participants indicated that they enjoyed the flexibility showed by teachers when teaching. This view is supported by these quotes from the focus group interviews: (I like it when teachers make jokes during lessons, Trevor, 12, male, focus group). Another participant reported: (I feel very comfortable when our teachers make us laugh, Lolo, 12, male, focus group). Similarly, Zahorik's (1990) findings where one teacher indicated that she used humour and child-oriented actions to express her care of students while the other used high expectations and formality to do the same, support this study's findings. These quotes suggest that participants perceive teachers' sense of humour as making lessons enjoyable.

It was also evident that teachers' flexibility brings happiness to the participants. One participant indicated that he feels happy when allowed to read in front of the class because he likes doing that.

Playfulness as suggested by Watson, et al. (2012) motivates learners to learn. In this study the participants appeared to be motivated when allowed to do what they like and also experiencing their learning in a hands-on manner. This was shown in of the lessons observed, where learners could manipulate instruments themselves.

Some of the learners appeared to have mature social and leadership skills. They indicated that they feel good when they can assist other learners who find learning areas difficult. As mentioned earlier, constructivism maintains that knowledge is constructed through

collaboration so this was evident in some classes where learners assisted each other and worked together.

5.2.2 Learners' perspectives on factors constraining their wellbeing and learning at school

The previous section discussed factors that enabled the participants' wellbeing and learning at school. It is also important to note that even though the factors are highlighted it was also evident that the participants are not satisfied with the amount of time given for the activities or the lack thereof.

This section will discuss factors which undoubtedly negatively affect the participants' wellbeing and learning. The findings revealed that mostly these factors include violence by both teachers and other learners.

5.2.2.1 Learner-learner violence

Teachers are challenged by having to deal with misbehaving learners in schools (De Witt & Lessing, 2013; Marais & Meier, 2010). This notion is emphasized by Mabasa (2013) who argues that schools in South Africa have become unsafe places to live in, especially those located in Black residential areas. Furthermore, teachers are said to perpetuate violence in schools and this is despite the notion that schools should be places of safety (Burton & Leoschut, 2012; Donald et al., 2010). The sad and important thing is that children and youth need safe and supportive schools to develop in a healthy manner and to thrive (Themane & Osher, 2014) but it seems that it is difficult to achieve that.

In the next section, the researcher will discuss the findings on fighting and bullying.

5.2.2.1.1 Fighting

Learners commonly attempt to resolve conflict by fighting (Burton & Leoschut, 2012; Donald, et al., 2010) even though this strategy to resolve violence with conflict is seldom healthy or effective. Similarly, Mncube and Harber (2013) report that a dispute turning into a fight is one of the most common forms of violence among learners in schools.

Findings of this study show that fights are also common in the school where the study was done. What is interesting is that teachers are reported to distance themselves from the fights.

One participant reported that when they report a fight that happened on their way from school, the teacher will comment that it has nothing to do with the school and that they cannot interfere. Similarly, according to a learner in a Limpopo study, teachers are not interested when they are informed about fights and indicate that they do not want to be involved (Mncube & Harber, 2013).

Findings of Marais and Meier's (2010) study indicated that fighting in the classroom and on the playgrounds, include pushing, slapping, kicking, and aggressive play-fighting.

Most researchers agree that South Africa is a violent society, therefore children are vulnerable victims due to their upbringing which results in them being exposed to risk factors which enhance the chances that they will be involved in violence (Mncube & Harber, 2013).

5.2.2.1.2 Bullying

Bullying has also been highlighted as a factor that does not make the participants happy. Learners indicated that the main forms of bullying were hitting and possessions like lunch being taken forcefully from learners. According to Olweus (1993) bullying among school children is a very old and well-known phenomenon. He further suggests that children should feel safe at school and no child should be afraid of going to school. To some extent the participants suggested that if there was monitoring by the teachers on the school grounds none of the bullying could take place. The participants' latter comments resonate with Olweus' (1993) when he says that teachers' attitudes, behaviours and routines play a role in determining the extent to which the problems will manifest themselves in a classroom or a school.

The above aggression by teachers towards learners and learners bullying others touched on safety and security issues at school. According to Ben-Arieh and Shimon (2013), safety and security are important aspects in the lives and wellbeing of children. They further posit that children who did not feel safe at school were also unhappy at school.

5.2.2.2 Teacher-learner violence

5.2.2.2.1 Corporal punishment

In this study, corporal punishment emerged as a constraining factor to the participants' wellbeing and learning at school. Most of the participants reported that corporal punishment

was practiced by their teachers. However, some participants' responses suggested that they do not see corporal punishment as a violent act but as a justified form of punishment. This was evident when they indicated that corporal punishment should not be done all the time or teachers should not hit them hard. Similarly, Payet and Franchi (2009) note that the learners in their study accept corporal punishment only if it is done fairly and not excessively. Furthermore, Payet and Franchi (2009) bring in a political connotation to this issue when they note the cycle of corporal punishment. They note that the teachers were learners who were raised and schooled during apartheid and thus were submitted to the violence of corporal punishment. The violence continues because the same learners became educators and thus are contaminating their professional representations of the relationship to the learner-child. This has been seen in Mncube and Harber's (2006) report on violence in which the director of the Centre for Psychological Services at the University of Johannesburg noted that there is a direct link between corporal punishment and violent crime in South Africa. This statement supports Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which asserts that learners'development is influenced by the contexts embedded in each other.

According to Murris (2012) violence has side effects which can be psychological, behavioural or academic. Murris (2012) further posits that these side effects include loss of self-esteem, an increase in anxiety and fear, helplessness and humiliation, a shortened attention span and impaired academic achievement among other things. Similarly, Hardman (2012) posits that fear can disturb learning, concentration, creativity, or even play.

Corporal punishment is a violent act, it then becomes a form of vicarious trauma when it also indirectly affects other learners who feel pain of those who are punished while they watch helplessly. Aggressive behaviours by teachers on learners often point to the fact that teacher-learner relationship is poor. From the above it is evident that corporal punishment impacts negatively on participants' learning. What is interesting to know is that corporal punishment was abolished post 1994 and that any person who contravenes that is guilty of an offence for assault (South African's Schools' Act, 1996).

 However, in spite of the fact that corporal punishment was abolished in 1994, the participants' responses suggested that it is still used in some schools. According to their age they are not supposed to have experienced it if it was not used at school. Similarly, in a study in Serbian schools, learners reported to have been hit by a teacher (UNICEF, 2015).

Some studies indicate that corporal punishment as a violent act may affect children negatively. Botha's (2014) research has proved that aggression and violence are on the rise in South African schools. He further posits that it is pervasive to the point that it makes it difficult for schools to create safe and nurturing teaching-learning environment. Teachers' violent acts were not the only concerns of the participants but their peers' bullying emerged often in their responses.

5.2.2.2.2 Teachers embarrassing learners

A positive teacher-learner relationship is imperative for learners' wellbeing and learning at school. Contrastingly, some participants in this study reported that some learners are humiliated by teachers in front of their peers. Generally, it is argued that schools are supposed to be conducive to learning (Booth and Sheehan, 2008; Elias & Arnold, 2006; UNCRC, 1989). The school consists of teachers, curriculum, extra-curricular activities, peers and other staff members. Each of the stakeholders just mentioned influence the learner in specific ways.

According to Mashu et al., (2008) good teachers build relationships that will bind their learners and themselves together in a common purpose. This is in line with psycho-social development. However, if the relationship is hampered by teachers by embarrassing learners, the psycho-social development of the learner is thus hampered. It is said that well-attached children start life positively, they have more self-confidence, are socially more competent, better motivated and are more open to others' feelings (Mashu et al., 2008). Similarly, Huitt and Dawson (2011) argue that if one's social skills are developed then that person can excel in school and also be able to contribute positively in his or her social circles.

Mncube and Harber (2013) argue that as learners bully each other, teachers may also bully learners. I have suggested earlier that bullying is a form of violence, therefore teachers are exerting violence on learners too.

Lumpkin (2007) argues that teacher-learner relationships are fundamental human need of knowing that another person genuinely cares. She further asserts that this relationship is nurtured by caring teachers who allow learners to be actively engaged in their learning. When learners are actively engaged in their learning they are likely to exceed their expectations. For schools to be conducive to learning they should offer emotional safety (Themane & Osher, 2014) which comprises the feelings of fitting within a group and togetherness, which excludes feelings of isolation or to be protected from any experience that may induce negative feelings.

They further assert that children and youth need safe, supportive schools if they are to succeed in school, to develop in a healthy manner, and to thrive. However, the findings in this study conflict with the above ideal as learners said that teachers make fun of learners who are not doing well. This is vicarious violence because the learners witnessing other learners being humiliated also feel hurt. Another participant showed an alternative to one factor which is a humiliation to them as learners. He indicated that teachers should not announce learners' marks out aloud in front of everyone but rather call each learner aside.

However, according to Vally (2005) teachers have replaced corporal punishment with other forms of punishment which include shaming learners. They do this by either ridiculing or ignoring them. Vally (2005) further states that there is an opinion view that emotional abuse in the form of humiliation, insults and intimidation may even be more damaging in the long term than corporal punishment. This may indicate that teachers need to attend training on the psychological effects of violence and on types of violence for they may not know that emotional abuse is also considered to be violence.

5.3 PARTICIPANTS' IDEAS OF AN IDEAL SCHOOL

The participants could identify their ideas of an ideal school. They mentioned that they would like corporal punishment to be done away with. This was also negated by some who felt that corporal punishment can be practiced as long as it is not harsh or not done frequently. They also indicated there would be less violence if their teachers monitored the school grounds during break. Their idea is echoed by Olweus when discussing bullying and how it can be controlled in schools.

Unbeknownst to the learners, according to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, administering corporal punishment at a school to a learner is a punishable offence.

Summary of findings

It was evident from the findings that the most important factor raised by the participants is lack of opportunities to express themselves. Self- expression presents itself in different forms. Some participants indicated that they liked to talk in front of the class while others indicated strongly performing arts and sport would make them very happy. This also showed that some of them had a clear insight of what their talents are.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Teachers' perspectives may have added more value to the findings of the research. The sample could have been larger to include other grades, nevertheless the results are reliable and valid because triangulation and multiple methods were used to collect data.

5.5 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The study aimed explore learners' perspectives on what impacts their wellbeing and learning. One of the central aspects that was mentioned by the participants which is not being listened to by adults. The research allowed the learners to be listened to when they talked about matters that impact their wellbeing and learning at school.

During the focus group interviews, an opportunity for psycho-education presented itself when one participant became emotional while describing how other learners tease him. The researcher explained to the participants that name-calling is a type of bullying and that it causes emotional harm.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings of the study, bullying goes unnoticed by teachers and it affects learners emotionally. My recommendations to eliminate bullying will be similar to Hardman's (2012) where she highlights guidelines to manage bullying. The guidelines not only protect the victims but also rehabilitate the bullies.

She suggests that interventions must change the social climate of the whole school and recommends that all members of the school community, including educators, learners, and parents should be made aware of what bullying is and how to respond to it. Furthermore, some suggestions to minimise bullying, taken from the Metropole North's learner discipline and school management, educational management and development centre (2007), are as follows:

Rules of the class should be short and clear. They should include clear instructions of how children should behave in an acceptable manner. The class rules should clearly indicate that bullying is not a good behaviour and is not accepted. Teachers should also focus on developing learners' social skills.

When preventing bullying there should be a balance between the outcomes and the instructions. Learners who are perpetrators of bullying should be made responsible for their actions. This may give a clear indication to other learners that bullying is unacceptable. It is however important that the focus should not be on discipline but on the learners' wellbeing. The other issue that is recommended is for teachers to be reminded of the policy around corporal punishment and its effects on the learners. The school can ask someone to do a workshop on learners' emotions and the relationship between them and the learners' learning.

The other factor that stood out from the findings is teachers' poor emotional intelligence. Teachers may be guided in terms of how to respond to certain classroom situations. This aspect is important for teachers to consider learners' developmental stage. According to Paget's cognitive developmental stage, the participants are in the fourth stage which is the formal operational stage. In this stage individuals can think abstractly and in more logical terms and think abstractly, they develop images of ideal circumstances. This again boils down to teachers' knowing their learners in class and being supportive. If that happens then it is likely that learners will be catered for according to their needs and abilities and in turn they will be happy in school and their ideal school will be partly created.

Collaborative co-construction of knowledge can also be attained by grouping learners and allowing sharing of knowledge.

5.7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to access primary school learners' perspectives about their wellbeing and learning at school. The themes that emerged revealed that learners are not given opportunities to talk about things that concern their wellbeing and learning at school. The study allowed them that opportunity. The results also revealed in detail how well learners are aware of what is happening in their education and what they desire in terms of their education. They also highlighted issues that concern them in nuanced and specific ways. This included watching other learners being ridiculed by teachers or witnessing bullying which they think could be avoided if teachers monitored them during breaks.

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APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN XHOSA

- **Xhosa**: Njengoba una 12 okanye 13 ukonwaba esikolweni kuthetha ntoni kuwe?

- **Xhosa:** Xa ucinga ngazo zonke ezenzeka okanye ezikhoyo esikolweni, njenge zinto okanye iindawo ofundela kuzo, izinto ozenza eklasini, izifundo zakho, indlela ootitshala abafundisa ngayo, imvisiswano yakho nootitshala nabanye abafundi kunye nezinto ezikonwabisayo esikolweni. Zeziphi izinto ezingenelela kwimpilo okanye ekonwabeni kwakho esikolweni?

- Umbuzo ozama ukungena kabanzi

- **Xhosa**: Niyazisebenzisa iikhompuyutha okanye ezinto zokufundisa ezingezoncwadi esikolweni? Ukuba niyazisebenzisa, zeziphi ezoo ntlobo zokufundisa? Ziintoni ozifundayo ngokusebenzisa zona? Olu hlobo lokufundisa lungenelela okanye luyichaphazela njani impilo okanye ukonwaba kwakho esikolweni? Zikhona izinto ezthile ezichaphazeleka kakhulu kunezinye? Unganika imizekelo yazo?

    o

- **Xhosa:** Ukuba ubunonikwa ithuba lokuthetha nenqununu yesikolo okanye umphathiswa wezemfundo, ubunokuthini kubo ngee:
    - ➤ Izinto ezilungileyo ezikonwabisayo esikolweni (unike umzekelo)
    - ➤ Izinto ezimbi ezingakonwabisiyo esikolweni (unike umzekelo)
    - ➤ Zeziphi izinto ezimbini okanye ezintathu onothanda ukuzitshintsha esikolweni ukuze wonwabe wena?

Xhosa: uziva uyinxalenye yesikolo okanye iklasi yakho? Uyazi njani loo nto?

- **Xhosa:** Wazi ntoni malunga nokunika olwakho uluvo ngemfundo yakho?

- **Xhosa:** Uyalifumana ithuba lokunika olwakho uluvo malunga nkufundayo xa usesikolweni?

- **Xhosa**: Imibuzo ezama ukungena kabanzi

- **Xhosa:** Ungathanda ukubanakho ukunika ezakho izimvo ngemfundo yakho esikolweni okanye ngendlela ofundiswa ngayo? OKANYE Khawundixelele ukuba zeziphi izinto okhe unike ezakho izomvo ngazo ngemfundo yakho? OKANYE Ucinga ukuba uyalifumana ithuba elaneleyo lokunika olwakho uluvo ngemfundo yakho esikolweni?

Appendix B

EXAMPLES OF DRAWINGS' INTERVIEWS TRANSCRIPT

Researcher: You have drawn a sports field, is it something you do here at school or is it something you would prefer to happen here at school.

Participant: It is something that I like.

Researcher: What do you like….eh…..can you tell me more about this sports field picture?

Participant: I like to play football.

Researcher: How does playing football make you feel?

Participant: It makes me feel happy.

R: Do you just play it casually or you are a member of a team?

P: Yes, I am a member of a team.

R: And now with the second picture….. Can you explain to me what it means?

P: It is teachers who beat children.

R: What is this? Is it blood? (Researcher pointing at the picture)

P: Yes Miss.

R: When are the learners beaten?

P: When they have done wrong.

R: Looking at this picture….has something like this happened here at school, where a learner bled?

P: Yes Miss.

R: Was it a teacher who did that?

The participant hesitates to give an answer….

R: It is ok if you do not want to talk about it. But how does the beating make you feel?

P: It makes me feel scared.

R: What happens when you are really scared?

P: Sometimes I do not want to come to school.

R: Thank you…. You can go back to your seat now.

LEARNER TWO

R: I would like us to talk about this picture. Is this something you like doing here at school or something you would like to do?

P: It is something I like doing.

R: Ok

P: I like to read on my own.

R: Oh….you like to be on your own when reading?

P: Yes, it makes me feel happy.

R: why does it make you feel happy?

P: Because I know that one day I will be successful in life if I read.

R: Here…(pointing at the second picture) what is this?

P: It is children who are involved in a fight.

R: And this does not make you feel happy? Have you ever fought here at school?

P: No…not here at school.

R: But you do not like it when the other children are fighting…..Can you explain to me why you do not like it when they are fighting?

P: Because they can injure each other.

R: So that does not make you happy…..Does that mean that you do not like fights at all.

P: Yes, Miss I do not like people who fight.

R: Thank you…..

LEARNER THREE

R: Please, tell about this picture.

P: Like….how?

R: Do you remember that I asked you to draw me yourself doing something that makes you happy at school or you wish you would be able to do…..and something that makes you unhappy? Now…. *would like you t explain to me what is happening in each picture.*

P: Here I want to say that I love to sing

***R:** So….you like to sing?*

***P:** Yes….*

***R:** umm….ok*

***P:** So that is what I have drawn in this picture. It is the way I feel about myself…..I know what kind of a person I am when I sing (smiling and using her hands)

R: And here at school…..what does singing have to do with the school?

P: During our morning prayer in the classroom and at assembly I lead with a song (She smiles….and puts her hand on her face)

R: What would you like to happen here at school with regards to music?

P: I would like us to have a school choir where we can participate and compete for our school (lifting her hands up)

R: With the second picture…. Can you tell me what it is that you want to say about it?

P: When a learner has failed a test…. And then the other learners laugh at him. I want to say that we are all here to learn so we are allowed to fail. Everybody sometimes makes a mistake and we do not have to laugh at each other.

R: What would you like to happen about that?

P: I do not like it when it happens….I would like the people who do it to stop.

R: How do you think it make others feel….those who are laughed at?

P: It make them feel sad….and sometimes they do not want to participate in presentations because they know they will be laughed at.

LEARNER FOUR

R: Please, tell me about this picture **(name of the participant)**

P: Me….I would like us to act on some days and dance on the others.

R: So…..it is something that you would like to happen at school….you do not have it yet?

P: Yes, we do not do it…..we do not act or dance.

R: Ok…..So….you like arts……Is it something that would make you happy?

P: Yes, a lot.

R: Then…..tell me about this picture.

P: What makes me sad is when a learner comes from buying her lunch …..we have bullies here at school. …some will hit you and demand your money and if you do not have money he then takes whatever you have without asking nicely.

R: Do they really do that?

P: Yes, they do….. (With emphasis)

R: Do you tell the teachers about such?

P: No, because they ask us not to tell on them when we tell them that we are going to report them.

R: But you say it does not make you make happy…..?

P: I feel sad…..especially when I see one learner crying because her belongings have been taken against her will.

R: oh…..crying because her belongings have been taken….

P: because she will not have anything for lunch.

LEARNER FIVE

R: tell me what you say makes you happy at school (pointing at the picture).

P: What I like is that Ms…...(teacher's name) lets us play netball. When we play the ladies who sell snacks during lunch also come and sell their goodies. Whoever wants to buy then buys and eats while watching the game.

R: Do you play matches? Is it during the week or weekends?

P: It is during the week…..

R: At what time?

P: It is in the afternoon just before school out.

R: Do you play alone or against other schools?

P: We play alone and then teams are selected while we play.

R: Is playing netball something you have always liked?

P: It is something I have always liked…but we did not have it here at school we have just started playing sports.

R: Oh….you like it? Are you in a team or just playing? Which position do you play?

P: Wing attacker….(smiling)

R: Oh….mhh…..Is that something you always knew or you have just learnt about it?

P: I knew it before.

R: How or where did you learn about it?

P: We played netball at CWD….there was a programme we attended and they wanted children who were going to play netball….and the we did not have any sports here at school.

R: So you were happy when it was introduced at school?

P: Yes Miss, I was (smiling).

R: And with this one…How many things have you drawn here? What it is that makes you unhappy at school?

P: What I do not like Miss ….is when our teacher just beats us even though we have not done nothing wrong. Some learners tell lies about other learners to put you in trouble and then you get punished even though you are innocent..

R: So…..you think that things are not discussed thoroughly to get to the truth?

P: Yes Miss

Appendix C

THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE INTERVIEWS

QUESTIONS	PARTICIPANTS' QUOTES	KEY WORDS	CONCEPT/ THEME
What does wellbeing mean to you?	• *...given a chance to play netball/ soccer* • *...I wish we had a school choir* • *I would like us to dance or act on some days* • *It would be nice if teachers could make more jokes when teaching so that we can laugh* • *I feel good when I get my work is correct* • *When we are given things even without paying for them sometimes.* • *It means that I feel at home and that I can all that I wish I can do but I do not have that here.* • *When you are punished and called name by the teacher you become embarrassed even to sit and chat with other learners*	• **Netball** • **School choir** • **Arts** • **Fun lessons** • **Catered for** • **Corporal punishment** • **Feeling at home**	**Fun Punishment**
Do you feel that you are given enough opportunity to participate in your learning?	• *...Yho...you would not even finish what you wanted to say before the teacher stops you* • *You are a child you do not what you say*	Teachers not listening to them No opportunity given and sometimes it is given	No communication Not listened to

		Not sure of their rights	Children's rights
	• *The teacher has to listen to the learner also* • *We do have not the opportunity but I think we are supposed to be listened to.* • *I think we can be listened but we are afraid to talk* • *For an example we can ask to be given more explanation on what we do not understand* • *One teacher listened to us and we ended up having extra Maths classes in the afternoons and on Saturdays* • *Not all of them are the same….some will tell you that they also have lives*	Some feel they are not cared for by their teachers	
What features of school affect your wellbeing? • Teaching methods • Relationship with teachers and other learners	• *Some teachers expect you to know what they have just taught you…..they do not give us enough time to understand what was taught…the teacher will give you an activity on the same day. I think the teacher should teach the topic for more times until we understand it.* • *I like LO because the teacher makes*	Not enough time given to understand Some teachers give time Teachers who are not angry	

• Recreational activities	*us understand more about careers…..and now I know more about them [careers].* • *Teachers should not be angry or shout when teaching.* • *I feel comfortable when the teacher makes us laugh during a lesson.* • *I wish teachers would stop making fun of other learners and call them names because they are weak in a certain subject.* • *I do not like it when a teacher just sits down until his period is up because he says he cannot teach when we are making noise.* • *Learners should stop bullying other learners by taking their things.* • *There are learners who tease others because they have failed attest. We all make mistakes and we are here to learn.* • *I feel good when I play and score in*	Not embarrass learners by calling them names Teachers wasting time- not teaching Learners making fun of other learners	

	netball....that makes me feel motivated. • *I like it when other learners clap for me when I have sung in class.*		
Do you use computers or other forms of media to learn in school? If so, which forms? What do you learn by using them? How does this form of learning affect your wellbeing? Any aspects more than others? Can you give examples?	• *Yes, we do use computers.* • *They help us to learn more about our history* • *Sometimes you get to learn about recent things which you would not have got in a textbook.* • *Sometimes the computers give us problems....the electricity would go off whilst you are busy* • *It takes time from our period to move from our classrooms to the lab. Sometimes you have to leave the lab when you have just started with your work...more time spent on the way and logging on* • *There are things that I wish we could have at school, like tablets or laptops. If you have them in your class, you do not waste time walking to the lab. Everything is done on time.*	Computers help with learning history Get current news They also have their disadvantages (more time spent walking) Wish they had laptops and tablets in the classrooms to avoid wasting time	

Do you feel that you belong in your school?	• *Yes, I do when I can help other learners who do not understand.* • *I feel motivated when my teacher asks me to teach other learners….that makes me feel good.* • *Yes, because we are the same age.* • *When other learners whistle or clap for me when I have scored a goal in netball.* • *Because I do well in my studies.* • *I can stand in for my class or my school in an activity.* • *I feel I belong when other learners ask for my assistance in things that they do not understand.*	Belonging- assisting others Participating in sports (playing for my school)	
If you could speak to your principal or the head of education of the country, what would you say to them: • Positive things in your school that enhance your wellbeing? • Negative things in your school that	• *I am happy because sports are improving in our school…now we have netball poles.* • *I wish we could have a soccer field.* • *If we were to have a choir and a piano I would be very happy.* • *Teachers sometimes make us happy.*	Improved sports- feeling happy Wishes- arts, like music Negative things- fights Corporal punishment Children- discipline	

damage your wellbeing.	• *I do not like learners who always fight at school.* • *They practice gang violence at school.* • *Children should not be let make noise while others are studying.* • *Corporal punishment should be stopped.* • *Clean school....without dirty papers around the school yard.* • *The ladies who sell us food should be monitored so that they do not sell junk food to learners because it is not good for our health.* • *Teachers to make lessons more fun and not always teach in a serious manner.*	Dirty school Learners who are not neat Healthy food (monitoring/ lack of)) Fun lessons Monitoring the school's cleanliness Neat learners/ uniform Emotional problems to be catered adequately for	
What two or three specific changes you could wish to make your school learning environment more supportive of your wellbeing?	• *There should be people who watch*		

| | *that learners <mark>are keeping the school clean</mark>….not throw away papers.*

• *There <mark>should be people who monitor our school uniform</mark>….see if we are wearing the required school uniform and whether it is clean or not.*

• *Sometimes learners have problems here at school and teachers call a social worker and it helps….I wish <mark>we had our own that stayed here at school,</mark> what if Miss something happens now and needs to be fixed now and the social worker is not here.* | | |

Appendix D

PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za
tel: +27 021 467 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20141120-40355
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Dear Mrs Winnie Gae

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES ON FACTORS THAT IMPACT THEIR LEARNING AND WELLBEING AT SCHOOL

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1.   Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2.   Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3.   You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4.   Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5.   The Study is to be conducted from **01 April 2015 till 30 May 2015**
6.   No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7.   Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8.   A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9.   Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10.   A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11.   The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
          The Director: Research Services
          Western Cape Education Department
          Private Bag X9114
          CAPE TOWN
          8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research
DATE: 21 November 2014

Appendix E

EXPLANATION TO THE PARTICIPANTS

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TOPIC: Primary school learners' perspectives on factors that impact their learning and wellbeing at school

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Winnie Gae who is a MEd Psych. 11 student , under the supervision of Professor Carolissen, from the University of Stellenbosch: at the department of educational psychology. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because the data needed will be best given by learners who have been at the school longer, and you are one of them.

1.   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to establish the factors that impact on your learning at the school. These may be teachers, peers or curriculum related.

2.   PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

[*Describe the procedures chronologically using simple language, short sentences and short paragraphs. The use of subheadings helps to organize this section and increases readability. Medical and scientific terms should be defined and explained. Identify any procedures that are experimental.*]

QUESTIONS
You will be asked to answer simple questions about the school and also make some drawings which depict certain feelings about the school. You will be asked to explain the drawings to the researcher.
TIME
We will meet twice a week for 45 minutes to one hour per session. We anticipate that it will take two months to finish the interviews.
LOCATION
The interviews will be done in the school library.

3.   POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no risks involved or any pain but if you feel that you do not want to answer certain questions, you are free to do that. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable or feel that you cannot continue with the study, you are free to withdraw from the study anytime you wish to.

4.   POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

You will not benefit from the research as you will be leaving the school at the end of this year. However, if changes are made after the study has been done, they will benefit the learners who will still be at school and the other groups who will still come. This means that your participation will help a lot of other children.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no payment involved for taking part in the research.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

The recorded interviews will be coded to get themes and they will be transcribed. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of keeping the data in a safe place where only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to. [*describe coding procedures and plans to safeguard data, including where data will be kept, who will have access to it, etc.*].

The data will only be known by the institution- University of Stellenbosch and the examiners of the thesis. [*If activities are to be audio- or videotaped, describe the subject's right to review/edit the tapes, who will have access, if they will be used for educational purpose, and when they will be erased.*]

No real names will be used in the thesis and by thus you will remain anonymous.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

In the case of old unpleasant feelings or memories being induced during the process, the researcher may withdraw you from the study to avoid further emotional harm.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact [myself (Winnie Gae) i*dentify research personnel: Principal Investigator, Professor Carolissen. You can contact me at this number: 074 116 2067 and my supervisor at 021- 808 2306: Supervisor, Co-Investigator(s). Include day phone numbers and addresses for all listed individuals.*

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development at Stellenbosch University.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant]* by [*name of relevant person]* in [*Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other]* and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is]* in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject]* was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Subject/Participant

_____
Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____
Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant]* and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative].* *[H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*__Xhosa__/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ by _____].

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANTS' ASSENT FORM

	STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES ON FACTORS THAT AFFECT THEIR LEARNING

RESEARCHERS NAME(S): Winnie Gae

ADDRESS:

CONTACT NUMBER: =

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about disease or illness. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping, or treating children who are sick. What is this research project all about?
This research wants to find out about how you feel about school. You will be asked to explain in details what it is that you think affects your learning either positively or negatively and if there are things that you would like to see changed at your school.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?
You have been invited to take part in the study because it needs perspectives of grade seven learners.

Who is doing the research?
I, Winnie Gae, a student at the University of Stellenbosch will be doing the research as part of the course.

What will happen to me in this study?
During the research I would like you to help me by answering some easy questions about your feelings about the school. I would also like you to do some drawings for me.

Can anything bad happen to me?

I hope you will enjoy your time during the interviews but if for any reason you feel that you are not comfortable, please feel free to tell your parents or me.

Can anything good happen to me?

As you are in Grade seven now, you might not benefit from the changes that the school may do because of the research. But your siblings or friends who are in lower grades may benefit because of your participation.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

Nobody else will know that you are participating in this study and no one will know what your answers are to the interview questions. Everything we discuss will be known by us only.

Who can I talk to about the study?

If you have queries regarding the study, you can talk to me, my number is 074 116 2067 or my supervisor, her number is 021- 808 2306.

What if I do not want to do this?

If for some reason you feel that you do not want to continue, you are free to do so and even there are questions you do not want to answer, feel free to say so.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES	NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES	NO

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

YES	NO

_____   _____

Signature of Child   Date

APPENDIX G

PERMISSION FROM THE RSEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Approved with Stipulations
Response to Modifications- (New Application)

28-Apr-2015
Gae, Winnie W
Proposal #: HS1166/2015
Title: Primary school learners' perspectives on factors that impact their learning and wellbeing at school.
Dear Mrs Winnie Gae,
Your **Response to Modifications -** *(New Application)* received on **31-Mar-2015**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee:**
Human Research (Humanities) via Expedited review procedures on **21-Apr-2015**.
Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:
Proposal Approval Period: **21-Apr-2015** -**20-Apr-2016**
The following stipulations are relevant to the approval of your project and must be adhered to:
The REC would like to thank the researcher for making the required changes.
The only remaining change that still requires attention is that the supervisor's name and contact details be added to the revised assent form.
Please provide a letter of response to all the points raised IN ADDITION to HIGHLIGHTING or using the TRACK CHANGES function to indicate
ALL the corrections/amendments of ALL DOCUMENTS clearly in order to allow rapid scrutiny and appraisal.
Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with
these guidelines.
Please remember to use your **proposal number** (**HS1166/2015**) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.
Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor
the conduct of your research and the consent process.
Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The
Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).
This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical
Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external
audit.
National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.
We wish you the best as you conduct your research.
If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.
Included Documents:
REVISED_Informed consent form_parents_ENG
Interview schedule
DESC Report
REVISED_Informed consent form_parents_Xho
REVISED_Focus group interviews_IsiXhosa
Informed consent form_parent

REC Application form
REVISED_Response to Modifications
Permission letter_WCED
Research Proposal
DESC Checklist form
Assent form
REVISED_REC application form
REVISED_Research proposal
Permission letter_School
REVISED_Assent_IsiXhosa
REVISED_Informed consent form_Teacher_Eng
REVISED_Assent form_ENG
Sincerely,
Clarissa Graham
REC Coordinator

Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)