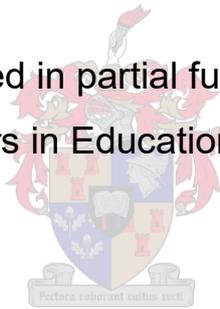


ON THE EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF HAPPINESS:  
AN ANALYSIS OF ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SOME RURAL FARM  
SCHOOLS IN THE WEST COAST EDUCATION DISTRICT

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degree of Masters in Educational Policy Studies



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## DECLARATION

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**Date: April 2019**

## ABSTRACT

This study explored the structural and conceptual notions underlying happiness and its concomitant link to education, in particular at rural farm schools in the West Coast District. The premise of my argument is based on the Aristotelian view, which conceptualises education as a morally informed social practice, directed towards some good that is internal to the practice itself, in order to ensure human flourishing commonly referred to as happiness. In concurrence with this notion, I argue that such an education embeds practical reasoning and compassion as two co-dependent and inseparable virtues, the inculcation of which enables learners to flourish as morally just human beings in the particular society, which they inhabit, enabling them to attain the ultimate goal of life, which is happiness. I further argue that an education informed by practical reasoning and compassion has the potential to improve the character and quality of the lives for learners attending rural farm schools.

**KEYWORDS:** Happiness, education, virtues, democracy, practical reasoning (*phronesis*), compassion, farm schools.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie het die strukturele en konseptuele begrippe onderliggend aan geluk of 'gelukkigheid' (*happiness*) en die daarmee gepaardgaande skakel met onderwys in die besonder by landelike plaasskole in die Weskus-distrik ondersoek. Die uitgangspunt van my argument is gebaseer op die Aristoteliaanse siening wat opvoeding voorstel as 'n moreel geïnspireerde maatskaplike praktyk gerig op deugde intern aan die praktyk self om sodoende menslike ontluiking, in die algemeen bekend as geluk of 'gelukkigheid', te verseker. In ooreenstemming met hierdie denkrigting voer ek aan dat so 'n onderwys praktiese beredenering en deernis as twee interafhanklike en onafskeidbare deugde insluit. Die vaslegging van hierdie twee deugde stel leerders in staat om as moreel regverdige mense in die spesifieke gemeenskap waarin hulle hulle bevind te floreer en derhalwe die hoogste doel van die lewe, naamlik geluk of 'gelukkigheid', te bereik. Voorts voer ek aan dat 'n onderwys geïnspireer deur praktiese beredenering en deernis die potensiaal het om die karakter en lewensgehalte van leerders wat landelike plaasskole bywoon, te kan verbeter.

**SLEUTELBEGRIPE:** Gelukkigheid, onderwys deugde, demokrasie, praktiese beredenering (*phronesis*), deernis, plaasskole

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BAWSI	Black Association of the Agricultural Sector
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CNE	Christian National Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
FASD	foetal alcohol spectrum disorders
FP	Fundamental Pedagogy
MVE	Manifesto on Values in Education
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NE	Nicomachean Ethics
RSA	Republic of South Africa

## Chapter 1

# BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I provide the motivation for this study, outline general and specific concerns relating to happiness and education, and explain the aim of the study. This is followed by a brief outline of the theoretical frameworks drawn upon, the theoretical questions that I explored, research approaches drawn upon, and the significance of this study. Finally, I give an overview of what each chapter contains, and provided interpretations of some key pedagogical approaches.

### 1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE MINI-THESIS

The saying that 'happy learners learn better' is widely quoted by many educationists and philosophers, amongst them Noddings (2003:2). However, it would seem from own experience and discussions with colleagues and friends that, for most people, there is little association between happiness and education. In fact, many people equate schooling with boredom and misery, serving only the purpose of acquiring a qualification that would enable them to become creative and economically successful adults, a sentiment which Noddings confirms (2003:1). Furthermore, most parents, when enrolling their children in school, desire that they become adults who lead a life devoid of social and economic hardships. But is it not so that, for most parents, included in this desire, there is also the hope that schooling would contribute to enabling their children to attain the kind of happiness that applies to their whole lives?

My concern about what people see as the purpose of education, as well as their perceived opposition to the connection between happiness and education, has increased during visits to some farm schools in the rural education district where I work. Visits to many of these farm schools often leave me appalled at the sense of hopelessness, apparent lack of contentment, enjoyment and enthusiasm, ill-discipline and often violence evident in the classrooms. For many teachers at these schools, schooling seems to present a depressing picture of increasing accountability, an emphasis on standards and testing, declining achievement and rising drop-out rates,

while many learners often describe their schooling experiences in a negative way. Usually in cases such as these, intervention strategies focusing on leadership, management and curriculum issues with the aim of ensuring improved learner performance are put in place to address such negative experiences on the part of some learners and teachers.

However, at some farm schools in the same district, I encounter a more relaxed and happy atmosphere in general, as well as very few challenges relating to learner discipline. In some of the schools mentioned here, academic outcomes are significantly better than some of the schools in towns. It is these 'islands of hope' that have motivated me to examine and explore if and how education at rural farm schools can contribute to happiness in terms of more meaningful and worthwhile schooling experiences in the sense of not only equipping these learners with knowledge and skills required for academic success, but also with a deeper knowledge that will transform his or her outlook on the world and how he or she feels about it.

First, one would have to have a clear understanding of how the two key words, namely happiness and education, are conceptualised. From a cursory glance at the literature, it seems that happiness is conceptualised from various perspectives. Many recent research studies are focused on what makes people happy. Some of these studies explore happiness from a subjective well-being perspective, while others focus on the objective meanings of happiness. The question of how such experiences of happiness contribute to a worthwhile life inevitably arises.

Contrary to the descriptive, causal perspectives of what makes people happy, the classical literature associates happiness with human flourishing and attaining the good life, advocating happiness as the ultimate purpose of human existence. Therefore, if happiness can be conceived as a goal of human life, I needed to examine how it can be attained.

According to the literature the Greeks located happiness in the full exercise of rationality, arguing that reason is the fundamental feature of (wo)man, and that the development and use of reason constitute his or her genuine happiness. For Aristotle (see Aristotle, 1955), this reasoning includes how most effectively to achieve some given end, as well as engaging in forms of practical reasoning (*phronesis*) about how

to act in a morally appropriate way (Carr, 2005:39). Therefore, in order to become morally virtuous, one will need success in the intellectual tasks of judging what is appropriate in the circumstances of action after careful thought with regard to what is best to do, reflecting the interdependence between moral and intellectual virtues (Chambliss, 2009:242). It therefore seems that virtue is acquired precisely through education, making happiness and education, as Noddings (2003:1) posits, intimately related concepts. If this is so, then education should aim at equipping learners with an understanding of how one ought to live a life benefitting both him- or herself and others, as argued by the Greek philosophers. Various contemporary philosophers of education, including Peters (1966; 1967; 1981), MacIntyre (1999; 2007) and Gutmann (1987), concur with the notion that practical reasoning prompts learners and teachers to question meanings, re-imagine possibilities and adapt their own perspectives in terms of those meanings through critical engagements with others. Yet, according to Nussbaum (2001), practical reasoning alone seldom brings into play the emotions that make continued dialogical engagements worthwhile. Teaching at disadvantaged schools, learners should be subjected to dialogical engagements underscored by compassion.

In order to examine how teaching and learning in South African schools promote opportunities for attaining human flourishing, an analysis of the aims of the national education policy was imperative. If respect for human dignity through compassionate action and the development of reason as a prerequisite for human flourishing are aims embedded in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12 (DBE, 2011) and the pastoral role of the teacher, as many would argue, then the question pertaining to why happiness often does not manifest in the lives of many learners at rural farm schools inevitably arises. In this regard, one needs to take into consideration the complex nature of South African schooling and the various psychological, socio-economic and political factors, which might all play a determining role in a person's state of happiness. This is so, because happiness does not unfold in a vacuum, but is guided by the context in which it manifests, that is, practices and institutions.

According to Teese and Polesel (2003, cited in Christie, 2008:176), rural farm schools serve mostly working class and poor communities. Referred to by Teese and Polesel (2003, cited in Christie, 2008:176) as 'exposed sites', effective learning in these

schools depends largely on the capacity of teachers to make up for the gap between what the curriculum assumes and who the learners really are. If it is true, as Noddings (2003:1) mentions, that most learners all over the world, even the bright ones and those who grow up in privileged homes, often display negative perceptions pertaining to schooling, is it possible for learners at rural farm schools in the Western Coast Education District to attain 'the good life' through practical reasoning occasioned by compassion if the social space in which they find themselves is perhaps one of utter despair? Which conditions ought to be in place in order for these schools to become instrumental in fostering the virtues, which are prerequisites for human flourishing?

The above-mentioned concerns have served as motivation to re-examine schooling for learners at rural farm schools with the aim of establishing conditions for pedagogical activities that would not only equip learners with knowledge and skills to ensure entry into the world of work, but would include activities that could bring meaning to their whole lives. Instead of emphasising just the importance of increasing the pressure on learners to perform academically, we need to shift the purpose of schooling to cultivating settings in which learners, in this instance, learners at rural farm schools, will perhaps flourish.

### **1.3 RESEARCH AIM**

The overall aim of this study was to examine and explore the educational potential of happiness and its implications for some rural farm schools in the Western Coast Education District.

Mouton (1996:2) states that the world of social science represents only one of numerous worlds that human beings inhabit. He goes further in suggesting that scientific research is a multidimensional activity driven by the ideal search for truth, irrespective of the paradigm in which it is presented.

In seeking answers with regard to the educational potential of happiness and its implications for some rural farm schools in the Western Coast Education District, I analysed the key concepts relating to happiness and their concomitant link to education using qualitative inquiry, in order to interpret and gain clarity on the meaning of these concepts. In addition, I sought insights from the context of policy development

and implementation in a particular context. Furthermore, I was concerned with meaning and seeking to understand and reflect on practical experiences influencing education while engaging in rigorous questioning of what education for learners at these schools might or should become.

The study aimed to encourage teachers, in particular those teaching at rural farm schools, to reflect on their own teaching practices and to, in their quest for providing educational experiences aimed at human flourishing, construct, shift, or fuse their own horizons in light of the perspectives offered here. The study furthermore aimed at encouraging educationists to reflect on policy implementation in a multi-grade set-up at rural farm schools.

In order to explore the potential of happiness at rural farm schools, I have developed a research question to guide the structure of this study.

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

According to the Flick (2009:103), “research questions are like a door to the research field under study”. It would therefore be fruitless to embark on a research journey without first identifying a research problem, which in essence lays out the logic of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:77). For the purpose of this study, my primary research question is: “What is the potential for learners at some rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District to attain happiness through the cultivation of practical reasoning and compassion?”

Considering my own interests and curiosity with regard to the potential for learners to attain happiness through schooling at farm schools, which stem from my varied experiences as education specialist working at such schools, I first turned to identifying the problem statement. I thereafter narrowed it down to specific subsidiary questions that would, as suggested by Punch (2009:64–65), organise the study, give it direction and coherence, delimit the study, showing its boundaries, keep me focused during the process, provide a framework for writing up the data, and point to the information that will be needed.

### **1.4.1 Problem statement**

I examined how the cultivation of practical reasoning and compassionate action as prerequisites for the attainment of happiness can contribute to morally worthwhile schooling experiences for learners at some rural farm schools in the West Coast Education district.

Four subsidiary questions guided me in exploring the above-mentioned question.

1. What constitutes happiness in and through education?
2. Does South African educational policy over the years contributed to enabling learners to internalise the virtues that are prerequisites for happiness?
3. Do learners and teachers at some of the rural farm schools in the Western Coast Education District experience education in relation to happiness?
4. Which conditions ought to be taken into account in order for rural farm schools to become instrumental in fostering practical reasoning and compassion?

### **1.4.2 Theoretical framework**

In this study, I was centrally concerned with the educational potential of happiness from an Aristotelian perspective (see Curren, 2010) and its implications for some rural farm schools in the Western Coast Education District. The premise of my argument was that practical reasoning and compassionate action are constitutive of an educational practice. I furthermore argued that these virtues are morally worthwhile to be cultivated at rural farm schools through the establishment of conditions conducive to fostering practical reasoning and compassion.

As a point of departure, I explored constitutive meanings of happiness and their link if any, to human life and education. With regard to subjective well-being and objective happiness features, I drew upon theories and insights provided by Layard (2005), Noddings (2003), Suissa (2008), De Ruyter (2007), Smith (2008) and Haybron (2008). In searching for an understanding of how happiness associated with human flourishing is conceptualised and attained through education, I drew upon the notions of happiness and education as espoused by Aristotle, with reference to the theories of Socrates and Plato. In this regard, literature studies by Curren (2010); Carr (in Dunne

& Hogan, 2004); Noddings (2003; 2007), Hogan (2004), McPherran (2010), Hummel (1999), Peters (1966; 1981) and MacIntyre (2007) provide insight into the Greeks' philosophies on happiness and education.

In seeking answers to ways in which schools in a democratic society can establish pedagogical spaces that will cultivate happiness, I drew upon the theories of contemporary philosophers Peters (1966; 1967; 1981), MacIntyre (1999; 2007), Gutmann (1987) and Nussbaum (2001). For Peters (1966; 1967; 1981), MacIntyre (1999; 2007) and Gutmann (1987), the development and attainment of competencies based on reasoning together with others as well as the inculcation of character and moral reasoning constitute the core of education in a democratic society, while Nussbaum (2001) emphasises that such rational deliberation ought to be occasioned by compassion.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHOD**

This is a conceptual study. Data has been constructed on the grounds of theoretical insights and narrational claims by myself. This study was grounded in the philosophy of education as a three-dimensional personal, public and professional space, as Soltis (1998:196) says. According to Soltis (1998:196), a personal philosophy of education requires having a set of personal beliefs about what can be regarded as good, right and worthwhile to do in education, enabling the individual teacher a "satisfying sense of personal meaning, purpose, and commitment to guide his or her activities as a teacher". Such a philosophical inquiry thus affords one the opportunity for reflection on one's own personal beliefs concerning meaning, purpose and commitment in education. In order to gain a better understanding than before of education in general and of one's own system in particular, requires some self-directed thinking (Soltis, 1998:196). However, Soltis (1998:197) also emphasises that education is, and ought to be everybody's business. He goes further in explaining:

[T]he point of being philosophical about education in the public dimension, is to articulate public aspirations and educational values, give sense and purpose to the cooperative public enterprise of education, and provide the opportunity for thoughtful participation in the direction of education by all who care seriously about it.

Waghid (2003:1) cautions that, while public philosophy has its merits, it focuses more on recommending and giving expression to public aspirations and educational values, making such a view insufficient for education. Waghid (2003:4) therefore echoes Soltis' argument for the integration of the personal and public dimensions of philosophy of education with professional space. Through professional philosophising, teachers are firstly concerned about the logical soundness of arguments, explaining the meanings of concepts, constructing reasonable arguments and providing ways to think about educational matters before devising ways in which those matters can be dealt with or solved (Waghid, 2003:4).

As an area of inquiry, philosophy therefore is a method of generating knowledge (not of the empirical sort) and perspective, which are commitments of value and belief that provide answers to the underlying principles, or reasons why of a complex area of human activity, in this instance education (Burbules & Warnick, 2003). This philosophical inquiry was therefore concerned with meaning and seeking to understand and reflect on practical experiences influencing education, while engaging in rigorous questioning of what education might or should become in a particular context. Drawing from Burbules and Warnick's (2003) description of methods of philosophical inquiry, I employed conceptual analysis, namely deconstructive criticism of a term or concepts, as well as hidden assumptions underlying particular thoughts as investigative tools in order to explore happiness and its relation to education in the context of rural farm schools. How is conceptual analysis to be understood?

Hirst and Peters (1998:37) argue that conceptual analysis, as an investigative tool of philosophy of education, enables one to gain clarity about the state of educational matters and what should be done in the realm of education. According to Burbules and Warnick (2003), apparent misunderstandings are often a result of people using the same concept or term in implicitly different ways. In this study, I was interested in using conceptual analysis in order to gain clarity about key concepts relating to happiness and their associated link to education. Waghid (2003:9) argues that conceptual analysis firstly enables us to reflect on and acquire more clarity with regard to understanding concepts; while secondly, it directs our practices as teachers towards looking for logically necessary conditions for the use of those concepts. A concept can therefore be analysed in terms of probing for the logically necessary conditions that

guide its constitutive rule or the general principle that makes a concept what it is (Waghid, 2003:14). In order to understand why a concept is used as it is, requires an exploration of the use of the particular concept in relation to other concepts that govern its use (Waghid, 2003:19). Furthermore, for one to comprehend the reasons why the particular concept is used as it is practiced, an understanding of the historical context that shaped the general principle of a concept and its relational practices is required (Waghid, 2003:14). This is so, because general principles are context-dependent, therefore guiding practices differently in the particular social and historical contexts in which it is used (Waghid, 2003:19).

In analysing the key concepts happiness and education, I was able to clarify its meaning by exploring different theorists' thinking on the meaning of the terms, both from causal subjective well-being and objective features approaches, as well as from a normative description perspective. This will ensure clarity regarding the concepts and its related concepts, namely happiness and education, as well as how learners and teachers give meaning to virtues related to happiness. In addition, I showed the hidden underlying assumptions associated with these terms and their related concepts, as well as looked beyond its obvious meanings by means of a deconstructive approach. Of importance to our understanding of the concepts, is the context in which these concepts function, as a concept derives its meaning from the context in which it functions, for example, what education means in a rural farm school in the West Coast Education District. An analysis of how the meaning of relevant concepts, such as education and happiness has evolved over time in order to historicise specific concepts is of equal importance.

In analysing various theories relating to happiness and education, I was able critically to review various arguments relating to this field in order to make sense of the complex nature of the relevant concepts. Moreover, by analysing the educational practices characteristic to some rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District, I was able to examine what normative implications these practices entail.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study and the subsequent mini-thesis are significant in the field of Philosophy of Education and Educational Theory for the following reasons.

- First, the study has personal value, insofar as the study prompted the author and should prompt the reader to reflect on their own sets of beliefs about what is regarded as worthwhile practices and approaches in not only educational spaces, but also in their own engagement with others.
- Secondly, in exploring debates on contemporary education, both internationally and locally, the study is concerned with seeking meaning and providing ways to think about educational matters in the professional space. These are debates with regard to how happiness and education are conceptualised, whether happiness can indeed be attained through education, and what the aims of education should be in a democratic society.
- Thirdly, the study provides the author an opportunity for public participation in educational debate and the direction education could or should take. The topic of the study reported on here is believed to be of educational and social value, particularly given the vision of the Department of Education to close down smaller and non-viable schools in rural communities, as well as the high incidences of humanitarian injustices reported in the media on a daily basis. The study is furthermore of practical significance as it highlights educational dilemmas faced by teachers and learners at rural farm schools, which policymakers and curriculum designers need to consider.
- It is therefore hoped that the results of the study reported in this mini-thesis will open up the possibility for further debate between academics, education theorists, curriculum planners, teachers and the general public.

## **1.7 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE STUDY**

### **Chapter One – Background to the study**

In this chapter, I described the motivation for the study, as well as the aims and the theoretical frameworks that guided it. In addition, I outlined the research methodology and method employed, indicated the significance of the study, gave an overview of the structure, and listed the meanings of key terms used in this study.

## **Chapter Two – An analysis of happiness and education**

In this chapter, I explore the different views proposed in terms of the meanings of happiness, how it can be attained in various domains of people's lives, and whether it is indeed attainable as an aim of life itself. A distinction is made between subjective and objective meanings of happiness, and happiness as conceptualised as a normative, evaluative concept. In order to understand the relevance and potential of education in human beings' pursuit of happiness, required an exploration of how ancient Greek philosophers, and contemporary philosophers of education conceptualise education and its potential to cultivate in learners the virtues benefitting themselves and the world they inhabit.

## **Chapter Three – Happiness in relation to the aims of South African educational policy**

In Chapter Three, I report on the potential of South African educational policy for enabling learners to internalise the moral values that are prerequisites for happiness. An exploration of the implications of happiness in relation to formal schooling in South Africa requires examining how the aims of education policies have influenced schooling in South Africa historically. In this chapter, I therefore report on an analysis of the aims of South African educational policy, prior to and after 1994, to the extent that it enabled and still enables the realisation of human flourishing.

## **Chapter Four – The potential for happiness at rural farm schools in the West Coast District**

In seeking answers to the questions relating to enabling conditions for, as well as conditions countering practical reasoning and compassion as prerequisites for human flourishing, a brief background of characteristics and conditions of farm schools is firstly provided. The constitutive elements of practical reasoning and compassionate action are discussed in relation to my own experiences working as district official at rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District.

## **Chapter Five – Summary and conclusion**

In Chapter Five, I provide a summary of each chapter of this study. The summaries of the chapters provide insights that have emerged in response to research questions

that framed this study. Finally, I offer some possibilities that might be considered by education authorities to enable the attainment of human flourishing at rural farm schools.

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS**

This study comprised a conceptual analysis located within philosophy of education. An analysis of happiness and its relation to education was conducted, based on the literature, examining ways in which practical reasoning and compassionate action had the potential to contribute to a morally worthwhile life for learners at some rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District. Possible ways in which these virtues could be inculcated in such schools were offered. However, various factors interchangeably play a role in different social contexts. The results of this study are therefore not offered as a model to be used at rural farm schools, but rather to elicit further debate in this regard.

I specifically did not choose to include in this mini-thesis how happiness is attained through religion, as the issue of religion is a complex one.

## Chapter 2

# AN ANALYSIS OF HAPPINESS AND EDUCATION

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

To have an understanding of a concept, “covers both the experience of grasping a principle and the ability to discriminate and use words correctly”, as stated by Hirst and Peters (1998:30). In this chapter, I focus on an analysis of the two central features of this, in order to gain a clearer, more informed understanding than before of how the concepts happiness and education are used, and what the meanings are that constitute understandings of these concepts and their relational practices within particular historical and social contexts. In addition, in this chapter, I report on my search for meanings, which concern not only the extrinsic ends of these concepts, but also those aspects connected to its intrinsic understandings.

In order to address the above-mentioned issues, it was necessary first to explore how these terms are embedded in our normal ways of thinking and talking, and secondly, how happiness and education are constituted by meanings as they unfold in the literature.

### 2.2 MEANINGS OF HAPPINESS

Most people, when asked what they want for themselves and for their loved ones, will reply that their greatest desire in life is to be happy (Noddings, 2003:9). The 14th Dalai Lama’s statement sums up this universal desire for happiness, “I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness” (Gyatso & Cutler, 1998:13). It would thus seem as if happiness is, for most people at least, one of life’s chief concerns.

For centuries, the question pertaining to what makes people happy has been debated and researched from various perspectives. Depending on the particular perspective from which (wo)man’s pursuit of happiness is addressed, views have accordingly been proposed in terms of the meanings of happiness, in particular how it can be attained in various domains of one’s life, and whether it is indeed attainable as an aim of life itself. I have explored how the meanings of happiness are used. A distinction is made

between subjective and objective meanings of happiness, and happiness as conceptualised as a normative, evaluative concept.

### **2.2.1 Subjective meanings of happiness**

In today's world, much focus is placed upon what makes people happy. For example, studies, such as the Happiness Planet Index (Abdallah et al., 2012), use research techniques that measure the well-being of people belonging to various nationalities. In the United Kingdom, educational programmes focusing on teaching happiness in schools have developed from an approach called "the science of happiness" (Suissa, 2008:575). This term is often used interchangeably with 'positive psychology' as an umbrella term for referring to techniques used to measure well-being, and research in the social science and economic well-being fields, which base their findings on such measurements of well-being (Suissa, 2008:575). Through standardised single-item or multi-item indexes of well-being, respondents are asked about their current feelings, whether they are having fun and what their hopes for the future are, in order to establish from the answers to various questions some measure of happiness in a particular time and place (Noddings, 2003:20). This sort of approach, espoused by Layard (2005, cited in Smith, 2008:563), is based on the notion that there is such a thing as feeling good – enjoying life and wanting the feeling to be maintained, while being unhappy refers to feeling bad and wishing things were different. Layard (2005, cited in Smith, 2008:563) supports his theory with claims that, in comparing experiences in terms of how much happiness they produce, it is possible to measure and rank them.

Smith (2008:563) reminds us that this approach can without question be traced back to the utilitarian philosophers of the nineteenth century. John Stuart Mill (1993, cited in Noddings, 2003:18), in describing the Greatest Happiness principle, states, "By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain." According to this view, "right action brings about the greatest sum of happiness in the long run, or the least amount of pain" (Wringe, 2007:44). As an ethical theory, utilitarianism thus attempts to provide answers to all questions relating to what one should do, what one should admire, or how one should live in order to maximise utility or happiness (Blackburn, 2008:375). For Mill (1863, cited in Blackburn, 2008:375), "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, and wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness".

According to the hedonistic view of happiness, which denotes a particular state of mind, for instance exhilaration or deep satisfaction, humans will experience happiness or well-being only if and when they believe that they are happy (De Ruyter, 2007:27). This argument is premised upon the view that what is best for an individual is what would make the individual happiest, placing the greatest emphasis on the quality of personal experiences (Bailey, 2009:799). However, the ways in which pleasurable experiences are achieved are as diverse as are the people who choose them. Moreover, while positive experiences are no doubt important to us, these pleasurable experiences are mostly short-lived (Bailey, 2009:799). Although a state of satisfaction is experienced on acquisition of new knowledge and skills, pleasure or satisfaction per se may therefore not be sufficient to enhance the quality of life (Bailey, 2009:800).

Another version of the subjectivist account, called the desire fulfilment theory of well-being, claims that life goes well when one's desires are fulfilled (Haybron, 2008:34). This is the dominant account of economists and philosophers during the twentieth century. It equates well-being with the satisfaction of the desires of the individual (Haybron, 2008:34). What makes an individual experience this feeling of happiness, is closely related to what the individual's desires are, or what they think they desire. According to O'Neill (1998:3, cited in Bailey, 2009:800), well-being can be associated with the fulfilment of fully informed preferences. There are two key characteristics of this so-called 'informed desire theory'. The first characteristic is that human beings will flourish if the desires that are beneficial to their well-being are satisfied, while the second characteristic relates to desires that include yearnings not related to an appetitive state, or desires whose fulfilment does not give psychological satisfaction (De Ruyter, 2007:27). The mere fact that desires can be ranked according to preferences is in itself problematic. Furthermore, what if the desires given preference prove to be potentially harmful to the individual's well-being, for example, when someone's desire to be skinny, leads to an eating disorder? I therefore concur with De Ruyter (2007:27) that, from this perspective, an individual's desires might not bear at all on their well-being.

If happiness, or subjective well-being, can be measured, surely one needs to take into consideration the factors that influence a person's levels of happiness at a particular point in time. As Suissa (2008:577) so poignantly asks, "Can a reported mood be a

manifestation of happiness? Is such a mood a necessary or sufficient condition for happiness?" As opposed to those ever-optimistic souls – referred to by William James (1929, cited in Noddings, 2003:24) as “healthy-minded people”, or by social scientists as “happy personalities” (the optimistic Pollyannas) who, even in difficult times naturally look on the bright side (Noddings, 2003:24) – the majority of people’s feelings relating to how they’re living their lives at a particular point in time, fluctuate. Michalos (2007:351) in his criticism on psychological profiles, asks the important question as to whether a happy profile is well warranted or not. According to Michalos (2007:350), one might question whether a person with a happy profile is living in a real world or a fool’s paradise, or whether a person with an unhappy profile is living a real world or a fool’s hell as described.

In addition, it is imperative collectively to take into account that subjective meanings of happiness are affected by societal approval or disapproval of some of the activities one might wish to participate in, and social pressures in terms of what is good and what is bad (Noddings, 2003:21). This often consequently results in internal and external conflicts relating to what are good or acceptable, or what is bad or unacceptable behaviour. Other complications are that people can be happy in one domain of their lives, yet unhappy in another (Noddings, 2003:21), or simply be pursuing hedonistic experiences the scope of which do not extend beyond the pleasurable experiences themselves.

Despite the complications relating to subjective well-being, as mentioned here above, I agree with Noddings’s (2003:23) contention that a positive sense of well-being is a requirement for happiness. However, as Noddings (2003:23) argues, a positive response on subjective well-being does not tell us how to attain happiness, or what conditions are required for it to be long lasting. This brought me to a discussion of another factor that influences the happiness of individuals, namely, objective goods.

### **2.2.2 Objective meanings of happiness**

Objective theories argue that characteristics of human flourishing can be objectively identified independent from an individual’s emotional endorsement of what it entails. Within the context of this view, the goods are intrinsically good, therefore judgment is made in terms of whether the goods are conducive to an individual’s flourishing,

irrespective of whether the individual likes the goods, wants them or values them (De Ruyter, 2007:26). Objective features of happiness, such as health, wealth, reputation, friendship/social relations, safety, intellectual and creative development and certain sensual pleasures have long been recognised, even by Aristotle (see Noddings, 2003:22), as goods which are intrinsically good and therefore conducive to an individual's flourishing. Developments in brain and gene research, and more broadly in psychology and biology, have confirmed that genetic predisposition to a certain level of happiness, as well as life circumstances relating to income, possessions, relationships, jobs, and intentional activities such as the active engagement in socialising, exercise, doing meaningful work and reflecting and savouring life, could account for variations found in people's happiness or flourishing over particular periods (Shah & Marks, 2004:5).

However, Noddings (2003:58) reminds us that, despite the obvious influence of these objective features on an individual's quality of life, they are open to interpretation, and priorities among them can shift from time to time. The objectively identifiable goods are in themselves not adequate to help a person lead a flourishing life. For an individual to lead a flourishing life, he or she has to construct his or her own interpretation of what the good is, which is one that he or she values as worthwhile and that will be satisfactory to him or her once it is fulfilled (De Ruyter, 2007:28). In illustrating her point of view, De Ruyter (2007:28) uses an example of how a person can flourish as a result of her relationship with God, while another can flourish as a result of her long-term relationship with her partner, and another as a result of having no exclusive relationship at all. Therefore, as De Ruyter (2007:28) quite rightly points out, human flourishing is personal and diverse, given the many ways in which people can interpret and combine the generic goods. This brought me to the question of whether an objective theory is sufficient when conceptualising happiness or human flourishing.

De Ruyter (2007:27) finds it problematic to agree with the notion that "well-being can exist independently of the perspective of the agent, or of the acknowledgement of the individual that he or she flourishes". She argues that, while there are goods that are undoubtedly good for all human beings, these goods are not automatically good for all in the same way. Furthermore, she posits that an individual need to be satisfied with his/her own interpretation of the goods, as well as with the actions or life path to which

this personal interpretation leads him or her (De Ruyter, 2007:29). Another concern, according to Noddings (2003:58–59), is the fact that consideration of expressed needs in a liberal democratic public requires moving beyond basic biological needs, to a consideration of others and sensitivity to context. Giving to others, sharing in others' joys, alleviating their misery and being sympathetic to others' suffering, all contribute to a deep sense of happiness in the majority of people.

I also explored the classical views on happiness.

### **2.2.3 Classical views on happiness**

Most people, in their pursuit of happiness, seek a life that is meaningful and therefore worthwhile. When individuals therefore define happiness as an aim of their lives, or when parents express their desire for their children to be happy, one can almost certainly say that these desires do not refer to episodic periods of joy or smiley-face feelings of being happy or the mere satisfaction of desires that are characteristic of some of the subjective well-being theories. Nor do they refer to hedonistic experiences of pleasure, which entail the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake, or the mere satisfaction of objective needs or desires. I therefore concur with Julia Annas' argument (2004, cited in Haybron, 2008:7) that, in raising their children, most parents aim at equipping them for lives that will go well as wholes. Parents therefore wish for their children a life that is meaningful and worthwhile.

Noddings (2003:25) reminds us that the circumstances that we are born into are not within our control and there are many incidentals that come along in life, hence our limited control over both subjective and objective factors. Furthermore, different individuals interpret different conditions in different ways. It would thus appear that the subjective and objective notions of happiness are centred on positive or negative psychological and/or biological feelings and dispositions and societal influences. In acknowledging that individual levels of well-being and contentment play a role in our understanding of what it means when someone is referred to as being happy, it can give us some insight into how people feel about certain aspects or situations in their lives. However, as Noddings (2003:23) posits, it does not indicate to us how happiness can be attained. In seeking an answer to this question, the Greeks, in the age of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, were not just looking for a descriptive, causal account of

what makes people happy. Central to their query into the aim of human life, was Socrates' question pertaining to "how one ought to live" (Haybron, 2008:6).

From the classical literature on happiness, it is evident that happiness has always been associated with human flourishing and attaining the good life (Noddings, 2003:10). This implies that happiness essentially is about having a full life or having the characteristics of a fulfilled life. For the Greeks, the very purpose of the state, and thus of its institutions, is enabling its citizens to lead the good life. Their writings thus essentially centre on how to attain this good life.

According to this view, it is *eudaimonia*, translated into English as happiness, which is the ultimate end or aim of life. (Hargreaves, 2001:488). McPherran (2010:529) summarises Socrates' moral theory (later developed by Plato, Aristotle and others) as follows, "Every person, as a rational being, aims to achieve the human good (*eudaimonia* or human flourishing) for him- or herself and the means to the human good are the virtues (*arête*) which is best obtained by means of philosophising."

Aristotle, in analysing meanings of a good or flourishing human life, conducted a conceptual and normative enquiry into human lives and values (Suissa, 2008:578). As Kenny and Kenny (2006, cited in Suissa, 2008:578) note, the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia* can more appropriately be translated as a 'worthwhile life', as it in essence captures the normative and broader aspects of the word, as well as the insight that it always relates to the context of the particular human being's life (Suissa, 2008:578). According to Aristotle, the general aim of political science is the resolve of the truth about happiness (*eudaimonia*) as "the highest of all goods achievable by action". It is therefore evident that, contrary to the more common, everyday understanding of happiness in the English language, *eudaimonia* is not a state of mind or set of feelings, but refers to a the quality of an individual's behaviour or character which results in him or her acting in a particular way (Hargreaves, 2001:488). Aristotle's teachings about the good life provide cogent arguments against identifying the good with money, with honour or with pleasure (MacIntyre, 2007:148). In positioning happiness in the full exercise of rationality, the Greek philosophers argue that true happiness is constituted through the development and use of reason (Noddings, 2003:10).

In his lectures, *Nicomachean Ethics (NE)* and *The Politics* (see Adkins, 1991; Barnes, 1984), Aristotle explains how *eudaimonia* can be attained. He argues that happiness (*eudaimonia*) requires the possession and exercise of intellectual and moral virtues (Curren, 2010:544). He defines moral virtue as the disposition “to feel and to be moved by one’s desires or emotions in order to act as reason would dictate, and to take pleasure in doing so” (*NE* II.2-6), while the “capacities or powers of understanding, judgment and reasoning that consequently enable one to attain truth” (*NE* VI.2 1139b11–13) constitute intellectual virtues (Curren, 2010:547).

MacIntyre (2007:149) sums up Aristotle’s argument in this regard as follows:

What constitutes the good for man is a complete human life lived at its best, and the exercise of the virtues is a necessary and central part of such a life, not a mere preparatory exercise to secure such a life.

For Aristotle, the happy man is a virtuous man, but virtue is acquired precisely through education. If this is so, how can happiness be attained through education? I examined the concept ‘education’ and its relation to happiness.

### **2.3 CONCEPTUALISING EDUCATION AND ITS RELATION TO HAPPINESS**

Derived from the Latin word, *educere*, the term ‘education’ was historically used to refer to training or bringing up of children and in Silver Latin, to the rearing of plants, animals and children (Katz, 2010:101). For the early Puritans, failure to properly rear a child, was a moral and legal transgression (Katz, 2010:101–102). If anything, education signifies some kind of learning. However, as is the case with many concepts, changes have taken place in respect of how terms are conceptualised and these changes mirror changes in economic and social life. In today’s world, education, because it has multiple meanings, remains ambiguous (Katz, 2010:102). It can, for example refer to a field of study, but it can also denote a system of schooling. Nevertheless, as Peters (1981:32) so aptly argues, having attended school does not necessarily mean being educated, nor does it mean that the individual’s upbringing was particularly educative. Insofar as education involves the moulding of the personalities of individuals, one needs to take into consideration that a person’s personality is complex, involving his temperament (Peters, 1981:33). Katz therefore reasons that the vagueness of education as a process or set of processes is the result

of the uncertainty about the proper criteria for how it is to be used in a particular sense (Katz, 2010:102). If it is true that, in life, most people aim, for themselves and for their children, to be happy in the *eudaimonic* sense, what criteria enable formal schooling to play a role in the ‘training’, ‘bringing up’, or ‘proper rearing’ of the children who are entrusted in their care? How will this be possible given the way in which society places emphasis upon symbols of educational achievement (diplomas, etc.) acquired through formal schooling as being essential for entrance into the socio-economic system?

In order to understand the relevance and potential of education in human beings’ pursuit of the good life, an exploration of how ancient and contemporary philosophers of education have conceptualised the term ‘education’, helps us gain some understanding in terms of providing education that will enable learners to acquire the virtues befitting the conditions of the world in which they live. In this regard, I drew from the philosophies of Greek philosophers, namely Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, as well as on Peters (1966; 1967; 1981), MacIntyre (1999), Gutmann (1987) and Nussbaum’s (2001) approaches to education. As a point of departure, I explored the philosophies of the Greek philosophers.

### **2.3.1 The Greeks**

The Greek philosophers, concerned with happiness and its relation to education, provided convincing arguments with regard to how happiness, conceptualised as human flourishing, can be attained through education. An exploration of the philosophies of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle provides insight into how these philosophers conceptualised education and its intimate link to happiness.

#### **2.3.1.1 Socrates**

According to McPherran (2010:528), it was Socrates who allegedly “first called philosophy down from the sky” through his investigation, not of the nature of the physical cosmos, but rather of the human virtue and how they contribute to human flourishing, that is *eudaimonia*. In seeking answers to life’s existential questions, Socrates and his companions engaged in a form of dialogue, which could be regarded as a method of learning or inquiry (Noddings, 2007:6). As he explored questions with regard to the creation of a just state, Socrates argued for an analysis and understanding of what it is one is doing or striving for, claiming that self-knowledge is

the basis of all knowledge as it supports and informs our critical inquiry of the broader society (Noddings, 2007:6–7). His questioning methods can be seen as pathways, by which he ventures with others: through such venturing there is the possibility of new insights coming forth, some previous dead ends being brought to light and some progress being made towards the truth (Hogan, 2004:22). Socrates' conclusion was that human beings become wiser through their best collective efforts, making them more appreciative and critical in their engagements with inheritances of learning (Hogan, 2004:23). Learning through critical engagement with others would therefore contribute to human flourishing.

### **2.3.1.2 Plato**

A scholar of Socrates, Plato's discussion of education is rooted in his analysis of the just state (Noddings, 2003:78). Plato argued for education according to students' capacities and demonstrated interests, as opposed to the same education for all. His 'functionalist' education model provides for different educational aims for workers and artisans, for guardians, and for rulers, a model that is aimed at producing competent adults to meet the needs of the state (Noddings, 2007:8). All children were provided with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities after which they received an education compatible with their interests and talents (Noddings, 2003:79). Such an arrangement, according to Plato, is just (Noddings, 2007:8). Plato's perfect state was one that was inflexible and hierarchically structured (Noddings, 2003:79). The three large classes he identified would be trained to the highest degree for the benefit of the state, while for the benefit of the individual, education would be aimed at "improvement and harmonious development of reason in the soul of the leader, spirit in the soul of the guardian, and appetite in the soul of the artisan" (Noddings, 2003:79–80).

Like Socrates, Plato focused on moral reasoning. He inherited from Socrates the belief that "virtue is knowledge" (Peters, 1966:104). Plato, in a process he describes as "turning the eye of the soul outwards towards the light", conceives the aims of education as building the capacity of the individual to understand and love the underlying principles of the world and develop a passion for order and symmetry, hence reproducing this in his or her soul and helping him or her to use reason to impose some harmony on his or her desires (Peters 1981:7).

### 2.3.1.3 Aristotle

For Aristotle, the goal of education is equivalent to the goal of man (Hummel, 1999:2). In his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *The Politics* which are records of lectures of Aristotle's teachings (see Adkins, 1991; Barnes, 1984), Aristotle intended to equip his students with a systematic understanding of human good (Curren, 2010:544-545). According to Carr (2004:132–133, cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004) the Greeks distinguish between 'theoretical philosophy', which refers to those detached forms of inquiry that employ a purely contemplative form of reasoning (*theoria*), and led to *a priori* knowledge of necessary, eternal and unchanging truth and is pursued entirely 'for its own sake', and 'practical philosophy', which aims at the development and improvement of the kind of 'context-based reasoning' employed in the conduct of a wide range of morally informed human activities. Of importance here, is the distinction between the two modes of non-theoretical reasoning, called *techne*, or technical reasoning, and *phronesis*, or practical reasoning. By *techne*, the Greeks meant the mode of value-free 'means–end' reasoning appropriate to those productive human activities they called *poiesis* (Carr, 2004, cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004:133). These are the activities whose 'end' can be clearly specified prior to any practical means to produce it (Carr, 2004, cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004:132–133). However, as well as reasoning how most successfully to achieve some given end, individuals also engage in forms of practical reasoning that entails how to act in a morally apposite manner. This form of practical reasoning was called *phronesis*, while the kind of morally informed human practice to which it applied was called *praxis* (Aristotle, 1955, cited in Waghid, 2003:47).

How then, according to Aristotle, is the capacity for such practical reasoning acquired? Like his predecessors, Aristotle argued that the virtuous man is a happy man. Repetition of virtuous action can establish the habits that then become part of the virtuous character, which in turn refine and shape the way in which we perceive the world. However, this cannot be achieved if such practices are thoughtless and unguided. The conduct in question requires that the learner is shaped through supervision and coaching to enable him or her to progress and become self-directed in his or her practice and habits (Curren, 2010:547).

How does a man become virtuous? According to Hummel (1999:2), Aristotle claims that the goal of education is identical to the goal of man, by implication making

education essential for the complete self-realisation of man. The happy man is therefore a virtuous man, with virtue being acquired through education. This implies that there are certain moral virtues, or strengths, that need to be cultivated through educative *praxis* (a practice committed to right living through the pursuit of the human good) in order to ensure human flourishing. The cultivation of those moral virtues lays the necessary foundation for the development of intellectual virtues, or our capacities of understanding, judgment and reasoning which arise as a result of teaching (*NE* II.1), and in turn enables us to act and make choices in order to achieve what is desirable (Curren, 2010:547). Such choices demand judgment. It is Aristotle's argument that an individual can only acquire practical reasoning if he or she, in the course of being initiated into a particular practice, comes to understand that what he or she is doing is inevitably directed towards the pursuit of some 'good' that is internal to the practice itself, and thus not related to the satisfaction of his or her immediate needs. Therefore, in order to make progress towards the achievement of excellence in his or her practice, the individual needs to acquire a disposition to think about what would constitute a suitable expression of this good in a particular concrete situation, which will allow him or her to act on the basis of sound practical reasoning (*phronesis*). Unlike *techne*, *phronesis* is not a skill that can be learned in isolation from, and then applied in, practice. Following in the tradition of Socrates and Plato, Aristotle argued that the aim of education should be the proper development of the rational psyche, the flourishing of which is intrinsic to living the best kind of life (Curren, 2010:550).

Carr (2004:133, cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004) further explains Aristotle's conceptualisation of practical reasoning. For Aristotle, means and ends are mutually constitutive elements within the single dialectical process of practical reasoning, as the end of a practice is some worthwhile good, internal to, and inseparable from the practice, existing only in the practice itself (Carr (2004:133, cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004). Characteristically to Aristotle's approach to teaching, and one can discern here the didactic method of the Socratic and Platonic dialogues, is the manner in which he poses a problem, discusses it by approaching it from different angles, probing it in order to determine the appropriate action to be taken (Hummel, 1999:1). By guiding and teaching learners to probe what is morally justifiable, the teacher enables the individual learner to acquire the intellectual virtue which equips him or her with the ability to, based upon a true and rational judgment, not only do what is right, but doing

it at the right time in the right place and in the right way (MacIntyre, 2007:150). Practical reasoning (*phronesis*) is therefore that intellectual virtue that must be present for all other virtues to be applied (MacIntyre, 2007:154). However, it is Aristotle's claim that, in order to have good judgment, one must possess all the moral virtues. The exercise of intellectual virtues can therefore not be possessed by someone who lacks the moral virtues (Curren, 2010:549). Intellectual and moral virtues, as the central virtues that will enable an individual to achieve *eudaimonia* (happiness), are therefore intimately related to each other (MacIntyre, 2007:155), hence Aristotle's view of *unity of virtue*.

Crucial to Aristotle's view is his claim that an individual is intelligible only as a member of a community, or a *politikon zōon* (MacIntyre, 2007:150). In Aristotle's city-state, obedience to rules and laws as prescribed are imperative, prohibiting certain types of action (for example the taking of an innocent life), irrespective of circumstances or consequences. In this regard, Aristotle refers to the importance of an education aiming to serve the best interests of all the citizens, preparing them to employ independent good judgment in shared government and in schooling different kinds of children together, preparing them to mutually respect each other and to have friendly regard for each other's well-being" (Curren, 2010:552). For Aristotle, "the activity of teaching is unequivocally understood to aim at something beyond itself, namely the formation of students" (Curren, 2010:555).

### **2.3.2 Neo-Aristotelian approaches to happiness in relation to education**

From the above-mentioned exploration of ancient Greek perspectives, it is clear that for Socrates, Plato and Aristotle education is linked explicitly and implicitly to acquiring the good life. This view has been embraced by twentieth century philosophers of education. In analysing the worthwhileness of education and its relationship to the notion of the good life, I explored Peters (1966; 1967; 1981), MacIntyre (1999; 2007), Gutmann (1987) and Nussbaum's (2001) conceptualisations of education.

#### **2.3.2.1 RS Peters**

In using the etymological roots of the older, more generalised derivations of education as 'training' or 'bringing up', Peters (1981) distinguishes between education and schooling, arguing that having been to school does not necessarily mean that one is educated, or that one's upbringing was particularly educative (Peters, 1981:32). For

Peters, education does not logically refer to one particular activity or process. Rather, it must refer to a family of processes that will culminate in a person becoming educated in the sense of being 'made better' (Katz, 2010:103). In this respect, according to Peters (1966:25), education can be associated with the concept reform, for both concepts lay down criteria regarding which activities or processes must conform, rather than picking out a particular activity or process. Both education and reform, as normative terms, also have criteria built into them that should lead to the achievement of something worthwhile (Peters, 1966:25). Although Peters sketches his own notion of criteria for being educated and tries to justify what he regards as the essential curricular content of education, he emphasises that the aims of education remain largely indeterminate (Katz, 2010:104). Peters regards processes of education as tasks relative to achievements, which by implication means that education's standards are intrinsic and not extrinsic to it (education) (Peters, 1967:2). Being educated therefore is the "achievement relative to a family of tasks called processes of education" (Peters, 1967:2). Peters explains his task-achievement analysis by providing examples of how education, like teaching, can be used as both a task and an achievement verb. In this regard, he uses the examples of having worked away at teaching or educating students, without the implication that the teacher or the learner achieved success in the various tasks they engaged in. As an achievement verb, education implies success, and unlike teaching, or other achievement verbs such as winning, remembering, finding, etc., with education there is also the implication that the achievement is worthwhile, culminating in something of value, and that the manner in which it is achieved is not morally objectionable (Peters 1966:26).

Covering a range of tasks as well as achievements, education is used to involve both trying and succeeding (Peters, 1966:26). However, as Peters (1967:3) so aptly asks, "Whose success are we talking about?" According to Peters (1966:3), the task of the teacher consists of intentionally employing various methods to get the learning process going. These processes of learning cannot be considered without reference to the achievements in which they are to culminate. Therefore, to learn something, is to succeed in some respect. The teacher's success, on the other hand, can only be defined in terms of that of the learner. In educational situations, learners are thus initiated by another into something that they have to achieve (Peters, 1967:3).

However, according to Peters (1967:6) we would not call a person educated if he or she had merely mastered a particular skill or if he or she is merely well informed. According to Peters (1967:6), this is so because being educated essentially requires a particular understanding of the principles and of the 'reason why of things'. In this way, the person's outlook of the world and hence how he or she feels about it, is transformed by his or her knowledge (Peters, 1966:31). For, as Peters (1967:8) puts it, "to be educated is not to have arrived; it is to travel with a different view".

Another sense in which mere knowledge cannot be inert was first emphasised by Socrates and Plato in their doctrine that "virtue is knowledge", with knowledge involving the type of dedication that is part of being within a certain thought and awareness (Peters, 1966:31). Education develops an individual's awareness by enlarging, deepening and extending it. However, being on the inside of a form of thought and awareness is, according to Peters (1966:31), both to understand and to care. Similarly, without what might be called a cognitive perspective, a man can be highly trained in a specialised field, yet fail to see its connection to much else, or its place in a coherent pattern of life (Peters, 1966:31).

Educational processes can therefore be viewed as a combination of tasks that ultimately results in being educated, an achievement which, according to Peters (1967:14) is a complex one involving the mastery of some skills, knowledge and understanding of principles. Contrary to the concept of 'training', which is naturally embedded in the realm of skills or competencies that have to be acquired in order to master some specifiable type of performance essentially through practice and to a lesser degree through instruction, correction and example, a person is never described as fully educated in terms of any specific end, function or way of thinking (Peters, 1966:34). The basic requisite is that students should first acquire the necessary understanding of knowledge in order to attain a perception of the principles that provide backing, substantiate and give unity to lower level rules or assumptions (Peters, 1967:18). Evidence that one has grasped the underlying principles is provided if one knows how to go on and deal with new situations in the light of it (Peters, 1967:18). Words such as 'insight' are connected to the grasp of principles, and once an individual attains it, very little practice is required as is the case with skills, and neither are the principles quickly forgotten like the lower-level information which they unify (Peters,

1967:18-19). Through the activity of teaching, students are taught to grasp principles, which is different to the methodology behind training or instructing. Teaching or educating therefore defines that the principles be understood before the skill is taught (Peters, 1967:19).

In a democratic society, the activity of teaching should therefore initiate learners into societal traditions in which the fundamental principles of reason are implicit (Peters, 1966:314). Initially, they will learn to act from others who know how to do so, without understanding the reasons for doing it. But gradually, they will come to comprehend in a more explicit way the principles underlying the reasons for what has become almost second nature or habitual to them, enabling them to act with understanding, adapt their practices to novel situations, or even challenge some of the practices as being no longer rationally defensible (Peters, 1966:314).

The danger however, is that fixed beliefs can be perpetuated if bodies of knowledge with principles immanent in them, are handed down without an attempt logically to explain or justify them, or deal with phenomena that do not fit in an honest manner (Peters, 1967:19). This type of indoctrination is not compatible with the development of critical thought, which is an essential feature of Peters' analysis of the aims of education. Critical thought, however, cannot emerge without a body of knowledge towards which a critical attitude can be developed. Critical thought will only develop if we engage in critical conversations that build in our consciousness, or as Plato suggested, when the "soul is in dialogue with itself" (Peters, 1967:19). It is Peters' contention that Socrates' *ad hominem* method of question and answer would probably be the best way to ensure such critical thought. In this way, constant probing would enable the student gradually to begin to think in a clear, coherent and structured way, and in developing a thought, to reformulate thinking or proposed actions until hitting something that is not objectionable (Peters, 1967:20). In this way, students will be able to critically examine their conduct, attitudes and beliefs. It is however imperative that the various forms of thought be passed on in the right way at the right time, and are informed by the passion that lies at the heart of it. Only in this way can they have a transforming effect on a person's outlook on nature, other people and social institutions. This means that the characteristics of consistency, clarity, precision and determination to look at the facts are considered throughout (Peters, 1981:41).

In addressing the question pertaining to which educational processes would lead to the development of an educated person whose knowledge and understanding is not confined to one form of thought and awareness, Peters (1967:21) argues that explicit learning situations are not sufficient to bring about such an integrated outlook. It is Peters' contention that conversation creates a common world to which all participants bring their distinctive contributions. Despite the fact that, in such conversations, no participant sets out to teach anyone anything, much is learnt by participating in shared experiences. In such learning situations, participants learn to see the world from the viewpoint of others whose perspectives are different from theirs. Peters emphasises that being an active participant in a real conversation, is an achievement as it is not possible without knowledge, understanding, objectivity and sensitivity to others (Peters, 1967:21). Such an achievement equips the participant with the ability to, even in his later years, really listen to what others have to say, irrespective of his or her use of it (Peters, 1966:88). Peters (1973b, cited in Katz, 2010:104) states that it is through education that mere living is transformed into a quality of life. The concentration on activities such as literature, science and mathematics, which have a high degree of cognitive content, is of course of utmost importance for how an individual sees and understands the world. But an educated person does not merely continue to engage in activities when he leaves school or a tertiary institution; he or she is someone whose entire range of actions, reactions and activities is gradually transformed as a result of the deepening and widening of his understanding and sensitivity. There is therefore no end to this process. According to Peters (1973b, cited in Katz, 2010:104), an educated person will therefore continue to pursue life-enhancing activities, even when he or she is no longer required to do so, which will inevitably transform and enhance the quality of his or her life. In this regard, the educated person is not someone who is too narrowly specialised, or someone who sees learning as an instrumental vehicle to other social goods such as status, wealth and power. Rather, he or she becomes someone whose works is characterised by passion, precision, and sensitivity to worthwhile things that lie at hand (Peters, 1973b, cited in Katz, 2010:104).

Peters (1966:25) recognises that the term 'education' also has normative cultural and social dimensions. In noting that the values upon which a community is built provides context, Peters recognises that education can be seen as a form of cultural transmission in that it consists of initiating others into a public world that is

characterised by the language and concepts of the people, and structured by the rules that govern their purposes and their interactions with others. To quote Peters (1966:56), “the ‘potentialities’ of the individual can only be developed within the framework of some socially structured pursuit into which he has to be initiated”. While focusing on the quasi-universal features of pursuing the truth and reason as intrinsic goods of being educated, Peters (1966) emphasises in this justificatory arguments for education such critical cultural values as social justice, equality of opportunity, respect for persons (Katz, 2010:105). The development of reason, as well as principles such as impartiality, truth-telling, freedom, and respect for and concern for others, which the use of reason in social life presupposes, are thus highly valued in the democratic society in which we live (Peters, 1981:37). In the section that follows, I examined Alasdair MacIntyre’s approach to educating learners to live a good life.

### **2.3.2.2 *Alasdair MacIntyre’s approach to education***

In his publication, *After virtue* (2007), MacIntyre argues for the restoration of the ancient Aristotelian approach to ethics. He begins by recovering the concept of virtue (*arête*), arguing that virtues are qualities that both enable and predispose an individual to flourish or live a good life. In order to understand MacIntyre’s approach to education in relation between practice and virtue, one needs to explore how he conceptualises ‘practice’ and ‘goods’. For MacIntyre, “a practice is any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended” (MacIntyre, 2007:187). For such practices to sustain the excellence of what is produced, human beings need goods internal to their practices, that is, virtues. According to MacIntyre, the telos of an activity, in other words the things that we consider to be worthwhile to have, achieve, attend to or participate in, are those goods that provide us with the reasons for acting (Higgins, 2010:238). For MacIntyre (2007:219), human life is characterised as a narrative quest insofar as the good life is conceptualised as the life spent in search of the good life. The virtues, or goods internal to our practice sustain us in this quest, but these also sustain those traditions through which both practices and individual lives

are provided with their required historical context (MacIntyre, 2007:223). It is thus from those communities that human beings derive their social, historical and moral identities (MacIntyre, 2007:220–221).

In his publication, *Dependent rational animals: Why human beings need the virtues* (1999), MacIntyre explores what these virtues or internal goods are that enable human beings to flourish. Much of his argument in this publication centres on the idea that we can learn something about human beings from how other animals pursue their individual and collective goods. In this regard, he argues that human beings, like dolphins and gorillas, aim at achieving their particular goods in company with and in collaboration with others (MacIntyre, 1999:61). Like dolphins, human beings' social relationships are crucial to their flourishing. A good human being is therefore one who benefits him or herself, as well as others (MacIntyre, 1999:65). MacIntyre therefore argues for relationships of dependency. This dependency makes us vulnerable to a wide range of inadequacies, illnesses and deficiencies and, just like other species, we need others in our quest to thrive. Just as children need mothers and learners need teachers in this regard, the opposite is also true, for mothers or teachers generally flourish when their charges do.

Which role, according to MacIntyre, can education and in particular formal schooling play with regard to enabling learners to flourish? It is MacIntyre's contention (MacIntyre & Dunne, 2004, cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004:1) that education should aim at, not only the development of those powers that will empower each and every child to become independent and reflective participants of their families and political communities, but also the propensity of those virtues that are required to guide people to the achievement of their common and individual goods. A good education is therefore one in which teachers enable learners not only to play their intended part in different kinds of complex activities through the development of their skills, but also to recognise the goods served by those activities which give point and purpose to what they do (MacIntyre & Dunne, 2004, cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004:2). MacIntyre argues that teaching is not a practice, but rather a set of skills and habits offered to the service of a variety of practices (MacIntyre & Dunne, 2004, cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004:5). The progress of a child is a further start to the habits which become virtues (MacIntyre, 1999:88). How is this to be done?

According to MacIntyre, one of the central goods intrinsic to practical reasoning is the possession of the virtue of caring (Waghid, 2003:26). In this sense, caring does not merely involve the cultivation of affection towards others. Of course, one has to be affectionate towards, or have some attachment to a learner in order to care, but this does not mean merely pleasing learners. To care for learners is to direct their actions to what is in their best interests in a setting in which the learner is provided the security and recognition needed by teachers who unconditionally commit themselves to care for learners (MacIntyre, 1999:90). For MacIntyre, a caring teacher is one who cultivates in learners the capacity to evaluate, modify, or reject personal practical judgments, in other words, to reach one's own justifiable conclusions for which one is to be held accountable (MacIntyre, 1999:83). In a Grade 7 Life Orientation lesson on religious practices in South Africa, for instance, the learner acquires new knowledge of the diverse religious practices in South Africa. Specific questioning techniques, and/or the sharing of various viewpoints through which the learner and his or her classmates rationally analyse such perspectives by articulating it in a clear, coherent way helps him or her to discover new perspectives and to evaluate his or her own understandings of the relevant practices. The learner is thus able to modify some of his or her previous judgments, or perceptions and prejudices relating to them, and in the process to re-educate him- or herself in relation to other learners' viewpoints, based on the teacher's critical feedback on other learners' viewpoints. A learner is cared for if he or she receives a good education on understanding the diverse religious practices in South Africa as well as the discovery of new perspectives, which might alter his or her previous viewpoints and the ways in which he or she responds to related matters. Investigating his or her own and others' viewpoints on certain matters, allows the individual to make sense of the world he or she lives in and in sharing these ideas seek for ways in which to transform possible biased attitudes in society.

According to Waghid's interpretation of MacIntyre's conceptualisation of caring, when practiced by teachers as practical reasoners, this kind of care will not only enable learners to make rational choices, to be imaginative and to re-educate themselves, but it will also help learners to trust and rely upon those teachers from whom they have received care (Waghid, 2003:27). Both givers and receivers therefore engage justly in conversation with one another. It is MacIntyre's contention that conversational justice, amongst other things, require of participants in conversations to firstly speak to each

other with candour, that is without pretending, or deceiving or striking attitudes, and secondly that such conversations do not take up more time than is justified by the relevance of the point that he or she has to make and the arguments necessary for it (MacIntyre, 1999:111). Let us say the lesson mentioned above is extended to a discussion on the viability of religious holidays in South Africa. Topics such as these have the potential to elicit conflicting viewpoints and resistance amongst learners. During such conversations, in encountering each other's differences, learners learn about each other and from each other. In the same way, teachers learn about learners and from learners. Such interaction requires of the participants to be willing to listen to each other and to be open to accept each other's viewpoints. In interacting with each other's differences, teachers and learners mutually explore and share each other's perspectives in a critical manner as a way to develop their own understanding (Waghid, 2003:28). Unconditional engagement of teachers has the potential to foster co-operation and mutual respect among participants, thereby improving the credibility and legitimacy of the engagement and their decisions, and enhancing the desire to share with one another (Waghid, 2003:28).

MacIntyre furthermore argues that learners in the classroom should be afforded the opportunity to exercise their voices in shared and rational deliberation, whether it is by exercising their own critical judgments, or exercising it by proxy, as is the case in group discussions (MacIntyre, 1999:139). He refers to this ability as the virtue of "shared rational deliberation", or "political reasoning" (MacIntyre, 1999:140). When learners engage with one another about their beliefs and presuppositions, they are required to articulate their perceptions and perspectives to others in a clear, logically consistent and unambiguous manner. Waghid (2003:31) explains that this type of critical inquiry requires of participants to be rational, open and truthful in their pursuit of achieving a common mind.

In the section that follows, I focus on how Amy Gutmann (1987) links practical reasoning to the advancement of a better society and world.

### ***2.3.2.3 Amy Gutmann's conception of deliberative education***

Children are first educated by their parents in terms of the inculcation of character and habits. This process is conducted through discipline and example. However, as they

progress to life outside of their own families, their character and skills are shaped both by the examples set by those whom they love and respect, as well as by the rules regulating those to whom they are associated with (Gutmann, 1987:50). This method, by which children are trained by example, is undoubtedly most effective during childhood, but as they enter the formal schooling system, they become responsive to another kind of education, one which is more intellectual in its effect and more rationalist in its method (Gutmann, 1987:50). For the most part, they learn through instruction, but teaching them to think logically, to argue coherently and fairly, and to reflect on relevant options before coming to conclusions, enable them to develop the capacities for criticism, rational argument and decision-making (Gutmann, 1987:50).

However, the capacity for reasoning is not sufficient, because those that lack a sturdy moral character are unable to distinguish between the obvious moral demands and the agonising dilemmas of life. Teaching them knowledge and appreciation of literature, science, history, and sports indirectly aids in the development of moral character. According to Gutmann (1987:51), this is so, because the logical and interpretive skills taught by science and mathematics, and literature respectively, and the understanding of differing ways of life taught in history and literature, as well as sportsmanship taught by physical education, all contribute to the development of the moral character of in this instance, learners. Together, the inculcation of character and moral reasoning constitute the core of compulsory education in a democracy: the development of 'deliberative' or what Gutmann (1987:52), interchangeably calls "democratic character". Connected with the development of democracy, deliberation is defined as "careful consideration with a view to decision" on the individual level, and as "consideration and discussion of the reasons for and against a measure by a number of councillors (participants in the deliberation process)" on the institutional level (Gutmann, 1987:52).

Gutmann, in the preface of her 1987 publication, provides us with more clarity in terms of the principles of democratic deliberation. Her deliberative democratic model is based upon principles which are instrumental in constructing a community and an atmosphere in which decisions are reached through the process of open discussion. These are the principles of reciprocity, accountability and reason giving. A foundational principle of deliberative democracy is reciprocity among free and equal citizens. In their

quest to seek common decisions, citizens and their accountable representatives, in an ongoing process of mutual justification, provides one another with morally defensible reasons for the rules or laws that collectively bind them. My concern however, was how the schooling system can contribute to the development of deliberative character.

Gutmann (1987:52) points out that, in any democracy, the school system is instrumental in the appropriate preparation of free and equal citizens. She emphasises the centrality of deliberating about the demands of justice as a virtue of democratic citizenship. However, this cannot be achieved meaningfully if school systems do not fulfil their roles to educate deliberative citizens. A primary aim of compulsory schooling should therefore be to cultivate the skills and virtues of deliberation, including the capacity to deliberate the demands of justice for all individuals, because it is through our empowerment of democratic citizens that we collectively can further the cause of justice around the world. According to Gutmann (1987:52), deliberation is not a single skill or virtue. It calls upon skills of numeracy and literacy, critical thinking, as well as contextual knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of other people's perspectives. In addition, deliberation encompasses the virtues of veracity, nonviolence, practical judgment, civic integrity and magnanimity. How is this to be done?

Here I would like to make use of a practical example of a group discussion on the format of the school's assembly, as transpired during a leadership camp for Grade 6 and 7 learners which I facilitated. First, the discussion centred on the current format of school assemblies. Thereafter, learners were encouraged to view their honest opinions with regard to this particular issue with open-mindedness, substantiating it with reasons. From listening to what the other had to say, learners acquired new knowledge about and insight into how others viewed the issue at hand. By considering the reasons of others equally, they critically evaluated whether their reasons for taking a particular stand were justifiable or not. In turn, this led them either to accept or to reject their own reasons or their understanding of their reasons or justifications before articulating an account of their reasons. After considering the arguments of the learners, the teacher pondered upon it carefully before giving an account of her own reasons, which students were encouraged to evaluate. This session could easily, as a result of the specific nature of the topic, have led to a conflict situation. Furthermore, in the event of others acting as representatives for our own viewpoints (in group discussions), there is the

potential danger of conflict between the representative's personal viewpoints and those whom he or she represents. However, the manner in which such deliberations are conducted determines the outcome. If all learners feel that they are part of a deliberation process conducted in an honest, open and mutually respectful manner and that their viewpoints are taken seriously, and group representatives accept accountability for accurately conveying the proposals of the group, then conflict situations would (hopefully) be averted.

Deliberation is therefore fostered through listening to, and evaluating and re-evaluating one another's reasons in a respectful manner. In this way, schools can be instrumental in inculcating the virtues which is essential for individuals to flourish in a democracy. However, is the inculcation of veracity, nonviolence, practical judgment, civic integrity and magnanimity sufficient in leading learners to become morally just persons? Considering MacIntyre's argument that practices and virtues only constitute the good life when those practices and virtues are from within a community and tradition that identifies them (MacIntyre, 2007:222), an exploration of how Nussbaum (2001) approaches the contribution compassionate imagining can make in guiding deliberation amongst teachers and learners.

#### ***2.3.2.4 Martha Nussbaum's justification of compassionate imagining as an enabling condition for moral justice***

For Nussbaum, rational deliberation ought to be prompted by the desire to treat others justly and humanely, that is, with compassion (2001 cited in Waghid, 2003:68). Her main contention in justifying compassionate imagining is that the emotion should be most frequently cultivated when one embarks upon democratic action in public life (Nussbaum, 2001:299). In addition to prompting people to be aware of the misfortune or suffering of others, compassionate imagining also extends the boundaries of the self outward by focusing on others' misfortune and suffering which in many cases had not come about through their own doing.

For Nussbaum (2001), an education focusing on deliberative argumentation and narratives without the cultivation of compassion is therefore not sufficient. At least two cognitive requirements constitute Nussbaum's notion of compassion, which she conceptualises as a painful, emotional judgment (Waghid, 2010:36). First, insofar as

one believes that the suffering of the person is serious and not trivial, and that the person is blameless for the underserved injustice he or she might have suffered, one recognises the need to find creative ways in which the person's plight can be alleviated. Secondly, compassion is best cultivated if one recognises that the sufferer of such misfortunes shows us something about our own lives, that is, that we too are vulnerable to misfortune (Nussbaum, 2001:319). In order for compassion to be present, one must, in recognising that another person's ill affect his or her own flourishing, consider the suffering of such a person as a significant part of his or her own goals. In effect, he or she "makes herself vulnerable in the person of another" (Nussbaum, 2001:319). This means that, instead of becoming impatient with the inability of others to grasp concepts, one should imagine what it means for them to encounter such difficulty.

Nussbaum (2001:426) suggests some practical strategies which could be employed at every level of public education. In cultivating in learners the ability to imagine the experiences of others and to participate in their sufferings, learners are able to extend their empathy to more people and more types of people (Nussbaum, 2001:426). According to Nussbaum, citizenship education should begin at an early age through the establishment of pedagogical spaces where learners are exposed to educational practices with the purpose of developing an attentiveness and concern for other people and for their sufferings. In the process, learners will be able to extend their empathy for others, encouraging a spirit of living together in diversity. Through exposing learners to myths, stories, poetry, drama, music, works of art and sharing stories about the histories of other countries and nations, and cultures and religions at an elementary level, learners get acquainted with, and gain an understanding, awareness, appreciation of and, most importantly, respect for the diverse circumstances of others by being drawn into those lives through imagination and a sense of wonder (Nussbaum, 2001:430). As a result of learning to appreciate the diverse circumstances in which other human beings struggle to flourish, learners' ability to think critically about controversial issues that pervade the society in which they live is expanded (Nussbaum, 2001:432).

## 2.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I highlighted the different ways in which research studies have approached concepts of happiness, as well as how it might be attained through education.

I explored various researchers' arguments against conceptualisations of happiness from a subjective well-being and objective approach, emphasising how subjective 'happy' states are rarely long lasting, are dependent on societal approval and are in many instances specific to a particular domain of one's life, while happiness attained through the acquisition of objective goods are open to interpretation and dependent on shifting priorities. Individuals therefore have limited control over subjective and objective factors.

However, in their quest for happiness, most people are searching for a whole life that is meaningful and therefore worthwhile, independent of its contingencies. Ancient Greek philosophers define happiness as the attainment of the greatest good or *eudaimonia* (human flourishing). Aristotle (see Sinclair, 1962:427), in emphasising the crucial role that education can play in human's quest for happiness, argued that it is through practical reasoning that human beings will come to shape their perceptions of the world as they know it, enabling them to know what the right action is that needs to be taken at a particular time in a particular context in order to attain some worthwhile good. In this regard, education can play a critical role in human beings' search for happiness. Peters (1966), MacIntyre (2007) and Gutmann (1987), albeit with some differences, provide persuasive arguments with regard to how classroom pedagogies aimed at the development of the virtues intrinsic to practical reasoning enable the individual learner to, willingly and attentively, through shared deliberation, critically examine his or her own and others' conduct, attitude and beliefs. However, for Nussbaum (2001:432), an education without the cultivation of compassion is not sufficient. Classroom activities should therefore include strategies that will enable learners to develop an attentiveness and concern for others and their sufferings. In turn, learners' capacity to think critically about controversial issues that permeate the society in which they live will be expanded (Nussbaum, 2001:432), making practical reasoning and compassion inseparable virtues of education. An education aimed at instilling the virtues through practical reasoning and compassionate action thus

benefits both the individual and those with whom she or he engages with in the particular society in which he or she lives, highlighting the notion of give-and-take embedded in educational *praxis* as a result of human beings' vulnerability and dependency on others. In this way, the process of education enables children to flourish as morally just human beings in the particular society which they inhabit, enabling them to attain the ultimate goal of life, which is happiness.

This brings me to an exploration of whether South African educational policy makes provision for the inculcation of the virtues of practical reasoning and compassion. In order to establish this, I examined how educational policy historically influenced the development of individual learners in the South African society.

## Chapter 3

# HAPPINESS IN RELATION TO THE AIMS OF SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL POLICY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two demonstrated that when schools become pedagogical spaces in which teachers provide educational *praxis* that guide learners in terms of how they ought to live or how to conduct themselves morally in a particular society, they (learners) will flourish as *educated* human beings. The literature further suggests that the attainment of human flourishing, that is happiness, is possible when an individual has developed the self-worth critically to evaluate information in order to make informed decisions, and that such learning experiences will have intrinsic value for him or her, as well as for those with whom he or she engages. Through thought-provoking, yet compassionate, deliberative exchanges with peers and teachers, learners may acquire, among other characteristics, the virtue to listen attentively and appreciatively to others, to respect others' viewpoints, to acknowledge the difference of others, and to be aware of and understand the sufferings and vulnerabilities of others, prompting them to act in just and humane ways. In this way, learners internalise the moral virtues that they require to flourish as individuals, while they are also expected to participate actively in the society in which they are situated.

The question arises, what is the potential of South African curriculum policy for enabling learners to internalise the moral virtues that are prerequisites for happiness, as described here?

An exploration of the implications of happiness in relation to the formal schooling system in South Africa necessitates examining how the aims of education policies have influenced schooling in South Africa historically. In their application of Rorty's (1990a) idea, Hogan and Smith (2003:166) emphasise that a nation's educational system is embedded in the authority of a government at a specific time. A nation's educational policy can therefore be interpreted on the basis of its historical context. Therefore, in this chapter I examined the aims of South African education, prior to and after 1994, to the extent that it enabled/enables the realisation of happy human beings.

## **3.2 THE AIMS OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA, PRIOR TO 1994**

Prior to 1994, South African curriculum policy played a key role in imposing racially based inequalities in schooling, and producing inequalities in social class, gender and religion (Christie, 2008:175). As a coercive social system, education before 1994 greatly influenced people's perceptions of the self and of others, and consequently the way in which they acted towards or treated others. It is therefore important to explore the aims of the education policy implemented in South Africa before 1994, as, despite the abolishment of segregated education, the effects of this system still affect society and its educational system to some extent. A possible reason for this could be that many teachers currently in the system grew up, were schooled, and were trained as teachers during the apartheid era. In order to seek an understanding of how schooling during this era influenced people's well-being, the rest of this section unfolds as follows: a brief historical background on educational policy during this period in South Africa's history; an exploration of the implications of apartheid schooling.

### **3.2.1 Brief historical background**

Since colonial times to the early 1990s, the aim of schooling was motivated and designed to prepare learners in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in their social, economic and political lives in a racially segregated society. This explains the differentiated curricula that were meant to cater for different race groups. Policies for segregated schooling for white and non-white children were introduced by the Dutch Reform Church Council as early as 1676, giving a clear indication of the roles those in authority would play then and in the years to come with regard to the idea that non-Europeans belonged in remote areas and that their education would therefore be driven in that direction (Seroto, 2004:63). Throughout the 1800s, the public schooling system for white learners, and the limited educational opportunities provided by missionaries for coloured and black children, ensured a skilled white workforce and an unskilled black workforce (Thompson & Prior, 1982:29). Towards the end of the 1940s and during the early 1950s, the National Party's apartheid ideology however gave government the power to relate the provision of education to racial segregation, social reproduction and economic growth (Hyslop, 1988:449). During this era, educational policy based on the Christian National Education (CNE) principles and the Fundamental Pedagogy (FP) approach followed in all schools was aimed at

ensuring conformity to and continuity of the ideologies and culture of the dominant group, thereby promoting exclusivity and maximising dominance over other racial groups (Fataar, 2010:74–75).

I examined the implications of the educational discourses and the pedagogical approaches during this era in relation to the notions of practical reasoning and the cultivation of compassionate action as prerequisites for human flourishing.

### **3.2.2 Implications of apartheid schooling**

I had a distinctive experience once as a student teacher in the early 1980s when I allowed learners to reflect on and share in groups their thoughts of a literature piece, during a lesson when my competency as a teacher was being evaluated. Needless to say, the noise levels were slightly higher than was regarded as acceptable in those days. The feedback I received from the evaluation by an experienced teacher, who acted as my supervisor, was that I had failed to maintain learner discipline during the lesson as learners were allowed to talk to each other. In addition, I was informed that I had not ensured that learners understood the literature piece from the author's perspective, which incidentally was an Afrikaner Nationalist perspective. This supervisor's reaction is a typical example of how the CNE and its FP approach to teaching influenced classroom practices during the apartheid era. A characteristic classroom situation would thus have been one during which the teacher explained a specific issue to learners, based on the perspective of state-approved textbooks and themes. Learners would have listened passively and the textbook version would have been accepted unconditionally as the truth. Relevant moral issues were, in all probability, accepted by learners categorically from a subjective perspective, as opposed to their being able to reason how to respond when confronted by those moral issues.

The FP approach, implemented in all classrooms across race groups, thus ensured a docile, authoritarian pedagogical style in which pre-packaged content was conveyed in a non-critical manner, from a Calvinistic Afrikaner Nationalist perspective (Fataar, 2010:159–160). Characterised by authoritarian and strict Calvinistic values and conformity (Leach, 1989:43), formal schooling set out to teach learners to accept authority, and to be obedient and know their place. (Enslin & Pendlebury, 2000:432).

I explored the influence of these pedagogical practices on the individual and society's potential to flourish as human beings.

Considering that the FP style of teaching discouraged critical enquiry and reasoning, and was essentially conservative and *techne*-instrumentalist as a result of the strict examination mode of assessment, it is questionable whether such value-free means-end teaching practices would have enabled learners to experience learning as a worthwhile practice in which the goods are intrinsic to the practice itself. In the absence of deliberative engagement between learners, or between teachers and learners, learners would not have been afforded the opportunity to listen critically to others' viewpoints. Not having been exposed to various viewpoints would inevitably mean that learners would not have been in the position to re-evaluate their own perceptions or challenge the religious, cultural and political perspectives of those in authority. For example, prescribed history, geography and literature textbooks, used both in white and non-white schools, would portray people of colour as different and inferior, and a threat to the white nation (Leach, 1989:44; Seroto, 2004:106). In the absence of deliberative engagement where different perspectives could be challenged and re-considered, the transmission of knowledge as facts contributed to the inculcation of a condescending perception among white individuals towards non-white people, reinforcing the government's vision of establishing identity along racial lines. In addition, it firmly established not only the individual learner's perception in terms of the self, but also how the individual interacted with and towards other race groups. On the one hand, there is the sad reality that many people based their self-worth and identity precisely on the premise that they were inferior to the (superior) other (race group), and therefore acted in an inferior and submissive way. On the other hand, acts from a superior platform could result in one not perceiving the needs of those who were oppressed as equally important to one's own needs, treating them with disrespect and often in inhumane ways, and reserving virtuous acts such as respect, trust and compassion for those within one's own race group. In other words, one can in my opinion, make the assumption that the Biblical Commandment to love your neighbour as yourself was literally interpreted as one's neighbour being of one's own race group.

CNE also displayed a deep patriarchal attitude and bias in terms of gender, as was evident in the curricula and subject choices for boys and girls of all race groups (Carrim,

2006:181–182). Furthermore, based on Calvinistic religious principles, an intolerance towards those who had different sexual preferences existed in most communities. If, for instance, the teaching of values consisted of the one-sided transmission of society's perspectives and beliefs relating to different sexual preferences, then the possibility existed that the rights of those who were in direct conflict with those beliefs would not have been recognised, a situation which potentially could have resulted in such persons being unjustly treated with contempt. For in the absence of knowing how another individual's inner conflict and struggles affect him or her, one finds it hard to imagine the pain that the particular individual is going through. Furthermore, the absence of learner–teacher engagement or critical deliberation amongst learners with regard to gender and sexuality issues, could have contributed to some individuals being coerced into believing or adopting specific character traits deemed appropriate for a specific gender, or being compelled to behave in a way acceptable to what the particular society deemed morally and socially appropriate.

However, despite the paternalistic, patriarchal approach to teaching, many people will be quick to point out that apartheid schooling indeed made provision for the cultivation of certain character traits, which were deemed beneficial to both the individual and the society. This argument can be based on the fact that the cultivation of habits such as cleanliness, obedience, punctuality and self-discipline, based on Calvinistic religious and moral values, made up a key constituent of the curriculum and the ethos of missionary schools (Fataar, 2010:68). In schools for white learners, Religious Instruction and Youth Preparedness programmes (Enslin, 2003:79) had, as some of their objectives, the cultivation of Christian values such as honesty, obedience and respect towards older persons, as well as discipline and a type of 'blind' patriotism. However, from my own experience, values such as honesty and respect for older persons were taught in classrooms throughout South Africa, without the opportunity for learners to question the rationality behind acting in a particular way in a particular situation. Furthermore, the question arises as to whether, for instance, being good or obedient was intrinsically motivated, or perhaps in some cases motivated by a fear of reprisal. Moreover, if obedience was motivated by an individual's anticipated fear or disapproval of his or her viewpoint, does it necessarily mean that the other's (mainly those in authority) viewpoints were respected, or that the other was respected as a person? More so, a highly moralistic upbringing, based on the Calvinistic principles,

did not deter some learners from becoming adults who saw nothing bad in oppressing others or treating others with disrespect, often in a violent way, despite their perceptions of themselves as being good individuals. Furthermore, is it not so that, being coerced into acting in a particular way, in many instances leads to resistance? Therefore, if the cultivation of habits such as honesty, cleanliness, obedience, punctuality and discipline was motivated purely for the sake of control and to benefit those in power, then the inculcation of such virtues resembled mere coercion of learners to acquire the virtues that would ensure compliance to authority. In the case of schooling for non-white learners in segregated South Africa, this type of indoctrination did indeed, together with black and coloured people's economic dependency on their employers, ensure a compliant non-white labour force over the course of many years. In this sense, the actions of those learners were therefore not guided by rationality, which would have enabled them to make choices in terms of what would be good for them as individuals, or what was good for the society. Rather, they were coerced into acting in a certain way which would have been beneficial to those in authority. Such pedagogies that promoted the coercion or indoctrination of fixed beliefs, handed down without an attempt logically to explain or justify them and done under the pretext that such virtues were in the best interests of the learner without allowing them the choice to consciously reflect on the virtues, could have been conceived as mechanical prescriptions to which learners simply responded.

From the above-mentioned assertions, one detects a docile, authoritative and patriarchal pedagogical style which discouraged learners from challenging or questioning the existing order, coercing them into conforming to the rules and values of a specific religious doctrine and an ideology. Together with legalised racial isolation, the CNE and FP approach followed thus not only influenced the individual's perception of the self, but also how the individual acted towards others. It would seem that the way in which education benefitted the state by implementing its ideology was regarded as a greater priority than how education benefitted the individual learner. In this scenario, there would therefore have been no place for the individual to exercise the right to choose which virtues to internalise, hence determining what kind of person he or she could have been. That, it seems, would have been the right of the state. Furthermore, the absence of critical conversation deprived learners of the possibility to form a relationship of mutual respect and trust between them and other learners,

and between themselves and their teachers. Moreover, an education which deprived learners of the cultivation of compassion for those who are undeservedly oppressed (those marginalised as a result of their race, gender, religious beliefs or sexual orientation) deprived learners of becoming morally just human beings.

It is therefore my contention that, while white learners might have had more opportunity than non-white learners for attaining happiness within the subjective well-being and objective framework of happiness, all South African children were, as a result of social isolation from each other and the docile, patriarchal, paternalistic, coercive pedagogies followed in all classrooms, equally disadvantaged during the apartheid era in terms of an education that would have, through practical reasoning and internalisation of the virtue of compassion, enabled human flourishing in the *eudaimonic* sense.

### **3.3 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AFTER 1994: A SHIFT TOWARDS DEMOCRACY**

Following South Africa's first democratic election in April 1994, education not only had to be restructured and rebuilt, it had to play a key role in the transformation of the South African community into a democratic society. Every education policy initiative has therefore been linked to the democratic principles articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) of 1996, which in its preamble envisions the healing of the divisions of the past and the establishment of a society based on democratic values, respect for fundamental human rights, social justice, equality, freedom, nation building and reconciliation (RSA, 1996). Contrary to the past when many South African children were not afforded the choice of creating their own lives, the focus of educational policy now has shifted from exclusivity (be it based on race, gender, social status, physical or cognitive ability) to inclusivity, aimed at the legal right of all South Africans to access non-discriminatory education in an adequately resourced school. The intention of frameworks and policies such as the White Paper on Education and Training (DoE, 1995) and the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, was therefore to ensure the realisation of the vision of the Constitution, namely that all children would be provided the basic human right of a just education in a school of their choice.

Such an education has the potential to provide the opportunity to those previously disadvantaged for attaining objective goods and in the process some subjective

happiness given the possible fulfilment of their desires, or feeling good about their achievements. However, as Waghid (2010:119) argues, procedural-institutional mechanisms, such as the Constitution, Bill of Rights, etc., alone are not sufficient to ensure the stability of modern democracies. A stable democracy also depends on the quality and attitude of its citizens. If education in a democracy does not promote enabling responsible and accountable citizens who do not just pursue their own self-interest without regard for the common good, then such an education does not necessarily function effectively (Waghid, 2010:120). Kymlicka (2002:285) supports this view by suggesting that democracies will become difficult to govern, to the extent of being unstable, if its citizens do not possess these qualities. In this regard, Noddings (2005:11) also reminds us that schools in a democratic society are established to serve both individuals and the larger society. Therefore, a democratic society expects from its educational institutions to produce individual learners who have a social conscience, can think critically, and based on this, can make thoughtful civic choices (Noddings, 2005:11). Nevertheless, if, as Peters (1981:36–37) posits, a democratic society places high value on the development of reason and is a way of life that get the most out of shared experiences and openness of communication between groups of community members (Dewey, 1916, cited in Peters, 1981:36–37), then education in a democracy should entail the inculcation of moral virtues through what Gutmann (1987:46) calls, “the virtue based upon the ability to deliberate with others”. Framed within the boundaries of Aristotelian virtue ethics which emphasise that the natural function of man is to reason, and to reason well is to reason in accordance with (moral) virtue (see Aristotle, 1962:389–390), such an education advocates that a well-rounded life that is overall satisfactory, cannot be achieved without exercising the moral virtue (Krisjánsson, 2013:22). Rational deliberation, occasioned by the impulse to treat others with compassion as proposed by Nussbaum (2001:299), further contributes to a morally just democratic society, that is, a society where the quality of a person’s life is not determined by subjective or objective goods, or by coercive practices.

In order to examine the potential of teaching and learning in South African schools for the cultivation of some of the virtues constitutive of practical reasoning and compassionate action, I report on an analysis of the vision of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to instil in learners higher levels of moral judgment that will govern their lives and relationships, as envisioned by the Manifesto on Values in Education

(DoE, 2001b). I furthermore report on an exploration of the potential of the National Curriculum Statement for Grades R–12 (NCS) (see DBE:2011) and its Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (see DBE:2011) to realise these values within the curriculum. In accordance with Green's view (2004a), democratic values refer to their associated virtues for the purpose of this study.

### **3.3.1 Manifesto on Values in Education (MVE)**

With education and training identified by President Thabo Mbeki (see Waghid, 2003:74) as a critical priority for meeting the broader challenge of creating a democratic and prosperous society, the education ministry launched the Tirisano ('working together') Project which focused on developing people for [democratic] citizenship (Solomons, 2009:24). A working group on values, education and democracy, established in February 2000, proposed six values which they contended would contribute towards producing an inclusive, critical student population capable of problem-solving (Waghid, 2010:122). These values, which resemble a Rawlsian liberal conception of citizenship education (see Rawls, 1971), are equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and social honour, and emphasised the set of rights and obligations people enjoy equally as citizens (Waghid, 2010:122–123). According to Miller (2000:83), the cultivation of these values not only emphasises the basic rights to education in the language of choice, but it is also supposed to instil in people a sense of moral virtue, as well as public-spiritedness to respect the rule of law and not interfere with others' enjoyment of their rights, and to promote commonality amongst themselves. Extensive school-based research, criticism and commentary by the public, culminated in the generation of the Manifesto on Values in Education (MVE) at the Saamtrek Conference on Values, Education and Democracy (DoE, 2001b:7). During this conference, ten values that were to be realised in educational institutions were announced: democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, *ubuntu* (human dignity), an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation (DoE, 2001b:3–4). In aiming to achieve a sense of deliberative democracy through communal participation in societal matters, the MVE offers a communitarian view of how these values were to unfold in South African democratic pedagogies. I explored these values and their potential for enabling

learners to internalise the virtues prerequisite for happiness. I discuss these values in no particular order, highlighting each one in italics.

In placing the value of *democracy* at the heart of society's "means to engage critically with itself", the MVE emphasises the role of education as key to providing learners with the tools to shape their destinies through critical and responsible participation in public life (DoE, 2001b:12). In this regard, the MVE recognises that the individual learner cannot reflect critically upon any particular way of life without engaging with others in a responsible way. In offering as an educational strategy the "nurturing of a culture of communication and participation in schools", the MVE promotes pedagogical spaces where critical dialogue or deliberation, rather than rote learning, is stimulated during group discussions, public speaking, mock parliaments and moot courts, promoting a shift towards a participatory and inclusive approach to teaching and learning. If classroom practices consist of critical dialogue on moral issues, such deliberations have the potential to encourage participants to reflect upon problems, engender possibilities through which problems could be examined, and stimulate the acquisition of new ways of solving problems (MacIntyre, 1999). Gutmann (1987:52) refers to this as "careful consideration with the view to decision on an individual level", and "consideration and discussion of the reasons for and against a measure by a number of participants". If then, the MVE promotes pedagogical spaces promoting deliberative engagement with others, how does it promote enabling learners to acquire the moral and intellectual virtues to make morally apposite choices and to act accordingly?

According to Waghid (2004:280), dialectical engagement enables learners to acquire the skills not only to listen to and acquire knowledge of others, but also to express their identity, feelings and ideas freely, and to interact with others in a clear, logical and coherent manner. Deliberative exchanges therefore have the potential to equip learners collectively to make informed choices for which they can be held accountable, in other words, skills required for participation in democracy and society.

However, educating for critical and responsible participation in public life ought also to be about the exchange of different social perspectives, hence the reference of the MVE to democracy and openness as interchangeable and interdependent values. In an *open society* that acknowledges peoples' rights to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, association, assembly, etc. (DoE, 2001b:14),

dialogue and debate provide the opportunity for them to listen appreciatively to others' social perspectives and critically confront personal bias towards those others who are different, or those who have different perspectives. In this regard, the insistence of the MVE on infusing human rights into the History and Life Orientation/Life Skills curricula reflects its alignment to this thinking. In addition, the English Home Language curriculum highlights that it is through the study of language that "cultural diversity and social relations are expressed and constructed, and it is through language that such constructions can be altered, broadened and refined" (CAPS Grades 7–9, English Home Language) (DBE, 2011:8). Particularly significant in this regard is the reference in the MVE to *respect*, not only for own culture, identity, language values and national values, but also for those of other countries and civilisations different from his or her own. This means that in the course of instilling values required for participation in a democratic, open society, learners not only come mutually to understand one another's differences, but also that each one has something to offer. Furthermore, when topics related to diversity, racist and or sexist discriminatory practices and violation of human rights are critically evaluated during, for example, History or Life Orientation lessons, then there is not only the possibility of transforming the learner's own perspective of the world in which he or she lives, but also of cultivating characteristics that will contribute to members of society acting in a morally apposite manner towards each other. More importantly, mutual understanding has the potential to generate mutual respect, which in turn contributes to the possibility for tolerant and peaceful participation in public life. In this regard, the MVE echoes Hill's (2000:83) argument that "respect is blind if uninformed". Therefore, if dialogue enables us not only to respect our own, but different cultures as the MVE suggests, then such respect necessitates an openness to confront one's own prejudices towards those others we barely understand (Waghid, 2010:67). However, as Gutmann and Thompson (1990:76) posit, "mutual respect is a form of agreeing to disagree". Put simply, unlike during the previous era, respect should not merely be an unconditional acceptance of everything people say or propose as this would negate dialogical interaction. People should agree to disagree. As Fay (1996:239) argues:

We honour others by challenging them when we think they are wrong, and by thoughtfully taking their (justifiable) criticisms of us. To do so, is to take them seriously, to do any less, is to dismiss them as unworthy of serious consideration, which is to say, to treat them with disrespect.

In this regard, the MVE encourages “healthy dialogue to contestation, as much as consensus building, the exploration of difference, as much as the exploration of shared perspective” (DoE, 2001b:18). In line with Fay’s argument, respect therefore allows one to challenge or criticise others if their reasons are not found to be persuasive or palatable enough (Waghid, 2010:70). However, the reference of the MVE to “creating and defending spaces for safe expression” could contradict this notion of ‘contestation’ building dialogue. If, as Waghid (2010:131) argues, safe expression is used in reference to situations where partners in dialogue are overly concerned about causing uneasiness and misery to the other, then such an interpretation of safe expression could challenge what deliberations ought to encompass. In contrast to responsible expression that has to do with taking risks through belligerent action, safe expression avoids confrontation and distress, thereby reducing the impact of deliberations by preventing participants from taking risks (Waghid, 2010:131–132). Benhabib (1996, cited in Enslin, Pendlebury & Tjiattas, 2001:122) reaffirms that conversational constraint is a limitation that deprives participants of opportunities for self-clarification and self-improvement. An individual who is morally committed and self-reflective about their commitments, discerning of the difference between being respectable or merely tolerating differences of opinion, open to the possibility of changing his or her mind or adapting his or her position when confronted with unanswerable objections to the present point of view, is someone whose character displays mutual respect for others (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996:67). Nevertheless, I agree with the statement in the MVE that mutual respect, as a prerequisite for learning, guides our relationships with others. Socrates (cited in Hogan, 2004:22) argued:

[D]ialogue constitutes pathways ventured with others, bringing new insights forth and some previous dead-ends to light, and some progress towards the truth. Dialogue as a method of learning and inquiry can therefore happen only if there is a relationship of mutual respect between those venturing into pathways towards the truth.

However, while the success of debate and deliberation greatly depends on speakers being truthful and respectful towards each other, the MVE quite rightly cautions that the right to express one-self comes with certain *responsibilities* (accountabilities). Free expression should therefore never become, as Gutmann (2003:200) refers to it, “an unrestrained license to discriminate”. As Waghid (2010:131) reminds us, injustice to others signifies the end to one’s right to unconstrained freedom. Therefore, if one

advocates a particular viewpoint that is discriminating against those others who are most vulnerable, then one can no longer lay claim to being respectful and therefore responsible, critical and just (Waghid, 2010:131). The MVE aptly supports this view in stating that citizens may never exercise their rights to openness if the intention is to incite violence, propagate war, or advocate hate based on race, gender or religion. In this regard, the Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa (DoE, 2011), explicitly outlines the responsibilities each young person has towards ensuring the right of equality and freedom of expression, but more importantly, that the right to freedom of expression is not unlimited (Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa) (see DoE, 2011). By stating, “a society that knows how to talk and how to listen, is a society that does not need to resort to violence”, the MVE promotes that “education must direct itself to the preparation of the child for life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality, etc.” (DoE, 2001b:14–15).

It would therefore seem that critical and responsible deliberative pedagogies have the potential to instil in learners the values required for acknowledging the rights of others to be different, but more importantly, that those others have the right to be treated equally in a just, respectful and fair manner. The MVE therefore explicitly promotes the values of *social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism*, and, that the *rule of law* is upheld in this regard. These values, as espoused by the MVE, are related to a liberal view of democratic citizenship insofar as it aims to cultivate socio-economic justice and non-violation of basic human rights. It therefore upholds the rule of law with regard to the provision of access to processes that ensure equality. However, access to equal education in itself is a contentious topic, as access to well-resourced schools has financial implications for most parents in the South African context. Nevertheless, not to divert from the issue at hand, these values cannot be instilled in learners without engaging with others in society, hence a strong case is to be made for a communitarian view of the values as they unfold in the MVE (Waghid, 2010:128–129). Deliberative exchanges, which enable learners to understand others and their right to be different better, have the potential to instil in learners a sense of how to treat others who are different in a morally apposite manner. By infusing classrooms with a culture of human rights as dialogue and debate on topics related to social injustice, discrimination, stereotyping, xenophobia and abuse, during History, Languages, Life Orientation, Life Skills, Religion Observation practices and even Arts and Culture lessons, a social

conscience that fosters the dignity of human values could be engendered in learners. In listening to the life stories of others, the individual might be able to imagine what it would be like to be in the shoes of the other, prompting him or her to re-evaluate and adapt his or her previous judgments with regard to those who are different, and to act in a way that would not harm or threaten those who are different. Furthermore, “accepting each other through learning about present and past social interactions” (DoE, 2001b:16) comes with the opportunity to heal and reconcile past differences, providing that dialogue between individuals are not entered into with set and preconceived ideas or opinions with regard to the past and the present (Waghid, 2010:73). As the MVE (DoE, 2001b) pertinently states, *reconciliation* is “not just about saying sorry”, for, while saying sorry is never easy, forgiving those who have caused pain, is in many instances harder. What comes to mind here is the Truth and Reconciliation process where the intention was to reconcile the victims of apartheid atrocities and their perpetrators. At this point, consideration of Arendt’s (1998:240–241) argument is of significance, “[f]orgiving ... is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven”. This essentially means that the door for enhancement of reconciliation can only be opened if one respects the perpetrators as persons for, in the absence of respect, there can be no acknowledgement of human dignity, and hence, the improbability of reconciliation (Waghid, 2010:71). Valuing respect for difference and diversity as the basis of unity, the MVE envisions setting the conditions of peace, well-being, and adhering to a common identity, a common notion of “South-Africanness” (DoE, 2001a:16), by instilling the value of reconciliation in learners. However, taking into consideration the many recent incidences of xenophobia, inculcating in learners a common national identity should never be to the detriment of others who originate from other countries. It must be remembered that mutual respect means allowing others to live their lives according to what they deem good for them without negatively affecting the lives of others. Furthermore, the reference in the MVE (DoE, 2001a:56) to “nurturing the new patriotism, or affirming our common citizenship through a verbal affirmation or ‘oath of allegiance’” proves problematic in the sense that loyalty to one’s country has nothing to do with democracy and achieving reconciliation. It therefore seems that the ‘oath of allegiance’ could undermine the need for learners to be critical of their country (Waghid, 2010:130), a situation reminiscent

of the parochial ‘blind patriotism’ displayed by many white South Africans during the apartheid era. In this regard, I concur with Kahne and Middaugh (2006:602) who argue that such a form of ‘blind patriotism’ could result in learners failing to recognise the value of reasoned debate, analysis and criticism as ‘engines of improvement’. Another dilemma is that ‘promoting the well-being of South African citizens’ might imply that those who live in the country, but who are not natural citizens do not deserve one’s support and tolerance. In this regard, the ‘oath of allegiance’ could undermine the rights of outsider immigrants to enjoy the respect and civility of citizens in a democracy (Waghid, 2010:129–130). Furthermore, proclaiming to work for peace, friendship and reconciliation means nothing in the absence of reasoned debate and criticism. Therefore, I concur with Waghid’s (2010:131) argument that it is doubtful that an ‘oath of allegiance’ would instil in learners the qualities of attending to the other, to act with trust, or to do things anew, a situation that would make the opportunity for reconciliation highly unlikely. This brings me to the value of *ubuntu* (human dignity).

In deliberately examining this value at the end of the analysis, I focused on how a combination of all the other values as espoused in the MVE, contribute to instilling in learners a sense of human dignity. Derived from African mores, “I am human because you are human”, *ubuntu* embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of human difference (DoE, 2001a:14). According to Waghid (2010:110), *ubuntu* refers to the situation where people co-exist in a mutually respectful manner, while not only recognising people’s vulnerabilities, but actually doing something about the situations of those who are vulnerable. Creating opportunities for learners, through belligerent and deliberative moral conversation, to share their commonalities and differences with regard to race, gender, language, culture, ethnicity, religion, thought, opinions and beliefs freely and respectfully, they come to understand and respect each other’s differences (Benhabib, 2002, cited in Waghid, 2010:20-22). Furthermore, they come to understand and respect the rights of others to be treated as equals, as well as their responsibilities in upholding the rule of law as a common code for appropriate behaviour. Such rational deliberations reflect an Aristotelian conceptualisation of practical reasoning, insofar as it provides the opportunity for learners to become reflective of their own beliefs and practices, re-evaluate their own perceptions, and if justifiable, adapt their beliefs and conduct and act in a morally just manner. Moreover, in listening to others’ stories, the potential is there for the individual to become aware

of and understand the vulnerabilities and sufferings of not only others, but also his or her own related vulnerabilities, prompting the realisation of the individual and society's responsibility towards the vulnerable. By putting oneself in the shoes of the vulnerable person, the individual is able to evaluate how the sufferings of others affect him- or herself. More importantly, however, in appraising that the suffering of others is serious and undeserved, the listener cultivates within him- or herself the concern to be just and humane towards them, that is to act with compassion. In this way, the potential to become socially just, equitable, egalitarian, non-racist and non-sexist, respectful, law-abiding, accountable and reconciliatory could be heightened, since one invariably displays a sense of human dignity (*ubuntu*) towards the other (Waghid, 2010:128). I therefore agree with the statement in the MVE that the practices of compassion, altruism, kindness and respect flow out of the values of *ubuntu* and human dignity (DoE, 2001b:14). Taking into consideration arguments relating to why practical reasoning as per the MVE cannot be sufficient to instil compassion, I agree that rational argumentation and deliberative engagement in itself are not sufficient for cultivation of compassion. However, it is my contention that listening to others' misfortune and suffering during deliberative engagements evoke an awareness of those others' day-to-day sufferings. In the hands of a skilful teacher, such deliberations could not only instil in learners a sense of compassion towards those who suffer (one cannot feel compassionate if one does not know and understand the context), but could prompt learners to act compassionately towards others in an unselfish manner.

From the above-mentioned analysis of the values, it is evident that the MVE vindicates both a liberal and communitarian conception of democratic citizenship. On the one hand, the values of the MVE relate to people's liberties which in itself could contribute to their subjective and objective well-being. On the other hand, the MVE also supports a communitarian view reminiscent of practical reasoning and compassionate action: engendering the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions and urging one to see oneself as a human being who need to respect diversity, and prompting the ability to imagine what it might be like to be in the position of a person different from oneself. However, despite practical reasoning not explicitly mentioned in the MVE, this virtue will, in an Aristotelian sense, lend itself to issues of respect, openness, accountability, tolerance, impartiality and equity, since these virtues are constitutive goods of practical reasoning. It is therefore my contention that an

education based on a communitarian view of democratic citizenship, as espoused by the MVE, has the potential to create pedagogical *praxis* where individual learners internalise the moral and intellectual virtues required to flourish in the society in which they are situated. Furthermore, deliberative engagements directed at an understanding of the pain and suffering of those who are vulnerable, have the potential to cultivate in learners the virtue of compassion which might also prompt them to do something about it.

However, if the vision of producing a society of good citizens is expected to be realised in schools, what role does the implementation of the national curriculum play in enabling opportunities for learners to flourish? This brings me to an exploration of the aims of the NCS, as articulated in the CAPS for each subject.

### **3.3.2 The aims of the National Curriculum Statement in relation to happiness**

The National Curriculum Statement for Grades R–12 (NCS) was implemented in 2012 and consists of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), the National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements for the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12, and the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12 (DBE, 2011:1).

In giving expression to the knowledge, skills and values worth learning in South African schools, the curriculum aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. In this sense, the curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global imperatives. Based on the principles of social transformation, active and critical learning, high knowledge and high skills, progression, human rights, inclusivity and social justice, valuing of indigenous knowledge systems, and credibility, quality and efficiency, the NCS (see DBE, 2011) serves the purposes of equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country.

The kind of learner envisaged as per the CAPS (DBE, 2011:5), is one who is able to –

[I]dentify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team; organise and manage themselves responsibly; collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively using visual, symbolic, and/or language skills in various modes; use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

I explored the aims of the NCS and highlighted the major concerns with regard to its potential to enable learners to flourish as human beings.

My first concern lies within the top-down prescription of content and outcomes. According to Waghid (2003:2), specified outcomes exhibit the “desire for finality” and the “desire for control”, and can therefore be associated with the control and causal manipulation of learners to prescribed pedagogical ends. Furthermore, specifying content and outcomes in advance could in itself be deemed anti-democratic as the choice of the predetermined knowledge and outcomes had already been made for learners and teachers. In this regard, I concur with Waghid (2003:2) that controlling the specification of knowledge and outcomes detaches learners and teachers from the social practice which makes education what it is.

My second concern lies within the approach to teaching and learning, that is the methodology and pedagogy used in classrooms. With academic performance becoming the single most important indicator of educational achievement in the CAPS for each subject, the curriculum has become a technical instruction tool, with the more comprehensive aims of education which are essential for a living democracy taking a back seat (Grussendorff, Booyse & Burroughs, 2014:15). Taking into consideration that the CAPS is based on, amongst others, the principle of “high knowledge and high skills” which specify that “the minimum standards of knowledge and skills to be achieved at each grade are specified” (DBE, 2011:4), one can assume that the focus on what a learner can demonstrate given a particular set of outcomes represents an attempt to achieve greater accountability and in effect signifies a curriculum based on a means–ends stance. The aims of the CAPS therefore resonate with *techne*, a concept used by the Greeks, as explained by Carr, 2004 (cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004:133), to refer to the mode of value-free means–end reasoning appropriate to activities in which the ‘end’ can be clearly specified. Such an instrumentalist view of education is in direct contrast to the notion, as argued by Waghid (2010:51), that

teaching and learning are continuous in that it constantly opens up possibilities to see things anew, rendering the outcomes of education inconclusive, or in terms of Peters' (1967:8) argument that "to be educated is not to have arrived; it is to travel with a different view". It is therefore no wonder that many teachers, under pressure to produce improved learner results on par with provincial, national and international standards whilst having to complete a packed curriculum and administer countless assessment tasks within a specified time, resort to the transmission mode, which they are more comfortable with given their own FP approach training. According to some teachers I work with, it is simply easier and less time consuming to teach the content and then allow time for practice and assessment. It consequently seems that greater emphasis is placed on *what* to teach, rather than *how* to teach the content of subjects. Without proper training and guidance on how to implement the curriculum in order to provide opportunities for learners to flourish, teachers will continue to focus on the 'what' as a means to an end. It is therefore no wonder that, in many classrooms I frequently visit in my capacity as district official, 'textbook teaching' is the order of the day.

My third concern lies with the kind of learner envisaged. Contrary to the previous curriculum where the role of the learner was defined in relation to his or her participation as a member of a group, the NCS now focuses on the learner taking individual responsibility for learning (Du Plessis, 2013:3). If the NCS therefore serves the purpose of equipping learners with the knowledge, skills and values necessary or self-fulfilment, then the question pertaining to whether self-fulfilment refers to an atomistic individualism where the individual is concerned with developing his or her own form of life, inevitably arises. In classrooms where teachers use the transmission mode of teaching, learners may very well disengage from matters of public interest. Furthermore, in the absence of deliberative engagement, learners and teachers are denied the opportunity mutually to explore and share each other's perspectives in a critical manner as a way to develop their own understanding of the issue at hand, and in the process internalise the virtues intrinsic to the practice. However, some people might argue that the aims of the NCS guide teachers in terms of developing in learners the features that are essential for reasoning with others: critical and creative thinking abilities, the ability to evaluate information critically, communication skills, decision-making skills, and working effectively in a team. However, if critical thinking and creative thinking are respectively interpreted by a teacher as the ability to research

problems in a logical, analytical manner (Bailin & Siegel, 2003:187), and the kind of thinking that contributes to the creation of new ideas or products (Bailin & Siegel, 2003:186), then those abilities by themselves do not make an individual a good citizen. Is it not so that a technician or a group of technicians who are designing a product in a workshop are also dependent on critical, creative, analytical and communication abilities? Furthermore, does having content-based objectives not contradict the aim of the CAPS to encourage critical learning?

My fourth concern lies with the omission of the kind of teacher envisaged. For an individual to become virtuous requires that the individual is shaped by means of supervision and coaching in order for him or her to progress and become an individual who is self-directed in her his or her practice and habits (Curren, 2010:547). Furthermore, in order to become independent practical reasoners, the individual needs to participate in a set of relationships with particular others who are in the position to give him or her what he or she needs (MacIntyre, 1999:99). These relationships include the relationship between the learner and the teachers as the person supervising and guiding the learner to become virtuous. Might the omission of the NCS of what type of teacher is envisaged be an additional reason why some teachers are assuming the role of instructor?

Finally, another concern is the omission of integration of subjects in the CAPS, which leaves very little room for creativity for teachers who are already under pressure to complete a packed curriculum within a specific timeframe. Some teachers might argue that the packed curriculum leaves insufficient time for a critical pedagogy which requires ample time for reflection, listening and discussion. In this regard, integration of subjects might, if implemented creatively, enable an educative *praxis* that allow more time for practical reasoning where some sort of a consensus is reached at the end of deliberations.

Linked to the above-mentioned concerns, is the over-arching instrumentalist purpose of the CAPS to prepare learners for the world of work. The slogan of the DBE, displayed at the top of the DBE website, "Every child is a national asset", might then be construed as the learner being viewed only as an economic benefit to the state. If this is the case, is it possible for every child, even the severely disabled, to be a national asset? However, aiming to equip learners with high knowledge and high skills is in

itself not problematic, as a democratic society aims not only to produce good citizens, but also citizens who are productive and who contribute to the economy of the country. Surely, an argument for the investment by government in education for economic growth can therefore be justified. Furthermore, most parents want for their children a life in which economic hardship is limited. The acquisition of knowledge and skills attained through schooling that will provide enjoyment and ultimately lead to socio-economic success for the individual is therefore justifiable and desirable for many parents. Such a means–end approach has strong links with subjective well-being and objective approaches to happiness in which the assumption made is that individuals are generally happier if their social and economic needs or wants are satisfied and if they derive some pleasure from it. In addition, if applied in a technical or mechanical context, critical, creative, communication and teamwork abilities might very well provide the opportunity for some learners to attain subjective satisfaction and pleasure, as well as objective intellectual and creative development as a result of academic success.

From this point of view, the end result, or reaching the specified outcomes, might bring about some form of happiness or feel-good moments for some of the individual learners and teachers who experience success in terms of their academic performance, and their prospects for further study, which might lead to economic prosperity. However, as pointed out in a previous chapter, many adults in societies across the world, despite being economically successful and possessing intellectual skills, do not regard the acquisition of these skills as sufficient to enable them to flourish as human beings. In addition, the acquisition of these skills does not guarantee a society in which all of its citizens can lead a morally good life. What comes to mind here are the brilliant cognitive capacities of HF Verwoerd, DF Malan, WM Eiselen and BJ Vorster, to name but a few of the National Party leaders, who were responsible for developing and implementing the apartheid policy of the party which oppressed the majority of the people in South Africa through the ideology of separate education for different race groups (see Leach, 1989). The means–end purpose of schooling is therefore insufficient to ensure that learners attain the virtues that will enable them to lead a life in which the value of the practices in which they participate are intrinsic to the practices themselves. Furthermore, given the one-sided transmission of knowledge, teaching practices based on an instrumentalist approach might result in

coercion, running the risk that the intended virtues embedded in dialogue are not cultivated in the learning process.

To this end, the instrumentalist characteristics of the NCS have been highlighted. However, the NCS also has as an aim equipping learners to participate meaningfully in society as citizens of a free country. If, for instance, the same technicians mentioned above, before embarking on designing and creating a product, engage in critical dialogue with regard to the potential harm the product might pose to the environment or other human beings (another aim of the NCS), weighing up all the options after listening to a variety of viewpoints and perhaps also to the viewpoints of persons who could possibly be harmed, they may come to the conclusion not to continue with the project. Such deliberative engagement on what is morally justifiable, allows the individual to inculcate the intellectual virtue to make a good judgment. For, as Aristotle argues, for an individual to have good judgment, he or she must possess the moral virtues (see Aristotle, 1962:389–390). Subjects such as History and Life Orientation/Life Skills also have the potential to instil moral and intellectual virtues in learners in an educative *praxis*. A Grade 7 Life Orientation group discussion on, for example, “The role of values, trust and respect for difference in sport”, would enable learners to obtain information in terms of what other learners’ perceptions are with regard to the issue at hand, in a coherent manner communicate own viewpoint, critically evaluate and weigh own viewpoints up against those of others, possibly alter own perceptions. Through such an exercise, the individual learner might come to a conclusion that is different to his or her previous perceptions and this might prompt him or her to act differently, with respect and without bias, when related incidences are encountered. These group discussions might also lead to learners collectively proposing ways in which bias in sport could be eradicated through the sport programmes at the school. Through probing what is morally justifiable, the potential is there for learners to acquire the intellectual virtue to make choices and do the right thing in the right place at the right time. When topics related to diversity, racist and or sexist discriminatory practices and violation of human rights are critically evaluated through dialogue and group discussions, then there is not only the possibility of transforming the learner’s own perspective of the world in which he (she) lives, but also of cultivating characteristics that will contribute to members of society acting in a peaceful and tolerant manner towards each other. If this is so, how would the Grade 7

Life Orientation lessons relate to the vision of the MVE? Through creating safe, unthreatening spaces where learners can freely and coherently communicate their viewpoints during participation in dialogue relating to social justice, equity and equality, learners are afforded the opportunity to listen attentively to the viewpoints of others, mutually to understand and actively appreciate the value of human difference, and to act in a responsibly compassionate manner in a non-racist and non-sexist society.

Therefore, despite concerns relating to the *techne*-instrumentalist aims, it is my contention that the NCS has, in the hands of a caring, competent, creative and skilful teacher committed to quality education, the potential to instil practical reasoning and compassionate virtues.

### **3.4 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the aims of educational policy before and after 1994 were analysed in order to explore its potential to provide learning experiences that would enable learners to flourish as human beings.

Contrary to the docile, non-critical and coercive, paternalistic and patriarchal Fundamental Pedagogics (FE) approach to teaching and learning which essentially prevented all South African learners from cultivating deliberative virtues through education, the post-1994 educational system aims at redressing the inequalities of the past, but also to equip learners with the values required for meaningful participation in a democratic society. In order to promote the latter, a Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (MVE) was drawn up, offering ten communitarian values to help learners achieve higher levels of moral judgment (DoE, 2001b:3). Promoting critical dialogue and debate during pedagogical encounters, the MVE aims at enabling learners not only to become critical of their own position after listening to others' freely, yet responsibly expressed stories, but also to respect and understand that those who are different or vulnerable have the right to be treated justly and humanely, that is, with compassion. I therefore argue that pedagogical encounters, as proposed by the MVE, have the potential to cultivate the virtues of neo-Aristotelian notions of practical reasoning and Nussbaum's compassionate action.

Despite the national curriculum (NCS), which is based on the principles of the MVE, having the potential to provide learning experiences that will have intrinsic value to the individual learner and those she (he) engages with, I acknowledge that there are certain dilemmas that might hinder the implementation of the MVE as envisioned. Specific concerns raised are the focus on learners' taking individual responsibility for learning, the omission of the type of teacher envisioned, and how subjects can be integrated, as well as the instrumentalist characteristics of the NCS. While a *techno-instrumentalist* view of schooling might provide individual happiness within a subjective well-being and objectivist framework, such teaching practices are not necessarily dedicated to right living through the quest of human good.

It is nevertheless my contention that, in the hands of a caring, competent, creative and skilful teacher, the NCS has the potential to provide learning experiences that will enable learners to internalise those moral virtues that are required for individual flourishing as a member of a particular society.

In the chapter that follows, I discuss the potential for the attainment of happiness through the cultivation of the constitutive elements of practical reasoning and compassion at rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District.

## Chapter 4

# THE POTENTIAL FOR HAPPINESS AT RURAL FARM SCHOOLS IN THE WEST COAST EDUCATION DISTRICT

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I articulate my lived experiences with regard to teaching and learning at rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District.

As an education district official, I have the opportunity to see and experience the on-the-ground joys, challenges and victories at the schools I visit. What I see can range from despondency to complete contentment. In rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District, like in many previously disadvantaged schools, one often finds a low level of enthusiasm in the classrooms, while in contrast, one can find the exceptions, or 'islands of hope'.

Although teachers at many schools, even those operating in different contexts, report a despondency as a result of a packed curriculum and increasing accountability, an emphasis on standards and testing, and declining achievement, the atmosphere in most of the farm schools in my district appear to be generally more relaxed and happier, with very few challenges relating to learner discipline. The question then arises, besides contextual factors, what sets apart some of these farm schools from others?

In seeking answers to this question, I firstly provide a brief background of the characteristics and conditions of farm schools. In doing so, the suggestion is that happiness does not unfold in a vacuum, but is guided by the context in which it manifests. I then follow this up with a narrative of my experiences at rural farm schools in reference to enabling conditions for, as well as conditions countering, practical reasoning and cultivation of compassion as prerequisites for human flourishing.

## **4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF FARM SCHOOLS IN THE WEST COAST EDUCATION DISTRICT**

Historically, farm schools had its origin in colonial times when missionaries provided basic arithmetic and reading and writing to the children of slaves (Thompson & Prior, 1982:29). Often referred to as “forgotten schools” (Human Rights Watch, 2004) or exposed sites (Teese & Polesel, 2003, cited in Christie, 2008:177), these schools offer tuition to, in the case of the West Coast Education District, the children of mostly coloured farm labourers. So, how are these schools to be understood?

According to a report on “Farm Worker Voices” (Black Association of the Agricultural Sector [BAWSI] Report, 2013:3), farm owners are still mostly in control of every aspect of farm labourers’ lives, particular those labourers who reside on the farms. This scenario dates back to colonial times when social relationships between farmers and their labourers were shaped by the social, economic and the political sphere in which it existed at a specific time. Many research studies, including those of Ewert and Du Toit (2005) and Falletisch (2008), report on decades of oppression that led to a legacy of a paternalistic order in which a deep sense of disempowerment, dependency and submissiveness was entrenched in generations of farm workers. Many of these farm labourers have remained trapped in cycles of poverty and self-destruction, with widespread occurrence of alcohol and substance abuse by adults and children, frequent experiences of aggression and violence, the high incidence of foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD), teenage pregnancies, and health problems being an integral part of the lived experiences of both adults and children living on farms. To my mind, these factors directly impact not only on the social identity of farm labourers’ children, as aligned with Haybron’s (2008:184) thicker conception of the self (a matter of how others see the individual, or the individual’s social role), but it also may have a profound influence on their performance at school.

Against this background, the children of farm labourers attend primary schools, in most cases situated on land leased from the farm owners. These schools offer tuition for relatively small numbers of primary school learners, mostly in a multi-grade teaching set-up. Although conditions with regard to access, abolishment of child labour, infrastructure, curriculum resources, learner transport, and the provision of a feeding scheme had considerably improved in the West Coast Education District over the last

two decades, notable challenges facing most of these schools with regard to educational provisioning include insufficient teaching space, lack of facilities for extra-mural activities, in many cases poorly kempt and unsafe playgrounds, some learners having to walk up to 4.9 kilometres to school, and the incapacity of parents to support their children academically (Boonzaaier, 2009:18).

With the above-mentioned in mind, I now turn to an exploration of conditions influencing schooling experiences for learners at these schools.

#### **4.3 EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL FOR THE CULTIVATION OF PRACTICAL REASONING AND COMPASSION AT RURAL FARM SCHOOLS IN THE WEST COAST EDUCATION DISTRICT**

Aristotle argues that the goal of education is to equip learners with systematic understanding of the human good through reasoning with others. By providing pedagogical *praxis* where learners are guided and taught what is morally justifiable, the individual learner acquires the intellectual virtue which enables him or her, based on rational judgment, to do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way (MacIntyre, 2007:150). Embracing an Aristotelian view of happiness in relation to education, MacIntyre states that such pedagogic *praxis* is one in which teachers enable learners not only to play their intended part in different kinds of complex activity through the development of their skills, but also to recognise the goods served by those activities which give point and purpose to what they do (Dunne & Hogan, 2004:2). Gutmann (1987:51) goes further and argues that the capacity for reasoning is not sufficient, as those who lack a strong character are unable to distinguish between the obvious moral burdens and the agonising challenges of life. For Gutmann (1987:52), the inculcation of moral character and moral reasoning as a result of deliberation based on the principles of reciprocity, accountability and reason giving, constitute the core of education in a democratic society. In this way, learners will become educated human beings who grasp the principles underlying the reasons behind a body of knowledge, enabling them to act with understanding, adapting their practices to novel situations, or even challenge some practices that are found to be no longer rationally defensible (Peters, 1966:314).

In line with the Aristotelian notion of happiness in relation to education, MacIntyre (1999), Gutmann (1987) and Peters (1966; 1967) provide compelling arguments with regard to how education in a democracy enables learners to flourish as human beings as a result of the inculcation of the virtue of practical reasoning. Given this historical and contemporary understanding of the connection between education and happiness, as well as my experiences at rural farm schools, I explored what conditions ought to be in place at these schools to provide opportunities for learners to attain the human good. In doing so, I discuss some of the constitutive elements of practical reasoning and compassionate action in relation to my own experiences working as a district official at rural farm schools.

#### **4.3.1 Practical reasoning**

For the purpose of analysing pedagogical practices at rural farm schools in relation to practical reasoning, I focused on three constitutive elements of practical reasoning, as identified by MacIntyre (1999), with reference to Gutmann (1987) and Peters' (1966; 1967) notions pertaining to what education should aim at.

##### ***Caring***

I recently was part of a discussion pertaining to the relevance of 'caring' as one of the core values of the Western Cape Education Department. Quite interestingly, most district officials immediately construed 'caring' in terms of its emotional connotation, making reference to affection, comforting learners, and feelings of concern and of attachment. In this sense, 'caring' is linked to subjectivist accounts of happiness. While one has to be affectionate or attached towards a learner in order to care for him or her, affection can never be sufficient in guiding the learner's development of the self. MacIntyre (1999:84) points out that the learner, through his or her experiences of attachment and affection, might learn to act so as to please the teacher in order to satisfy his or her desires. Waghid (2003:26) further emphasises the potential threat of a teacher pleasing a learner if it is not in his or her best interest. Although affectionate experiences are undoubtedly important for most people, they are not sufficient to enhance one's quality of life.

However, MacIntyre (1999:89–109), in construing "caring for others" as one of the central virtues intrinsic to practical reasoning, argues that a caring teacher is one who

cares for the learner *qua* learner, as well as for the subject matter, who provides them with the security and recognition they deserve, who not only teaches content as an end to a means, and who understands that rule-following is an essential constituent of some of the virtues that both the self and others must have to act adequately in the role he or she occupies within the network. If a teacher therefore is really to acquire the virtue of caring for others and not just be affectionate towards them, what would such caring acts entail?

A caring teacher, who cares for the learner *qua* learner, as well as for the subject matter, is one who cultivates in learners the capacity to evaluate, modify or reject their own practical judgments, in the process reaching their own justifiable conclusions for which they are to be held accountable (Waghid, 2003:26). In caring for the learner, the teacher is therefore not only concerned with teaching content as a means to an end, but rather in guiding learners through teaching to acquire the intellectual virtues which will enable them to do the morally appropriate thing in the right place at the right time and in the right way (MacIntyre, 2007:150). This in effect implies that the teacher, in caring for the learner *qua* learner, understands, as Aristotle (Curren, 2010:555) posits, that the activity of teaching is aimed at the formation of learners, and that learning is much more than just acquisition of knowledge purely for the sake of it. In posing Socratic-type of differentiated questions which aim at eliciting dialogue, caring teachers guide learners not only to understand the subject-related matter, but also to reflect on their own and others' experiences and perceptions and maybe come to new insights in terms of how to act virtuously in similar situations. In order to acquire the virtue of caring, a teacher should therefore, as Waghid's students conclude, present knowledge in an actual and relevant manner, encouraging them to connect the content to their social environments and experiences (Waghid, 2003:27). This in effect implies that teachers have to plan their lessons thoughtfully with this in mind, and link their lessons to the learners' lived world. For teachers at multi-grade farm schools, lesson planning might be somewhat more challenging given the packed, prescriptive CAPS curriculum that have to be completed within a specific timeframe for a specific grade. If, however, teachers use the CAPS document as a framework and plan their lessons in such a way that the same topic is taught at the same time for more than one grade, their (the teachers') workload could be significantly lightened. However, a 'caring' teachers is not one who is particularly concerned about reducing the workload if it means that the

ultimate aim of education will be compromised. Caring teachers are ones who thoughtfully plan their lessons taking into consideration appropriate, relevant and interesting resources to enhance learning, ensure that different grades experience different levels of difficulty and depth from the same content, ensure that subject related concepts are fully understood, thoughtfully plan differentiated questions to which learners in the particular context can relate to, cultivate in learners the virtues that will enable them to flourish as human beings in the society in which they live.

If one is to take into consideration farm school learners' frequent exposure to social ills and repressive circumstances as depicted in various research studies, then one can assume that for these learners, topics relating to moral issues are not foreign. In planning their lessons, teachers would therefore have to be sensitive to the learners' own experiences with regard to the specific topic. This is only possible when teachers 'know' their learners and make an attempt to understand the circumstances in which they are raised. Furthermore, in planning their lessons, teachers should take into consideration the different cognitive levels of learners in the different grades taught at the same time, as well as the varied cognitive levels of learners within the same grade. It is, as MacIntyre (1999:90) argues, the needs of the learners that have to be paramount, involving a systematic refusal to align the teaching of a child to his or her qualities or aptitudes. If individual learner's diverse needs are not accommodated, then the teacher does not care unconditionally, for unconditional care means that each learner should be approached as a unique individual who should be taught in a manner that would enable him or her to reach his or her own potential. When taking learners' contextual factors and an analysis of the individual learner's assessment results into consideration, teachers are better able to plan their lessons to accommodate the diverse needs of learners, and to develop focused individual intervention plans tailored to their (individual learner's) needs. In this way, teachers show unconditional care through ensuring that each learner is provided with the right kind of safe setting that will allow him or her to become self-aware as the object of the right kind of acknowledgment (MacIntyre, 1999:89–90). Such unconditional care requires from the teacher a responsiveness to diverse types of situations: the ability to know when to take risks and when to be cautious; the ability to know when to lavish deserved praise and when to be sparing of deserved blame; as well as the ability to know when to be

challenging with oneself or with others, and when to be more relaxed, qualities that can also be exhibited in the teacher's practical reasoning (MacIntyre, 1999:92).

In my capacity as district official, I have experienced precisely this type of care at some of the rural farm schools in which I work. It is at these schools where I have experienced very little or no challenges with regard to learner discipline, and where the relatively relaxed atmosphere in classrooms reflects positive learner- teacher and learner-learner relationships and a sense of community. At these schools, teaching is not seen as a means to an end. Knowledge is imparted to, in alignment with Peters' notion of education (Peters, 1966:31), "transform the outlook of the world" of the receiver (learner), rather than to cover a set curriculum.

Logically planned lessons where learners, and learners and teachers engage with each other with regard to own lived experiences in relation to moral issues equip learners with an understanding of how the particular issue is conceptualised, what the reasons are for the particular harmful conduct, how one feels when inhumane conduct is directed at you, and how such behaviour can be prevented. In this way, the child learns how to immediately distinguish what the most relevant features of a situation are, recognizing what related goods, harms and dangers present itself in each situation, and what the virtues require by way of response (MacIntyre, 1999:93). Through constant (planned) probing, learners are guided to gradually begin to think in a clear, coherent and structured way, enabling them to analyse concepts relating to moral issues, articulate meanings logically and skilfully, and re-evaluate, modify or reject previous perceptions (Waghid, 2003:26). In this way, as Peters (1966:31) argues, education develops an individual's awareness by enlarging, deepening and extending it. Being on the inside of a form of thought or awareness, learners are, as Peters (1967:20.) argues, enabled critically to examine their conduct, attitudes and belief, and in turn, act wisely without being told what to do or to say according to a set of rules. Through deliberative engagement in a caring environment, learners are consequently afforded the opportunity to explore ways in which they can improve conditions for themselves and the society they live in, understanding, as Waghid (2003:23) expounds, that the concern of each and every individual is a matter of common concern.

The following example of a lesson on bullying illustrates how a teacher, through creating opportunities for the learners to become independent practical reasoners, can display an unconditional caring attitude. After careful selection of an appropriate magazine article on bullying, a Grade 6 learner in the Grades 5–6 multi-grade class is asked to read the article. A discussion of the article follows, with the teacher taking care to explain unfamiliar concepts and ensure that all learners understand what the article is about. Mixed grade groups then portray bullying situations familiar to them during a role playing session, followed by reflection during which the teacher guide the learners, through posing questions ranging from lower order to higher order thinking questions in order to accommodate diverse cognitive levels of learners, to evaluate the actions of the bully and to imagine how it would feel if they were in the shoes of the victim. Taking into consideration the new knowledge acquired, learners re-enact the same situation, with one group focusing on how the bully should be held accountable for hurting the victim, another focusing on the bully now realising the hurt he caused and apologising to the victim, and the third group focusing on how the bully can be helped in order to prevent repetition of such harmful acts. Aligned with the strategy of the MVE for nurturing a culture of communication and participation, such educative practices have the potential to elicit engagement during which learners articulate in a clear and coherent way their own perspectives, and, after listening to others' accounts of their lived experiences, re-educate themselves in relation to others' views. In one such lesson on bullying that I encountered during my work as district official, it was interesting to note that the role of the bully was in most cases assigned to bigger boys, while the victim was portrayed by a smaller female learner. During this lesson, some learners related bullying to male on female abuse in their own lived world, the factors contributing to it, and how it makes them feel. The lesson ended with learners coming to a conclusion that bullying, or any form of abuse is wrong, but they also offered ways in which it could be prevented at school, culminating in each Grade 6 learner being assigned a group of smaller learners whom they 'look out for' and who can come to them when experiencing problems at school. This is an example of how dialogue and debate can provide opportunities for generating some of the values of the MVE, namely social justice, equity, non-discrimination and non-sexism, accountability, reconciliation and respect for human dignity, which in turn contributes to the possibility for tolerant and peaceful participation in the world in which he or she lives. Such educational practices are aligned with Gutmann's argument that, in deliberating the demands of

justice for all individuals, learners acquire the moral character that will enable them to distinguish between what is morally right or wrong, prompting them collectively to further the cause of justice in the particular society which they inhabit (Gutmann, 1987:52).

This brings me to another of MacIntyre's (1999) constitutive elements of practical reasoning, namely conversational justice.

### ***Conversational justice***

According to Waghid (2003:27), the kind of care teachers as practical reasoners practise, not only supports learners in developing their ability to make rational choices, to be imaginative and to re-educate themselves; it also contributes to learners trusting and depending on those teachers from whom they receive care. This implies that both teachers as givers and learners as receivers have to engage justly in conversation with each other (Waghid, 2003:27). MacIntyre (1999:111) posits:

[C]onversational justice requires among other things first that each of us speaks with candour, not pretending or deceiving or striking attitudes, and secondly that each takes up no more time than is justified by the importance of the point that he or she has to make and the arguments necessary for making it.

Considering this criterion of conversational justice, it appears that the concept candour represents both a view of human experience and a moral value which promotes a particular attitude and response to human engagement (Waghid, 2003:27). As a moral value, conversational justice comprehends the relationship between the self and the other dialectically, making it the basis for engagement based on honesty, openness, sincerity and truthfulness, moral aspects which link strongly with the notion of candour (Waghid, 2003:27). How do these virtues, given high importance in the MVE, unfold in classroom practices at rural farm schools, if indeed it does?

My experience working in rural farm schools have provided me with insight in terms of how vastly varied pedagogies create different schooling experiences for learners in similar context schools. These experiences, however not exclusively, range from farm schools where teachers create pedagogical spaces for individual learners not only to participate in, but also to engage actively in conversation, discussions and debate relating to specific moral issues, to a few schools where teachers shout at learners,

and where they are dismissed for giving incorrect answers. At schools where teachers are willing to listen and are open to accept what learners have to say during interaction with them, teachers and learners mutually explore different perspectives, enabling the intellectual development and enhancement of their own (learners' and teachers') understanding, and thus the self-knowledge of both learners and teachers. For Gutmann, enabling learners to understand differing ways of life contribute to the inculcation of character, which, together with moral reasoning form the core of democratic education (Guttmann, 1987:52). According to Gutmann (1987:51), the logical and interpretive skills taught by Science and Mathematics and Literature respectively, the understanding of differences taught in Social Sciences and Life Skills, and even the sportsmanship taught during Life Skills lessons, all contribute to the development of a moral character. In one particular farm school where I work, the teachers have established an unthreatening environment where learners are not only corrected if their arguments are not justifiable, but they (the learners) have the confidence to indicate to the teacher when they do not agree with the teacher's viewpoint. On the one hand, by challenging their viewpoints, the teachers demonstrate to learners that they take them seriously, treating them with respect. This is so, as respect conceived as mere acceptance of everything learners do or say, negates conversational justice (Waghid, 2003:29). Furthermore, if deliberative engagements do not involve questioning and challenging those in authority, then respect for the human dignity of others (*ubuntu*) is restricted. On the other hand, by challenging the teacher's viewpoint, learners demonstrate their ability to reason confidently about issues without the fear of being dismissed. At this school, a teacher acknowledged during a lesson that his viewpoint had not been justifiable, reflecting the mutual respect, trust and honesty between learners and teachers fostered through dialogue. Such unconditional engagement eradicates unnecessary antagonism and suspicion among learners and teachers and, as Waghid (2003:28) argues, enhances the desire and ability to extend mutual relationships.

I explored a third constitutive feature of MacIntyrean practical reasoning, namely political reasoning.

### ***Political reasoning***

For MacIntyre (1999:140), reasoning about the common good effectively means that one is reasoning politically. In seeking the common good, each individual has to contribute to the shared, rational deliberations of the class in his or her own voice (MacIntyre, 1999:140). Waghid (2003:30) sums MacIntyre's notion of political reasoning up as an essential, rather than a mere optional part of an individual's independent and communal well-being.

In order to cultivate a political voice, external factors such as classroom arrangements and learning and teaching resources should first enable learners to exercise critical judgments in respect of shared deliberative reasoning. Classroom activities should therefore enable learners in a clear, logically consistent and unambiguous manner to engage about their beliefs, conceptions and presuppositions in their quest to improve their situations and contexts. However, MacIntyre (1999:139), in establishing a link between political reasoning and the notion of proxy, also alludes to the proxy's role of speaking for those who, for various reasons, are unable to voice their own opinions. Therefore, classroom arrangements and learning and teaching resources should secondly allow those who are unable to speak for themselves to have someone act as their proxy (MacIntyre, 1999:139).

The lesson on bullying, mentioned previously, clearly indicates how teachers can create opportunities for different grade groups collectively to discuss their lived experiences in relation to a specific topic. During active group deliberations, both learners and teachers willingly and patiently listen to one another's honest viewpoints, even when such viewpoints are at times conflicting. All learners, in participating in the group discussion, learn about their personal and common good, and critically think of ways in which their individual and collective lives can be improved, making critical inquiry as Waghid (2003:31) posits, a shared public discourse rather than a private one. But taking into consideration that groups consist of not only learners in different grade groups, but also of learners with varied cognitive or communicative ability, the teacher allows for a proxy to provide feedback with regard to the conclusions on why bullying is wrong and suggestions in terms of how to prevent it. This is an example of political reasoning where the viewpoints of the group are articulated by one person representing the group. By choosing and appointing their proxy, members of different

groups display the trust they put in the person who is to represent their viewpoints. However, careful consideration should be given that the proxy presents the collective viewpoint of the entire group during feedback sessions so that group discussions are not dominated by one or two older learners, with input of others dismissed or ignored. For, by excluding some, teachers and other learners might never know how they (those excluded or dismissed) experience reality or perceive the world, thus diminishing the scope and effectiveness of decision-making that might improve their lives (Waghid, 2003:30).

Educative *praxis*, which includes the exercise of caring, conversational justice and political reasoning, therefore sustains the excellence and development of learners' intellectual capacities to –

- become independent reasoners who evaluate and re-evaluate their own presuppositions, in the process imagining alternative possibilities, and re-educate themselves in order to act in a morally appropriate manner;
- in an unthreatening environment and based on mutual respect and trust, engage with one another in an honest, open, sincere and truthful manner about each other's differences and different viewpoints, thereby improving possibilities for participation and communication through which they can produce arguments to justify their viewpoints; and
- exercise their voices in shared and rational deliberation (Waghid, 2003:33).

Through such deliberations, learners, in consequence of those social relationships which on occasion provide correction for their own judgments, attain the self-knowledge that will enable them to imagine possible alternative futures for themselves in the particular society which they inhabit (MacIntyre, 1999:94–95). Such an approach to teaching where learners freely express their feelings and ideas in an unthreatening atmosphere, confront their own biases, and collectively take decisions to improve their own situations and those of others is aligned to the educational strategy of the MVE of nurturing a culture of communication and willing participation where open-minded, respectful deliberations contribute to accountability for treating others in a morally just manner. Therefore, in concurrence with the Aristotelian notion of happiness in relation to education, MacIntyre (1999; 2007), Gutmann (1987) and Peters (1966; 1967) argue

that the cultivation of moral virtues, which lay the foundation for the development of the intellectual virtues, or the capacity for understanding, judgment and reasoning which enables one to make choices towards the pursuit of some good internal to the practice itself, enables the learner to become an educated human being who flourishes as a member of a particular community. Based on my experiences at rural farm schools, the formation of such deliberative character is not only possible at those schools, but is crucial if the aim of education is the formation of learners who have a sturdy moral character which prompts them continuously to improve themselves and the societies in which they reside.

This brings me to an exploration of compassionate action in relation to my experiences at different farm schools.

#### **4.3.2 Compassion**

For Nussbaum (2001), an education is not sufficient if it focuses on deliberative argumentation and narratives without the cultivation of compassion. She argues that all “rational deliberation should be occasioned by the impulse to treat others justly and humanely” (Nussbaum, 2001, cited in Waghid, 2003:68).

For instance, when topics such domestic violence, homophobia, poverty, substance abuse, etc. are deliberated on in Life Orientation, Life Skills, Social Sciences and Literature lessons, it should prompt in learners an awareness of the serious misfortune or suffering of others, particularly in cases where suffering occurs through no fault of their own (Waghid, 2003:68). In listening to others’ misfortune during discussions in the example of a lesson on bullying mentioned above, the opportunity is created for learners to become aware of abuse suffered by smaller, and or female learners, purely because of their physical stature or of their gender. In listening to the stories of those learners, the opportunity is further created for other learners to hear about the pain and suffering of those who are abused, to rethink their own actions towards those that are physically weaker than them, and collectively to develop strategies for prevention of such abuse.

However, it could be argued that merely listening to others’ misfortune is inadequate to cultivate compassion. Waghid (2003:67), like Nussbaum, makes a compelling argument stating that deliberative argumentation and rational persuasion alone does

not necessarily contribute to acts of compassion towards others. Gyekye (1997:74) emphasises that moral justice requires of us to look beyond our own interests, feelings and needs and extend our moral sensitivities to others who are not part of our immediate communities. A compassionate person should therefore pay greater attention to those who suffer and are oppressed and less attention to his or her self-interests (Waghid, 2003:67–68). If the aim of education includes the cultivation of compassion, then what kind of teacher, more so one teaching at a farm school, is envisaged to provide such an education?

First, a teacher who displays compassion for the circumstances in which they (the learners) undeservedly find themselves is one who is also fully aware of the fact that resources that would introduce learners to the world beyond their own are limited, given their socio-economic background, in this instance as children of farm labourers. Such a teacher, in recognising that the learners are blameless for the unequal circumstances they find themselves in, will go out of his or her way to find creative ways in which to assist learners to reach their own potential. A teacher who enhances learners' understanding of content by linking lessons to learners' own worlds, plans his or her lessons to accommodate for diverse learner needs, develops individual intervention strategies based on each learner's particular barriers or needs, and offers extended opportunities which includes afterschool academic support, e-resources, sponsored educational trips and extra-mural activities, is one who acts with compassion through making judgments that will contribute to the flourishing of the learners.

However, one could argue as Waghid (2003:69) mentions, that all learners deserve to be treated equally, and that no learner should receive preferential treatment. But given the undeserved unequal circumstances within which farm labourers' children find themselves through no fault of their own, with specific reference to limited resources available and a lack of exposure to the greater world out there, equal treatment would mean extended exposure to opportunities that would enable them to realise their fullest potential, as stated in the MVE.

Secondly, a compassionate teacher is one who acknowledges some sort of community between herself and her learners by focusing on learners' suffering, the teacher "makes herself vulnerable in the person of the other" (Nussbaum, 2001:319). Teachers

at farm schools therefore need to imagine the feelings of learners when they struggle to comprehend certain concepts as a result of, amongst others, lack of exposure to what many urbanised learners take for granted, as well as limited resources available to them. This implies that, in making herself vulnerable in the person of the other, the teacher supports learners who struggle to understand concepts in a patient and understanding manner. For many farm school teachers, imagining the suffering of their learners are not easy, given that their own lived experiences are relatively far removed from those of the learners. At one of the schools where I work as a district official, a teacher was clearly impatient with learners, referring to her frustration in terms of having to produce results in a context where learners encounter difficulty to comprehend concepts. This made me wonder about whose interests are at stake during pedagogic encounters. If a teacher pays less attention to her self-interest, and, in making herself vulnerable in the person of each individual learner who encounter difficulty as a result of circumstances emanating from their background, she will create an educational *praxis* where learners who struggle are supported in a patient and understanding manner. In this way, the teacher's self-fulfilment will come from seeing her learners flourish as human beings. The teacher's success, as Peters (1967:3) argues, is defined in terms of that of the learner.

A compassionate teacher is furthermore one who takes cognisance of the social ills to which many of the learners are exposed on a daily basis, showing empathy towards learners, and engaging with learners in a sensitive way when topics relating to poverty, abuse, etc. are dealt with. At one particular farm school I frequently visit during the course of my work, I was appalled at the lack of sensitivity and empathy shown towards learners. It was at this school where a white teacher, in response to my question relating to the use of the transmission mode of teaching and the lack of development of critical thinking skills, responded, "learners at farm schools are incapable of critical analysis of information as they lack the cognitive ability to do so. They should therefore only be taught practical skills that will enable them to be efficient farm workers" (her words), a sentiment somewhat reminiscent of a Platonic view of education (see Noddings, 2007:8). Another disturbing observation was a picture of a big six-year-old grandson of one the teachers and a tiny six-year-old Grade 1 girl at the school posted in the principal's office (in full view of all who enter the office) with the caption, "Note

the difference between a child whose mother drank alcohol during her pregnancy, and one who led a healthy life style during her pregnancy.”

At this school, it would seem that teaching is approached from a perspective that these learners should acquire only the necessary skills to be able to fulfil their future roles as farm workers, a notion reminiscent of the apartheid era where instrumentalist teaching aimed at producing different levels of skills for different race groups. For Peters (1967:6), a person is not educated if he or she has mastered some predetermined skills. There is therefore the possibility that teachers at this particular school are not interested in educating learners, but merely in schooling them with a specific end in mind. Furthermore, in failing to view the learners' limitations or vulnerabilities as consequences of circumstances which are no fault of their own, treating them without sensitivity and empathy, these teachers act without compassion, in turn modelling behaviour which is counterproductive to enabling learners to become compassionate citizens themselves. This is so because, as MacIntyre (1999:89) argues, teachers have to possess a substantial measure of the habits that they try to inculcate in their learners.

The type of teacher, whose educative practices instil compassion, is therefore one whose pedagogic approach is prompted by the impulse to treat learners in a just and humane way, recognising that learners' suffering and vulnerabilities are often unmerited and also that they (the teachers) are not any different to those who are vulnerable. Through practical reasoning elicited by compassion, learners are taught to, as Waghid (2003:73) puts it, oppose all unmerited living conditions which are an insult to human dignity. Occasioned by the virtue of compassion, the potential is there that, when confronted by injustice against the vulnerable or marginalised, learners will make sound moral judgments and act accordingly, wherever they may find themselves in life. Therefore, from an education perspective, practical reasoning and compassion cannot be seen as two independent and separate components; they are intimately intertwined in the process of education.

#### **4.3.3 Criticisms relating to the potential of cultivating practical reasoning and compassion at rural farm schools**

Critics would be quick to point out some concerns about the potential to cultivate in learners at farm schools the virtue of practical reasoning. Waghid (2003:33) highlights

as the most powerful criticism the argument that the discourse is biased against historically disadvantaged learners in South Africa. Justifiably, these arguments are based on disadvantaged learners' social backgrounds where many of the parents are traditionally subjected to submissiveness, are themselves illiterate and unable to provide adequate pre-school exposure to cognitive activities and resources to their children, resulting in these children lacking the skills of eloquent, persuasive speech and rational reflection, notably an argument raised by some teachers at farm schools where I work. However, a caring teacher who, in an unthreatening environment, patiently guides learners' reasoning through posing probing questions, listening to and responding to their answers without being dismissive, and possibly acknowledging their own changed perspectives, instil in learners the willingness to participate in deliberative engagement, moulding not only their reasoning skills, but also enhancing their own listening and speaking abilities. Furthermore, particularly in multi-grade classes where learners of different age groups and abilities are taught in the same class, discussion groups consisting of learners on different grade and ability levels allow for the appointment of a proxy who can speak on behalf of the others. In this way, the collective decisions taken by the group through practical reasoning are conveyed by a proxy who possesses relatively enhanced deliberative skills. Multi-grade classes as such also have the added benefit of creating a safe space for learners, where learners and teachers, and learners and their peers get to know each other over a relatively long period of time.

Justifiably, another criticism against the potential for cultivating practical reasoning at farm schools stem from the fact that learners at these schools are mostly homogenous groups who reside in isolated areas where they are not exposed to other cultures, religions and living conditions. In becoming acquainted with a rudimentary understanding of the history and cultures of different religious and ethnic groups, as well as with an understanding of those with alternative sexual orientations during Social Sciences, Life Skills, and Literature lessons, respect for others, which is an essential underpinning for compassionate imagining, is engendered (Waghid, 2010:23). In this regard, literature, videos and e-resources, but more so extra- and co-curricular activities and outings provide exposure to those who are different from them. Deliberative discussions relating to such experiences have the potential to open up completely new perspectives of others, known and unknown. Is it not so that one does

not necessarily have to live in a war-torn country to know that the atrocious acts against those living in such countries are morally wrong?

Another criticism against the provisioning of pedagogic *praxis*, in which practical reasoning is embedded, is the issue of having to complete a packed, set curriculum and assessments in a multi-grade setup within a specified time allocated to subjects. Considering that practical reasoning requires ample time for reflection, listening, and discussion, this concern is a justifiable one given that a high degree of consensus could only be achieved at the cost of silencing dissent and curtailing some learners' viewpoints (Benhabib, 1996:77). However, as Waghid (2003:32) argues, practical reasoning demands that some sort of consensus is reached at the end of discussions and deliberations, even if it is a temporary one. This implies that such discussions and deliberations does not continue relentlessly without reaching a consensus. It is therefore a primary aim of practical reasoning to attain consensus amongst most of the participants in a discussion. If consensus, or a shared compromise, is not attained, participants can agree to reach a temporary deadlock on condition that the outcome is reviewed and even rescinded if better arguments are tabled (Waghid, 2003:32). Embedded in this is also a valuable life lesson for learners. People do not always agree about everything. However, in a democracy, everyone should be able to voice their opinion. Decisions taken should favour the viewpoint of the majority, or alternatively stand over until better arguments, also from dissenting voices, can be produced. As Waghid (2003:32–33) argues, there is no validity in the claim that dissenting voices are marginalised through deliberative consensus. Be it as it may, the criticism relating to time constraints as a result of the CAPS requirement to complete a packed, set curriculum and assessments in a multi-grade setup within a specified time allocated to subjects, is a fair one. In this regard, the teachers at some of the farm schools where I work have integrated some subject content in order to enable learners to attain relevant knowledge and skills. For example, during a grade-specific group discussion on religious groups in South Africa, the Grades 4–6 class group were assessed for their debating ability in Afrikaans Home Language. Afterwards, they completed a Mathematics assessment relating to analysis of related data, and thereafter they completed a Life Skills assessment to gauge their knowledge relating to the content. Three assessment tasks were thus covered during this time.

However, given that most research on the cultivation of practical reasoning and compassion relate to older learners and university students; would it be possible to instil compassion as a necessary condition for deliberation on public matters, in younger primary school learners, such as the learners at farm schools? Nussbaum (2001) emphasises the importance of establishing pedagogical spaces where learners are exposed to educational practices with the purpose of developing an attentiveness and concern for other people and for their sufferings. Such educational practices will enable learners to extend their empathy for others and thus promote a spirit of living together in diversity. Through exposing young learners to myths, stories, poetry, drama, music, works of art and stories about histories of other countries and nations, cultures and religions, they get acquainted with, and gain an understanding, awareness, appreciation of, and respect for the diverse circumstances of others by being drawn into those lives through imagination (Nussbaum, 2001:430). Novels and stories about the tragic fate of others and of a worthy hero are, according to Nussbaum (2001:430), powerful sources of “compassionate imagining”. I once had the beautiful experience of watching young primary school learners at a farm school sing Michael Jackson’s song, “We are the world”, while the music video was played on a big screen. Afterwards, the teacher and learners discussed what the song is about, how they were affected by the video images, and how some of the images related to their own world. Through this experience, the learners became attentive and concerned about the distress they themselves, and other human beings might experience. Waghid (2010:41) refers to this as the psychological development of a concern for people outside of themselves. Such educative experiences, where learners learn to appreciate the diverse circumstances in which other human beings struggle to flourish, have the potential to expand their ability to think critically about controversial issues that pervade the society in which they live (Nussbaum, 2001:432).

To this end, it seems that strong give-and-take relationships between all agents within the social construct of the school are built on mutual respect and trust for others through the development of reason. Such relationships enable learners to become critical, responsible citizens with a social conscience. Mutual respect and trust do not mean that participants are actually compassionate towards others. Compassion can therefore not be cultivated through practical reasoning only (Waghid, 2010:160). For compassion requires that the individual focus on those who suffer and are oppressed,

rather than on him- or herself. I therefore concur with Nussbaum that deliberative engagement, occasioned by compassion, enables the individual to flourish as a morally just human being in the society in which he or she lives. The question now arises whether there is a connection between happiness from a subjective and objective perspective and *eudaimonia*.

In my experience at farm schools where I encountered such educative practices, learners also perceive the schools in a positive sense as places where they experience 'feel-good' moments as a result of positive relationships and affirmations of success achieved. In addition, these are the schools where learners' safety is a priority, where their nutritional needs are being provided for, and where their potential for future economic success is improved as a result of academic successes achieved in line with their potential. This could be seen as an indication that education as a morally informed human *praxis* potentially adds to the enhancement of learners' subjective well-being, as well as their objective happiness. In contrast, the opposite is not true, for subjective and objective features of happiness do not contribute to the attainment of a good life. This is so, because subjective 'happy' states are mostly episodic, are dependent on societal approval, and are in many instances specific to a specific domain of one's life, while objective goods are open to interpretation and are dependent on shifting priorities.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

Rural farm schools, characterised mostly by inferior or substandard leased infrastructure and a multi-grade teaching set-up, offer tuition to farm workers' children whose living circumstances in many cases still reflect a paternalistic order and exposure to many social ills. However, in my experience working as district official in, amongst others rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District, distinctly different schooling experiences for learners can be found at different farm schools, in spite of the contexts and resources provided being relatively similar.

At farm schools representing an educational environment in which virtues constituting MacIntyrean elements of practical reasoning, namely caring, conversational justice and political reasoning are fostered, teachers care for the learner qua learner, as well as for the subject matter of teaching, and present well planned lessons in which

knowledge is presented in an actual and relevant manner, linked to their lived world. Furthermore, learners are provided with the security and recognition they deserve, while their capacities to act reasonably, imagine alternative views, and rationally re-educate themselves through deliberative engagements are developed. In this way, learners potentially develop what Gutmann (1987:52) refers to as a deliberative character. Through engaging justly in conversation with each other while speaking with candour, relationships based on respect, honesty, openness, sincerity and truthfulness are fostered amongst learners, and amongst learners and teachers. Classroom activities enabling learners to, in a clear, logically consistent and unambiguous manner engage about their beliefs and conceptions in their quest to improve their situations and contexts, enhance possibilities for exercising critical judgments in shared and rational deliberation.

Therefore, be it at farm schools or schools in urban areas, education should be aimed at the acquisition of the intellectual and moral virtues through practical reasoning. Such an education enables all agents in the educative set-up to view themselves and others and their relationships to others as potential members of some network of giving and receiving. Education should therefore have as its task transforming and integrating the impulses or desires of learners towards what is both their individual good and the good for others (MacIntyre, 1999:160). However, as Nussbaum (2001) so pertinently argues, all rational deliberation should be “occasioned by the impulse to treat others in a just and humane manner”. This is so, because compassion is a necessary condition critically to deliberate about controversial issues that permeate society. It is compassion that prompts deliberative argumentation on matters relating to social ills, while deliberative argumentation has the potential to make the individual aware of the misfortunes of others. Practical reasoning and compassion can therefore be seen as intertwined virtues, the cultivation thereof contributing to individual’s flourishing. In the hands of caring, compassionate, creative and committed teachers, educative practices consistent with establishing an environment where learners and teachers and learners learn from each other contribute to both teachers and learners flourishing as human beings, even at farm schools. It is in such an environment where true transformation is plausible.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

“Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life,  
the whole aim and end of human existence”

*AZ Quotes*

Most people desire for themselves and for their children to be happy in all spheres of life. If the purpose of life is happiness as Aristotle professes, how can this be attained? More specifically, how might schooling contribute to the attainment of happiness? In this regard, many people would be quick to respond that there is very little connection between happiness and education. Others might respond that happiness through education would be particularly difficult to attain in disadvantaged societies. With these arguments in mind, I have set out to explore how happiness is conceptualised, how it is related to education, and whether it is indeed attainable through educational experiences at disadvantaged, more specifically, rural farm schools.

#### 5.2 THE EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF HAPPINESS: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FARM SCHOOLS

The primary aim of this study was to explore the educational potential of happiness, in particular at rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District.

The second chapter of this thesis set out to explore the different ways in which research studies have approached conceptions of happiness and how it might be attained through education. When conceptualised from a subjective well-being approach, experiences of happiness are dependent on the satisfaction of an individual's desires or wants, emotional state of mind, and even personality types. Such experiences are therefore often episodic, dependent on societal approval, and in many instances specific to a particular domain of one's life. Objective features of happiness on the other hand, while recognised as goods which are intrinsically good and therefore conducive to an individual's flourishing, are open to interpretation given that human flourishing is personal and diverse. In addition, it should be taken into account that

individuals' priorities may shift from time to time. The contingencies of life and the varied contexts into which individuals are born furthermore contribute to individuals having limited control over subjective and objective factors (Noddings, 2003:25).

However, most people, in their quest for happiness, are searching for a whole life that is meaningful and therefore worthwhile, independent of its contingencies. Led by the practical question that commonly guides individuals in their quest for happiness, namely 'How ought I to live?' the Greeks defined happiness as the attainment of the greatest good, or *eudaimonia*, which could be translated as 'human flourishing' (Noddings, 2003:10). This term essentially captures the normative aspects of the term 'happiness'. For Aristotle, it is through practical reasoning (*phronesis*) that human beings will come to refine and shape their perceptions of the world they inhabit, enabling them to know what the right action is that needs to be taken at a particular time in a particular context in order to attain some worthwhile good. It is in this regard that education can play a crucial role in human beings' quest for happiness. For, contrary to some subjective and objective approaches to happiness where educational systems (means) of countries are seen as instrumental in providing opportunities for learners to become socially and economically successful (end), education through practical reasoning cultivates goods that are internal to the practice itself. Means and ends are thus in a reciprocal relationship.

Peters (1966; 1967), MacIntyre (1999; 2007) and Guttmann (1987) provide, albeit with some differences, cogent arguments with regard to how the development of the virtues intrinsic to practical reasoning enable the individual to, willingly and attentively, through shared deliberation, critically examine their own and others' conduct, attitude and beliefs. Open-minded and honest deliberation is fostered through listening to, appreciating, evaluating and re-evaluating one another's arguments with regard to a particular moral issue in a mutually respectful manner, before coming to common decisions for which one can be held accountable. Such an education emphasises the notion of give-and-take relationships embedded in educational *praxis* as a result of human beings' vulnerability and dependency on others.

Deliberative exchanges themselves become the means of enabling learners (and teachers) to understand others and themselves better, and to evaluate and re-evaluate and possibly modify their own viewpoints through guided reflection in the case of

learners, and reflection on their teaching practices in the case of teachers. An education aimed at instilling the virtues through practical reasoning would therefore, as the Greek philosophers professed, benefit both the individual and those with whom she or he engages with in the particular society in which he or she lives. However, as Nussbaum (2001, cited in Waghid, 2003:68) argues, all rational deliberation ought to be motivated by a desire to treat others in a just and humane way. Compassionate imagining not only makes people aware of the undeserved suffering of others, it moves the confines of the self outward when one focuses on others' suffering that might have come about through no fault of their own (Waghid, 2010:36). Compassion therefore essentially foregrounds the intellectual emotions of people engaged in ethical deliberation (Waghid, 2010:38). Developing a consideration and concern for others and their sufferings, in turn will expand learners' ability to think critically about controversial issues that pervade the society in which they live. It would therefore seem that, in combination with each other, the cultivation of virtues of practical reasoning and compassionate imagining should be aimed at in the process of educating children to flourish as morally just human beings in the particular society which they inhabit.

If this is so, how has the South African educational policy over the years contributed to enabling learners to internalise the virtues that are prerequisites to happiness? In Chapter 3, I reported on an analysis of the aims of South African educational policy before and after 1994 in order to explore its potential to provide learning experiences that might enable learners to flourish as human beings.

During the apartheid era, it was essentially the discriminatory Christian National Education policy based and the docile, non-critical and coercive, paternalistic and patriarchal Fundamental Pedagogics approach to teaching and learning that prevented all South African learners from cultivating deliberative virtues occasioned by the impulse to treat others in a humane and just manner. Before 1994, schooling was aimed at producing obedient and compliant citizens who were discouraged from challenging those in authority (see Fataar, 2010:64–90), therefore denying individual choice with regard to which virtues to internalise or how one ought to live his or her life. In firmly establishing identity along racial and gender lines, the social role of each individual was determined by those in authority. Schooling in South Africa resembled a Platonic hierarchy (see Noddings, 2007:8) insofar as it promoted that learners should

not all have the same education, but should be educated according to their capacities. Sadly, the apartheid-era regime promoted the belief that people's race determined their capacity.

Nevertheless, the failure to equip all South African learners with an objective, unbiased understanding of humanity through critical engagement, contributed to the lack of compassion towards those perceived as different, whether it be in terms of race, gender, religion or sexual orientation. While white learners might have been provided with more opportunity to experience happiness from a subjective well-being and objective perspective during this era as a result of superior resources and an entrenched belief that they were a superior race, it is my contention that they too were deprived from schooling experiences that would have enabled them to flourish as human beings. Therefore, in the absence of critical dialogue motivated by compassion for others perceived as different, all South African learners were denied the opportunity to an education that would, as Peters (1973b, cited in Katz, 2010:104) posits, "transform mere living into a quality of life".

However, with the demise of segregated schooling in South Africa, a new education system was ushered in not only to redress the inequalities of the past, but primarily to equip learners with the values required for meaningful participation in a democratic society. In recognising that the values, which go beyond language and culture, are the common currency that ensure a meaningful life, and are therefore the normative principles that ensure ease of life lived in a community, the MVE offers ten communitarian values to help learners achieve higher levels of moral judgment, namely democracy, social justice, equity, equality, non-racism, non-sexism, *ubuntu*, an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation (DoE, 2001b:3).

In contrast to the docile, paternalistic pedagogy implemented during the previous dispensation, the MVE promotes critical dialogue and debate based on mutual respect and trust during pedagogical encounters. In offering as a strategy the nurturing of a culture of communication and participation in classrooms, the MVE envisions enabling learners to become critical of their own position after listening to others' freely, yet responsibly expressed stories. During such pedagogical encounters, learners willingly and respectfully share their commonalities and differences with regard to race, gender,

beliefs, cultures etc., and come to respect and understand other's differences, other's rights to be treated as equals, as well as their responsibilities in upholding the law. Although practical reasoning is not explicitly mentioned in the MVE, such deliberations resemble an Aristotelian notion of practical reasoning insofar it promotes dialogue where learners come to understand the self and others during discussions and debate: evaluating, re-evaluating and modification their viewpoints before deciding how to act in a morally appropriate manner. In this way, learners, as critical thinkers, internalise the moral virtues that are required to flourish in a democratic society. As mentioned during my discussion on how compassion is conceptualised, it is only when deliberation is motivated by the need to alleviate the suffering of those others who are less fortunate, that such deliberation becomes a meaningful educational experience. Learners therefore begin to understand that those who are vulnerable have the right to be treated justly and humanely, that is, with compassion.

However, despite the national curriculum (NCS), which is based on the principles of the MVE, having the potential to provide learning experiences that will have intrinsic value to the individual learner and those with whom he or she engages, I acknowledge that there are certain dilemmas that might hinder the implementation of the MVE as envisioned. These dilemmas are the overarching instrumentalist purpose of the CAPS, as well as the focus on the individual taking responsibility for learning, the omission of what type of teacher is envisioned and how subjects can be integrated. Instrumentalist teaching in which achievement outcomes are specified in advance could be deemed as anti-democratic, "disengaging learners and teachers from the social practice which makes education what it is" Waghid (2003:2). While a *techne*-instrumentalist view of schooling might provide individual happiness within a subjective well-being and objectivist framework, value-free means–end practices are not necessarily committed to right living through the pursuit of human good. In other words, such schooling might provide opportunities for learners to become successful in terms of monetary or other objective needs, but it does not guarantee that they will become good individuals and community members of strong moral character.

Nevertheless, in spite of the challenges mentioned with regard to implementation of the educational policy, it is my contention that based on the analysis of its aims, the NCS has the potential to provide learning experiences that will enable learners to

internalise those moral virtues that are vital for an individual to flourish as a member of a particular society, if implemented in a manner conducive to this. Critical engagement relating to topics impacting on the rights and dignity of people, in an open, honest and mutually respectful manner, has the potential to cultivate in learners compassion, altruism, kindness and a heightened sense of *ubuntu*. The question with regard to how learners and teachers at rural farm schools in the Western Coast Education District experience education in relation to happiness now arises.

In Chapter 4, I focused on how learners at rural farm schools in the West Coast Education District experience education in relation to happiness. I furthermore discussed the conditions that ought to be in place for rural farm schools to become instrumental in fostering practical reasoning and compassion.

Inspired by the Aristotelian notion of human flourishing (see Curren, 2010:548), Peters (1966), MacIntyre (1999; 2007) and Gutmann (1987) provide guidance in terms of how happiness can be attained through education. MacIntyre argues that education should the aim of education should be the development of both the powers that will enable learners to become reflective and independent members of their families and political societies (MacIntyre & Dunne, 2004, cited in Dunne & Hogan, 2004:1). MacIntyre proposes how pedagogies based on practical reasoning direct learners towards the achievement of individual and common goods. A summary of how three elements constitutive of MacIntyrean practical reasoning, namely caring, conversational justice and political reasoning, enable human flourishing follows.

Education environments in which teaching involve much more than the transfer of facts on topics to passive disengaged learners, but rather aim at genuine engagement in which the right combination of words and the right actions at the right time contribute to transforming learners' lives, are environments enabling human flourishing. According to MacIntyre (1999:89), such educative environments require caring teachers. In a MacIntyrean sense, caring teachers are ones who give of themselves so that their learners can become educated human beings who are equipped with the self-knowledge that will inform their critical examination of the society in which they live. Teaching is thus intimately linked to caring for others to the extent to which teachers want to create a better world. Caring teachers are therefore ones who exhibit the following characteristics.

- Care for the learner as an individual, as well as for the subject matter. These are the teachers whose lessons are thoughtfully planned, taking into consideration learners' lived worlds. Furthermore, teachers display care towards learners when they cultivate in those learners the ability to evaluate, modify, or reject their own practical judgments in order to reach their own justifiable conclusions for which they accept accountability (Waghid, 2003:26), teachers display care towards learners. This implies that content matter is presented in an actual and relevant manner, encouraging learners to connect it with their social environments and experiences. Well-considered probing questions eliciting dialogue are posed to learners, guiding them to evaluate and challenge the new knowledge and respond to questions in a respectful manner. Caring teachers ensure that learners fully understand a concept before teaching them how to apply it.
- Care for learners by providing them with the security and recognition they deserve. Learners are cared for unconditionally, irrespective of their socio-economic background, or physical or intellectual ability. By getting to know their learners' home backgrounds during parent meetings and home visits, teachers acquire a better understanding in terms of the circumstances in which learners are raised. This enables teachers to approach topics relating to moral issues in a sensitive manner. Caring teachers are also conscious of learners' varied cognitive levels. Each individual learner should therefore be approached as a unique individual who should be taught in a manner that would enable him or her to reach his or her own potential. In this way, teachers unconditionally care for learners.
- Care not only about the outcome of a lesson as a specified end to a means, but rather is concerned with, through teaching, equipping learners with opportunities to internalise the internal and moral virtues which will enable them to act in morally apposite manner in whatever situation they find themselves. Caring teachers will therefore guide learners critically to evaluate information, imagine alternative ideas, and make confident judgments concerning the variety of the good. In this way, learners come to understand the underlying principles of things that will lead them to choose and do what is reasonable.

- Care for learners through provisioning of pedagogies which will enable them to become self-directed in their practice and habits. This implies that teaching will equip learners to be able to recognise what is required in situations when there is no rule to guide them. Through educative practices in which practical reasoning is embedded, learners come to act in a morally apposite manner, even when no one is watching.

The kind of care that teachers practice will not only enable learners to become independent practical reasoners, but will also enable educational environments that foster mutual respect and trust amongst all participants in the educative process. In essence, this means that both givers (teachers) and receivers (learners) of care have to engage justly in conversation with one another (Waghid, 2003:27). Teachers who are serious about providing an educative environment in which learners will flourish, have the following characteristics.

- They create unthreatening pedagogical spaces where learners confidently and actively engage in conversations, discussions and debate relating to specific moral issues, within specific timeframes. Learners therefore need to reach consensus with regard to their conclusions.
- They create pedagogical spaces where all participants respectfully and attentively listen to each other's viewpoints, are open to accept what the other has to say, evaluate and confront their own biases, and are open to be challenged and corrected, or convinced of justifiable alternative perspectives.
- They ensure that such engagements are unconditional, fostering greater co-operation and mutual respect amongst learners and amongst learners and themselves.

In this way, teachers and learners mutually explore different perspectives, enabling the development of their own and learners' understanding and self-knowledge, in the process enabling learners to become critical and responsible citizens.

In establishing environments in which each learner contributes to shared, rational deliberations in his or her own voice, teachers recognise that each member in the educative process is one from whom there is much to learn about their own personal

good and about their common good. Such environments will therefore have the following characteristics.

- Classroom arrangements (desks) and learning and teaching resources enable shared deliberative reasoning. Such classroom arrangements should make it possible for learners to engage with others in a clear, logically consistent manner about their beliefs, conceptions and presuppositions in their quest to improve their situations and contexts (Waghid, 2003:31).
- A proxy provides feedback in terms of conclusions of group discussions, articulating the viewpoints of the group.

For Gutmann (1987:52), a schooling system should cultivate in learners the capacity to deliberate over the demands of justice for all individuals. It is through empowerment of democratic citizens that the cause of justice can be furthered collectively. Deliberative engagement that elicits reflection on injustices faced by themselves and others, have the potential to motivate learners at farm schools to seek ways in which justice for themselves and for others can be attained. In listening to, and evaluating and re-evaluating one another's reasons in a respectful manner, educative practices at farm schools can be instrumental in instilling the virtues, which, as Gutmann (1987:287) posits, are essential for individual learners to flourish in a democratic society, namely honesty, respect, veracity, nonviolence and magnanimity.

My potential critic might argue that practical reasoning as a discourse is biased against learners who are disadvantaged. Likewise, many teachers would argue that the cultivation of practical reasoning and compassion is challenging enough in urbanised schools, and therefore even more challenging to achieve at rural farm schools. Some teachers attribute these challenges to the packed CAPS curriculum which is not designed for a multi-grade set-up, time constraints, or their limited or non-existent training in terms of how to teach and manage learners in multi-grade classes. Others, like the teacher at one of my schools who stated that farm labourers lack the ability for critical thinking, sadly believed that the majority of farm labourers' children have a limited cognitive ability as a result of poor nutrition and health care, mothers abusing alcohol and other substances while pregnant, the lack of stimulation and resources, and should be taught accordingly. While these factors are not to be disputed as adding

to the pressure and challenges that these teachers face, I argue that it is precisely at these schools where teaching are called upon to provide learners with the opportunities to flourish as human beings. A caring teacher who, in an unthreatening environment patiently guides learners' reasoning through probing questions, listening to their answers without being dismissive and acknowledging their own changed perspectives, instil in learners the willingness to participate in deliberative engagement, moulding not only their reasoning skills, but also enhancing their listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, although not exclusively, learners at farm schools often lack the confidence to express their own views for fear of being ridiculed. However, in an unthreatening environment where learners come to understand that they too have a voice, and that whatever their contribution is, it is regarded as valuable, they will acquire the confidence to view their opinions publicly. In coming to understand that their own perceptions might be the result of coercion or it might be the result of a lack of exposure, there is the possibility that they might willingly adapt their viewpoints based on the new knowledge acquired through critical reflection. Similarly, when a teacher acknowledges to them that he or she might not have been correct in his or her assumptions, then the learner comes to understand that one is not always right, and that conversation with others might bring one to other insights. Through listening and speaking to others, learners' language ability is enhanced, which in future will enable them to have meaningful conversations in a logical and coherent way. In coming to know and understand others who are different through conversation and engagement, respect for others' differences are cultivated which in turn could contribute to tolerance, peace and *ubuntu* in the society in which they live. Furthermore, particularly in communities where violence and disrespect for others are prevalent, dialogue as deliberation could prevent violent behaviour. Through deliberative dialogue where participants really listen to the viewpoints of their co-participants in the dialogue, and where they display an openness to be persuaded by a reasonable explanation of other's viewpoints, the ability to restrain their anger through respect for the dignity of the other is cultivated (Waghid, 2010:95). In this way, learners learn that violence is never the answer to solving disagreements.

However, according to Nussbaum (2001), an education is not sufficient if it focuses only on the development of the capacity to reason without the cultivation of compassion. This is so, as practical reasoning aims at establishing relationships based

on mutual respect and trust amongst participants, but it does not mean that participants are necessarily compassionate towards others (Waghid, 2003:81). In order to make sound judgments based on perceptions and reflection of other's undeserved misfortune, one needs to possess the virtue of compassion that will shift the focus on the self towards a focus on others (Waghid, 2003:61). In this way, learners will become morally just persons. For learners to become independent practical reasoners who are compassionate, we need compassionate teachers who willingly shift the focus of the self outward towards their learners. At some schools where I work, I have encountered educational environments in which compassion as a virtue is fostered. At these schools, the following conditions prevail.

- Teachers find creative ways in which to assist learners to reach their full potential, despite their disadvantaged background which is no fault of their own.
- Teachers, in acknowledging some sort of community between him- or herself and his or her learners and imagining what it would be like to encounter difficulty, supports learners who struggle to understand concepts in a patient and understanding manner.
- Teachers treat all learners in a morally sensitive and compassionate way, empathetically taking into consideration how it would feel when confronted with barriers to learning. In this way, the teacher's self-fulfilment comes not only from learners' improved academic success, if indeed there is any, but it comes from seeing her learners flourish as morally just human beings.
- Learners are, from a young age, exposed to literature, stories, lived experiences, poems and visual texts depicting the suffering of others, which is of no doing of their own. Through thoughtful probing questions, learners are guided to articulate how exposure to the literature, stories, lived experiences, poems and visual texts about others' suffering and tragedies, prompt them to rethink their actions towards those who suffer, including those beyond their immediate communities. Given the new insight, learners deliberate on ways or strategies for prevention of related abuse, thus improving the societies that they inhabit.

While the challenges facing teachers at multi-grade schools are not disputed, I am nevertheless confident that farm schools can provide teaching and learning environments enabling learners and teachers to flourish. In such environments, the elements of practical reasoning are embedded in the educative practices. However, while practical reasoning fosters virtues that are connected to mutual respect and trust, it does not necessarily move one to do something about the misfortune for others. In order to be able to truly flourish as a human being, one needs to cultivate the virtue of practical reasoning, as well as the virtue of compassion. People are not born compassionate people. People become compassionate when they become aware of injustice against others and by making themselves vulnerable in the person of the other, extend their moral sensitivities to others. Only then will people act compassionately towards others. When learners are exposed to educational practices with the purpose of developing attentiveness and concern for others, they will come to understand the suffering of others and be prompted to oppose conditions that might lead to undeserved suffering. Motivated to treat others in a morally just and humane way, participants in the education process therefore sets out to deliberate critically over social injustices that permeate society with the view not only to improve the self, but also society itself. Practical reasoning and compassion is therefore inseparable virtues of education. Through cultivating the virtue of practical reasoning and compassion, teachers and learners will flourish within the education set-up, also at farm schools. This is only possible in the hands of caring, committed and creative teachers who themselves are compassionate.

### **5.3 POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS**

In the study reported on here, I have explored how happiness and education are conceptualised. I have furthermore explored the potential for learners to flourish at rural farm schools in South Africa. I am of the contention, based on conceptual analysis, that learners at farm schools can become educated human beings through the provisioning of educative *praxis* in which practical reasoning and compassion is embedded. It would however be interesting to use empirical data in a future study in order to ascertain to what an extent the cultivation of these virtues are plausible at farm schools. I therefore do not wish to make any recommendations, but rather offer

possibilities that might be considered by education authorities in respect of the attainment of human flourishing at rural farm schools.

It is my experience during lessons observed at schools that teachers either lack the knowledge and skill to cultivate democratic virtues through their teaching, or regard the inculcation of virtues as the exclusive role of the parent, and not the school. It is therefore imperative that emphasis is placed on this aspect in teacher training, as well as in initiatives aimed at professional development. Such training and professional development sessions will ultimately include a focus on deliberations on interpretation of aims, or what Noddings (2003:74) refers to as “aims-talk”. During professional development sessions, unpacking and understanding the virtues and how it is cultivated through teaching and learning experiences will enhance teachers’ capacity to implement a curriculum aimed at give-and take relationships that will enable the development of learners into educated, flourishing human beings. In this way, both actors in the teacher-learner relationships learn and gain from the educational experience.

Through the establishment of Professional Learning Communities where teachers working in the same contexts regularly share best practices, including those aimed at provisioning of educational *praxis*, teachers are potentially empowered to provide an education aimed at the formation of learners as individuals who flourish in the society they inhabit.

According to Waghid (2003:72), pedagogical encounters with learners from disadvantaged socio-economic communities might contribute to making teachers aware of what it means to learn under conditions of hopelessness, poverty and hunger, cultivating in them a sense of compassion. As suggested by Waghid (2003:72), the introduction of a compulsory in-service training period for all teachers, in schools where the majority of learners are from rural farming communities, have the potential to equip teachers with more insight in terms of the day to day realities of learners living in disadvantaged circumstances.

Taking cognisance of the current process of developing an adapted curriculum for multi-grade schools, district officials should, instead of focusing mainly on CAPS compliance, support creativity and flexibility in terms of the implementation of the

curriculum, providing safe spaces for teachers to do things differently. These will also include integration of subjects and multiple subject assessments per task.

In order for subject advisors to provide quality support to teachers with regard to the creation of a pedagogical *praxis*, the possibility of those subject advisors teaching at rural farm schools from time to time for a predetermined time could be explored. During school visits to support educators, district officials could, for example, teach alongside the teacher, or teach the class for the day while the teacher observes the lesson. On the one hand, this will provide the subject advisor with a better understanding in terms of the realities of teaching in a rural school context, and on the other hand, provide the teacher with a better understanding with regard to pedagogies aimed at instilling the virtues in learners. In addition, subject advisors could take over an entire class of identified teachers for a full day or more, while those teachers attend in-service training.

Assessment practices focused on assessment of content should be reduced in order to allow for more opportunities for robust engagement and the development of reason. In this way, learners will acquire the ability to question and understand the reasons for the existing order, and deliberate on ways in which improvements can be brought about.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

In this mini-thesis, I argued that the NCS, which is based on the principles of the MVE, has the potential to provide learning experiences that will have intrinsic value to the individual learner and those with whom he or she engages. I furthermore argued that all learners, even those educated at rural farm schools, would flourish as educated human beings in pedagogical spaces where the development of their self-worth is enabled so that they may evaluate information critically in order to make morally appropriate decisions. Such educational experiences aim at enhancing learners' capacity for the development of a deliberative character (Gutmann, 1987:52) which could "enlarge, deepen and extend the individual's thought and awareness" (Peters, 1966:31), in turn enabling them to develop the capacity to be reflective and independent members of their respective families and societies (Macintyre & Dunne, 2004:1). Through thought provoking deliberative engagements with peers and

teachers, learners internalise the moral virtues of respect, trust, freedom, impartiality, cooperation, truthfulness, nonviolence and concern for others and their dignity as human beings. It is only when such deliberative engagements emanate from compassionate imagining that educative practices will be meaningful. In order for this to realise, we need caring, creative teachers who themselves are not only able to reason, but are compassionate. In this way, farm schools can become places where mutually respectful and trusting relationships enable learners to cultivate the virtues that enable them to flourish as human beings. If, as Aristotle argues, happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the end to which our actions are directed, making it the whole aim and end of human existence (Aristotle, 1955:13-15), then an education in which the cultivation of practical reasoning and compassion are embedded, has the potential to contribute significantly to personal and collective happiness, even at rural farm schools.

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