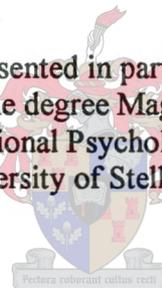


EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF OVER AGE LEARNERS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE AS VIEWED BY EDUCATORS

by

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree Magister Educationis (Psych) in
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Declaration

I, the undersigned do hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

SUMMARY

Being over age-for-grade has become a barrier to learning. More than 15% of learners in the South African school system are over age. This creates an enormous problem in terms of education spending per learner. In 1998 South Africa spent one-third of its education budget on over age learners who included repeaters and drop-outs.

A clearer understanding of the educational needs of over age learners is needed. These learners are at risk of dropping out, being further retained or being promoted out of the school system. Thus far over age learners have been marginalised by the education system essentially due to the system's inability to deal with them. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to make a contribution to the understanding of the educational needs of over age learners.

A qualitative approach provided a clear description of the factors that impact on the educational needs of over age learners. This study revealed the following:

- Over age learners experience a sense of being educationally displaced.
- The attitudes and beliefs of teachers directly influence their educational responses to the needs of over age learners.
- Over age learners struggle with basic scholastic skills.
- The provision of support comes primarily from classroom peers.

It appears that teachers need a variety of educational skills to deal appropriately with the needs of over age learners. Furthermore, it appears that these learners need an educational space of their own within an inclusive education environment. It would further appear that over age learners need to be acknowledged as being a specific category of learners with learning barriers, otherwise their needs will continue to be marginalised by the educational system.

OPSOMMING

Dit wil voorkom dat ouderdom 'n leerhindernis vir duisende leerders geword het. Meer as vyftien persent van leerders in die skoolsisteem is oorouderdom. Dit skep 'n probleem in terme van die opvoedingsonkoste per leerder. In 1998 is 'n derde van die Suid Afrikaanse begroting aan oorouderdom leerders gespandeer wat ook herhalers en skoolverlaters insluit.

Daar is 'n behoefte aan groter begrip vir die behoeftes van oorouderdom leerders. Daar is 'n risiko dat hierdie leerders skool kan verlaat, terug gehou kan word, of uit die skoolsisteem bevorder kan word. Tot dusver is oorouderdom leerders deur die onderwysstelsel gemarginaliseer hoofsaaklik as gevolg van 'n gebrek aan kennis om hulle effektief te akkommodeer. Die doel van hierdie studie was om 'n bydrae te lewer tot 'n beter begrip van die opvoedkundige behoeftes van oorouderdom leerders.

'n Kwalitatiewe benadering is verkies wat 'n duidelike beskrywing gee van die opvoedkundige behoeftes van oorouderdom leerders. Die studie het die volgende tendense aan die lig gebring:

- Oorouderdom leerders ervaar hulself as misplaas binne die onderwys stelsel.
- Opvoeders se houdings en oortuigings het 'n duidelike invloed op hul eie opvoedkundige response ten opsigte van die behoeftes van oorouderdom leerders.
- Oorouderdom leerders worstel met basiese skolastiese vaardighede.
- Oorouderdom leerders ontvang primêr opvoedkundige ondersteuning van medeleerders.

Opvoeders benodig 'n verskeidenheid van opvoedkundige vaardighede om oorouderdom leerders se behoeftes toepaslik te hanteer. Dit blyk dat hierdie leerders 'n behoefte het aan hul eie opvoedkundige ruimte binne 'n inklusiewe omgewing. Daar kan geargumenteer word dat oorouderdom leerders 'n spesifieke kategorie leerders is met eiesoortige leerhindernisse. Indien bogenoemde nie erken word nie sal daar voort gegaan word met die miskennis van oorouderdom leerders se behoeftes deur die opvoedkundige gemeenskap.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. **AARC** Age Appropriate Regular Classroom
2. **ABET** Adult Basic Education and Training
3. **CASE** Community Agency for Social Enquiry
4. **CIPP** Curriculum Innovation Pilot Project
5. **DET** Department of Education and Training
6. **DOE** Department of Education
7. **DSM-IV** Diagnostic and statistical manual of Mental Disorders
8. **ECD** Early Childhood Directorate
9. **ELSEN** Education for Learners with Special Education Needs
10. **EMIS** Education Management and Information Systems
11. **FET** Further Education and Training
12. **GET** General Education and Training
13. **HDI** Human Development Index
14. **HSRC** Human Sciences Research Council
15. **IMC** Inter-ministerial Committee
16. **LSEN** Learners with Special Education Needs
17. **MEP** Mathematics Education Project
18. **NCSNET** National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
19. **NCESS** National Committee on Education Support Services
20. **NEPI** National Education Policy Investigation
21. **NGO** Non-governmental Organisation
22. **NQF** National Qualifications Framework
23. **OBE** Outcome Based Education
24. **POLP** Primary Open Learning Pathway Trust
25. **RIEP** The Research Institute for Education Planning
26. **SES** Socio-economic Status
27. **UNESCO** United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation
28. **WCED** Western Cape Education Department
29. **YBET** Youth Basic Education and Training
30. **YAR** Youth at Risk

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

There are moments and I believe this is one of them, when, whoever we are, observers or not, we have to throw up our hands in heaviness of heart and dismay and disgust and say in desperation: God save them, those children, and for allowing such a state of affairs to continue, God save us too.

Robert Coles (1973:116)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Age has become a barrier to learning for thousands of learners. It should be remembered that the present South African education system has retained many of the negative features that resulted from apartheid. For example, the socio-economic conditions in society at large remain poor, and the result of educational neglect at home or inappropriate teaching responses at school has seen an increase in the number of over age learners in South Africa. The phasing in of the new education system, namely Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) could shift the problem from the primary school to the secondary school due to the fact that learners can repeat a grade only once in a phase (Department of Education: Draft Assessment Policy, 1998). The lack of grade-based benchmarks against which to assess learners' performance is a mixed blessing for those learners who do not have to spend more than four years in a phase. They will become part of the overflow of over age learners in the secondary schools and will at least not feel socially excluded. There are two educational phases in a primary school: the foundation phase and the intermediate phase. If learners are held back once in each phase then by the time they enter secondary school these learners will be two years older than their classmates and will therefore be over age (Department of Education, August 30, 1999:21).

The problems faced by the South African educational system are staggering. For example, South Africa spent one-third of its education budget in 1998 on over age learners and drop-outs, costing South Africa R15 billion (Sunday Times, 1998). This particular situation needs to be understood against the background of the former educational system that was the breeding ground for educational inequality in the disadvantaged sectors of South African society (Dawes and Donald, 1994:137-151; Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen, 1996:x; DOE, May 2000:3). The cumulated consequence of this unequal system was, for example, a desperately under-educated African population; according to the October Household Survey of 1995, African adults made up 92% of those who have no formal education (South Africa. DOE, May 2000:4).

1.2 BACKGROUND

The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1992) was the first democratic, documented process that gave a true reflection of the educational crisis facing South Africa in the reconstruction period of the 1990s. A glimpse at some of the statistics for over age learners provides a sobering view of the seriousness of the situation (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). The creation of a category of learners who are over age can therefore be directly related to the following deliberate educational policy of the past:

Education provision in South Africa prior to 1994 was delivered along racial lines (in accordance with the political ideology known as apartheid) with most resources being allocated in order of rank to Whites, Indians, Coloureds, with the least resources going to Africans. For example in 1994, the pre-democratic government was still spending R5 403 per White learner per year compared to R1 053 for every African learner in the former Transkei (South Africa. DOE, May 2000:4). This racist educational provision was further entrenched by legislation providing for four separate racial education departments. (Department of Education, November 1997: 22; Donald and Csapo, 1989: 139-152). Education for Africans was not compulsory, while school attendance was compulsory for Whites and Coloured learners from age 7-16 years, and for Indian learners from age 7-15 years. African learners

had to pay school fees, whereas schooling was free for the other groups (Donald and Csapo, 1989: 140). Training and qualification of educators in each system of education also differed. De Lange (1981) considered a senior certificate and professional qualification as the norm and showed that in the education system for White learners, 3.36% of educators were underqualified; for Indian learners, 19.70%; for Coloured learners, 66.14%; and for African learners, 85.0%. White, Coloured, and Indian learners began and continued their education in their mother tongue (English or Afrikaans) throughout their entire school career. African learners' education was primarily in their mother tongue in primary school, but in the secondary school their instructional language became English and Afrikaans (Donald and Csapo, 1989: 142). All these issues impacted severely on the educational process of learners in disadvantaged and developing contexts.

Table 1.1. Over age learners in the school system (excluding out-of-school youth and special schools)

	Ex-DET	All Provinces	WCED	WCED	WCED	WCED	WCED
Years	1994	1995	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total Learners	4,845 447	11,908 883	857 213	869307	841 696	902 648	907 856
Over age	862 530	3,063 517	103 870	118 578	89 899	93 975	130 693
%	18%	26%	12%	14%	11%	10%	14%

Sources: Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) from Western Cape Education Department (WCED, 1995-1999); the ex-DET monograph of 1994 and Hartley, 1997 (See Tables 1.1 – 1.10).

Table 1.2 OVER AGE LEARNERS PER PROVINCE IN 1995/1996

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT	NUMBER OF OVER AGE LEARNERS	% OF ENROLMENT OF PROVINCE
Kwazulu-Natal	319 073	12.4%
Northern Province	343 473	17.9%
Guateng	129 341	9.18%
Northern Cape	35 043	17.4%
Mpumalanga	145 973	15.98%
North West Province	189 274	20.68%
Eastern Cape	481 729	20.7%
Free State	186 029	23.96%
Western Cape	51 573	6.1%
Total	1 871 995	15.7%

Source: Hartley, 1997: 11.

The figures in Table 1.2 are based on Hartley's definition (1997: 10) for over age learners, namely, those learners who are three or more years older than the expected age for a class, with a starting age of seven years in grade one. When we take the definition of over age learners given in the Green Paper on Special Education (South Africa. Department of Education, August 30, 1999:21) as the starting point, namely, all those learners two or more years older than the expected age for a class (age-grade norm) with a starting age of seven

years in grade one, as this study does, then it should be clear that South Africa have a serious problem on its hands (see Appendices 1.1–1.10).

A clearer understanding of the educational issues involved with over age learners is needed. These learners are at risk of becoming drop-outs, being further retained or promoted without educational support. Motala (1995:164) suggests that the dichotomy between in-school and out-of-school factors is misleading; that both are important in explaining high rates of repetition and drop-outs. Psycho-social and educational instability appears to leave these learners with gaps in basic academic skills for learning that are necessary for them to proceed further with their school careers. Donald writes about 'out of age' (1993:152) groups of learners who in almost all cases have not acquired adequate basic educational skills in literacy, numeracy and writing. These learners need specialised support in the form of special learning materials, special adaptations of methodology, and special modifications of pace and motivation (POLP, 1998; Donald, 1993:153). It therefore appears that an inappropriate educational response seems to contribute to placing this group of learners further at risk. The South African national Department of Education is acutely aware of learners with special educational needs:

For those who struggle to find a place and a voice within the schooling environment – learners with special needs, second-language English speakers, poor and hungry scholars ... as well as those hidden and invisible conditions and practices, which push out and marginalise people within schools.

(South Africa. Department of Education, March 2000:26).

Various sectors of society have marginalised over age learners, for example, the media (newspapers) by responding in the following sensationalist manner:

Learners as young as six years old have been sexually molested and abused by teenagers at a city primary school and although several cases have been

reported to the principal, no action has been taken. Parents and educators have told how a group of older grade five learners, who were held back for several years and are now between twelve and fifteen years old, have attacked several grade one and two learners, aged between six and eight. The root of the problem, according to educationalists, is the disproportionately large number of learners at some schools who have been held back, and are consequently much older than their classmates. In the Kuils river area, for example, 22,5% of the learners are overage[sic]-the highest percentage of overage[sic] learners in the Western Cape.

(Cape Times, March 16, 1998).

There appears to be a defined number of reasons for learners being over age for their grades (Motala, 1995: 161-177):

- Legal entrance dates: Starting school too early or too late. The legal entry age is seven with effect from the 1 January 2000.
- Sometimes there are no birth records.
- Parents may have decided to keep the child at home for an extra year or more for various reasons, ranging from the child being hungry to having to walk long distances from home to school.
- Learners have more than once repeated a grade.
- A few learners are confined to home/hospital and are unable to attend school with their age peers. These cases used to be infrequent and did not account for many older learners. However, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has swollen the numbers of such learners dramatically
- Dropping in and out of school.

Repetition of a grade (repeaters) and dropping in and out of school (mobile learners) appear to account for the vast majority of learners being above the median age for the grade. In the case of repetition, some parents and most educators appear to believe that this practice will place learners at an educational advantage. Most educators mention economic disadvantage

and over age as factors that occur often among learners who drop-out of school. Schools have little or no direct influence on the economic circumstances of their learners. However, they have full control of grade placement policies. Unfortunately, it appears that where educators had a say in the grade placement of over age learners it tended to be promotion without support. Mobility of learners in terms of exiting and entering a grade (drop-ins/drop-outs) during the course of a year plays a critical role in repeating a grade. Multiple re-entries to the same grade over more than one year after exiting school are another variation of repetition. Another variation of multiple re-entries to the same grade takes place when learners are shuttled around within the same school without leaving school for that year.

Access and equity are not enough. According to some researchers these learners should be treated as learners with special educational needs (LSEN) as it refers to all learners in need of additional support within a continuum of need (Du Toit, 1996:14; WCED Conference, March 1999). A learner-centred education or learning approach should be adapted to the needs of the learner rather than that the learner be fitted to pre-ordained assumptions regarding the pace and nature of the learning process (UNESCO, 1994:7). According to the Primary Open Learning Pathway Trust (POLP, 1999), learners between the ages of nine and fourteen years who are entering school for the first time or repeating a grade for more than the first time, should be given the option of placement in multi-age *open learning* classes but only after assessment indicates that they have not reached the level of grade three. According to POLP, open learning consists primarily of *multi-grade/multi-age* classes. According to Craig (2000:6), open learning is primarily focussed on providing *access* for learners to get back into formal schooling. Over age learners who have had some schooling and are re-entering school, could also be placed in these open learning classes or alternatively in other age-appropriate grades. Youth older than 15 years and functioning at the Foundation Phase Level should be placed in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) classes for youth, for which the venue could be a high school, community college or other age-appropriate site (Department of Education, August 30, 1999:21).

Interactive special educational need (a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic need), was

developed only after 1990 in the former Department of Education and Training (NEPI, 1992:33; Du Toit: 1996:14-15). What should be clear is that neglect of this need, particularly now under conditions of compulsory primary education, will produce and perpetuate a crippling effect not only on substantial numbers of learners but also on general classroom practice and the morale of educators. It is important to note that educational need is proportionately greatest for those who are the most disadvantaged due to poor people being more at risk to unhealthy and unsafe conditions like malnutrition, disease, infection, and injury than those who are not poor. For example, for every 100 learners conservatively estimated to have special educational need, 89 are African. On a more real estimate, 91 are African (NEPI, Support Services, 1992:30; Donald 1993:145-152). Over age appears to be a common denominator to the practices of retention and drop-outs (push-outs). This situation is not unique to South Africa; there is a considerable body of international research on educational need (World Bank, 1990; Manning and Baruth, 1995; Little, 1995).

The Department of Education drew up the following statistics using the 1995 October Household Survey for the age groups, and the enrolments per age for South Africa for 1995.

Table 1.3 Estimation of not-at-school youth during 1995

AGE GROUP	TOTAL POPULATION	ENROLMENTS	%	NOT-AT-SCHOOL	%
6-14 Years	8 947 529	8 369 676	93.5%	577 853	6.5%
6-18 Years	13 291 529	11 304 627	85%	1 986 902	15%

Source: Hartley, 1997:11

The above-mentioned figures for not-at-school learners are cause for concern since they will further swell a potential group of learners that will generally be over age at the time of school entry.

The researcher has been an employee of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), South Africa, for the past 13 years, serving as a guidance counsellor and later as a school psychologist. Through his work as a school psychologist, the researcher is exposed to learners from pre-primary to tertiary level, but the period spent as an educator was served in a secondary school only. During these years and especially working from the school clinic, it became apparent that the needs of over age learners are not being met. This realisation was further affirmed after becoming a member of the Curriculum Innovation Pilot Project (CIPP) under the auspices of the Primary Open Learning Pathway Trust (POLP). CIPP represented various stakeholders in the Western Cape, namely: school clinics, the Early Childhood Directorate in the Western Cape Education Department, Subject Advisory Services, Circuit Managers, Directorate for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) and Para-Educational Directorate on Over Age Learners from the WCED. The CIPP was formed in collaboration with the non-governmental organisations (NGO's) sector via the POLP and the Maths Education Project (MEP) of the University of Cape Town.

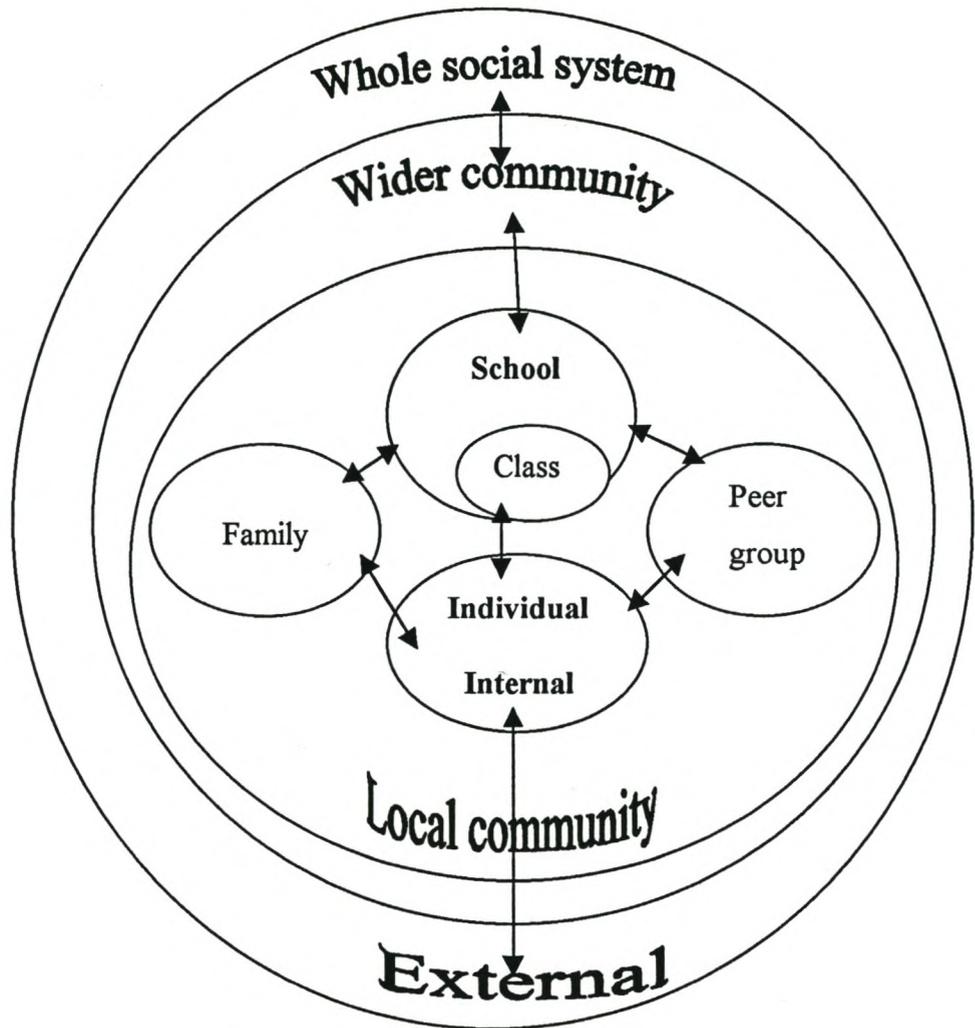
1.3 A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The blend of ecological and systems theories used in this study is known as the ecosystemic perspective. The main concern of this perspective is how individual people and groups at different levels of the social context are linked in dynamic, interdependent, and interacting relationships. A systems perspective refers to the view of individual behaviour that takes into account the context in which that behaviour occurs. The systems theory sees different levels and groupings of the social context as systems, in which the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interaction among all parts (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwane, 1997: 36). For example, each level of a system has its own subsystems – a school as a system may have staff and learners, but educators, heads of departments, junior learners and senior learners function as subsystems. Systems and subsystems also interact with other systems, shaping and limiting one another.

In this study systemic context of the learning problems and learning needs of over age learners

in the school is focused on with specific reference to the **educator-learner interface subsystems**. This perspective presents a conceptual shift from a linear-causal model, which focuses primarily on the individual, to a circular-systemic model in which learning problems are interpreted merely as indicative of dysfunctional dynamics within the system. A systemic perspective supports the view that the learning problems are maintained by the social context, for example a monograde grade environment, especially in the foundation phase, contributes to a category of learners being labelled *over age for grade*. The social context (socio-economic conditions, ways of life and cultural patterns) has a profound influence on the needs of specifically over age learners. A fundamental principal of systemic thinking is that cause and effect relationships are not seen as taking place in one direction only; they are seen as occurring in circles, or more accurately, cycles (Donald *et al.*, 1997:36). The ecosystemic perspective provides a framework for understanding the individual learner in relation to his social context. Thus, how we think, feel, behave, and develop as individual persons is linked to the social structures, forces, and relationships that make up our environment, and cannot be linked causally to only one part of the system. The latter would present a false picture of reality. Therefore, different levels of the system in the social context influence and are influenced by one another in a continuous process of dynamic balance, tension, and interplay (See Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 The classroom within the whole social context.



Source: Donald *et al.* (1997:111)

The different levels of Figure 1 are based on the work of Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 1986).

Donald *et al.* (1997:58) describe this ecosystemic perspective as follows:

- **Microsystem (Individual)** - this consist of systems such as the family, the school and the peer group in which learners are closely involved in various patterns of daily activities, roles, and relationships.
- **Mesosystem (Local community)** - at this level, peer group, school, and family systems *interact* with one another. Thus, what happens at home can influence responses in the classroom or in the peer-group.
- **Exosystem (Wider community)** - this level includes other systems, for example, the parent's place of work, in which the learner is not directly involved, but which may influence or be influenced by the individual's microsystems.
- **Macrosystem (Wider social system)** - this level involves dominant social structures, as well as beliefs and values which influence and may be influenced by all other levels of the system.

Overall, the interactions between these systems and their influences on individual development all interact with a person's stage of development. The ecological perspective is further based on the assumption that each learner must be viewed as a complete entity surrounded by a unique mini-social system or ecosystem. Looking at the needs of over age learners through the lens of an ecosystemic approach has as its main concern how individuals and groups at different levels of the social context are linked in dynamic, interdependent and interacting relationships. Because living systems are dependent upon their external environment, they are envisaged as open systems (Donald, et al., 1997:34). *Open* indicates that there are permeable boundaries within and between the different part-systems and subsystems.

The ecosystemic perspective enables us to identify *needs* not learners. The current paradigm in the classroom still focuses largely on the internal systems (medical-deficit focus) of the learner, which consist of the biological and psychological needs pressing for satisfaction. This represents only one system with its various sub-systems (biological and psychological) interacting with one other. The ecosystemic perspective focuses on the fit between the learner and his setting with an emphasis on the interface. This perspective therefore demands that,

having identified those needs, the aim is to meet them through the provision of appropriate resources and support at the interfaces of various systems and/or subsystems. This means of support requires the classroom educator to consider himself as part of the wider social system (Figure 1.1). Educators appear to be aware of the wider social context and their impact on the learner but have difficulty in translating that awareness into appropriate educational responses. Educators need to consider the learner-in-context (see Table 1.4), for example:

- Learner as individual
- Learner-in-class

Dawes and Donald (1994: 9) say that it is necessary to look at the learner through the lens of the relationships between the various components and levels of functioning of the individual human subject (intra-personal factors) and his or her environment (inter-personal and contextual factors), (See Table 1.4).

Table 1.4 Learner in relation to various sub-systems

Intra-personal (Biological & Psychological)		Inter-personal and contextual factors				
Individual		School	Class	Peer Group	Family	Society
Physical		Resources	Teaching	Values	Resources	Resources
Intellectual		Curriculum	Learning	Support	Values	Policies
Emotional		Values	Interaction	Counselling	Language	Practices
Social		Management	Language development		Cognitive stimulation	

Source: Adapted from WCED Conference (1999)

Change in one part of the system will affect changes in other parts and in the system as a whole. This makes it impossible to consider intervention in part of a system, without taking the other parts into consideration.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

International research (Ranaweera, 1989:8; Little, 1995:5) confirms that one common characteristic of over age learners is that these learners are found mostly in rural areas and urban slums. They may also be *learners within special groups* such as nomadic groups, or/and migrant workers. Economically speaking, they come from underdeveloped, and under-privileged sectors of the population and usually from minorities and isolated communities. In South Africa, the reverse is the case in that the majority of South African learners fit the profile of the underdeveloped, and under-privileged sectors of the population due to a deliberate system of political, economic and educational discrimination known as apartheid.

To date there are less than a handful of research studies in South Africa on over age learners and their needs in educational settings (Pease, 1996a, 1996b, 1998a, 1998b, POLP, 1998). International literature (though limited) indicates that over age learners constitute a group in danger of failing to complete academic programmes (World Bank, 1990; 1993; Lee-Manning & Baruth, 1995). There is substantial evidence that over age learners in South Africa leave school before completion at a far greater rate than their peers who are age-appropriate for their grades (Motala, 1995:161; Donald, 1993:148; Gilmour & Soudien, 1994:124).

The emotional, physical, social and cognitive development of over-age learners tends to mismatch their scholastic performance (Primary Open Learning Pathway Trust (POLP), 1998; Donald, 1993:152; Pease, 1996a, 1996b, 1998a; Craig, 2000: 6-16). This could result in a lack of scholastic confidence that often contributes to dropping out of school, being retained or promoted without support. In order to handle these learners with greater effectiveness and efficiency, this research will focus on a needs analysis of over

age learners in the Kuils River school clinic area. The focus will be to identify basic educational needs that can be met in formal educational settings.

The over age learner's need for support is very real. This need for support appears to be essentially extrinsically generated. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) of 1992 indicates that if over age learners are to be re-incorporated into the mainstream of education at age-appropriate levels, then the relationship of literacy and numeracy skills to all other dimensions of the curriculum creates a compelling need for special educational support (NEPI, 1992:31-32).

The following question will serve as a guideline throughout this research study.

- *What are the views of educators on the educational needs of over age learners?*

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research study will serve the following purposes:

- It will put the research problem in context and provide information on all relevant research on over age learners by:
 - Surveying international literature on over age learners,
 - Surveying South African literature on over age learners,
 - Analysing current South African educational practices in comparison with international trends,
 - Providing an assessment of the educational needs of over age learners.
- It will enable the researcher to synthesise the information.
- It will enable the researcher to come to a conclusion.

The research objectives stem directly from the research problem, *namely: what are the educational needs of over age learners in the foundation phase?* Investigating this question will help to provide a clearly defined analysis of the educational needs of over age learners that can play a pivotal role in addressing poor educational survival in the foundation phase.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

A number of terms used in this study require specialised definitions. These terms appear below:

1.6.1 Learners

Before the transformation in South African education commenced after the first inclusive democratic election of 1994, the term *pupils* or *students* were used for school learners. These terms were replaced by the term *learner*, which refers to all learners, ranging from early childhood education through to adult education (South Africa. Department of Education, 1997:vii). According to the South African Schools Act, Act 84 (1996:4),

A *learner* is defined as any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of this Act. Compulsory school attendance is defined as follows:

Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever comes first.

(South African Schools Act, Act 84, 1996:4-6).

Furthermore, these age stipulations are also in accordance with the age requirements for admission to an independent school, as well as for different grades at a school as stipulated

in the National Education Policy Act, Act no. 27 of 1996, section 3(4)(i). This act gives further guidance for interpreting the admission to any grade, namely that a learner should be the statistical age norm per grade, which is the grade number plus six, for example:

- Grade 1 + 6 = age 7
- Grade 9 + 6 = age 15
- Grade 12 + 6 = age 18

The above age requirements will be applicable with effect on 1 January 2001. For the purpose of this research study, the term *learner* will specifically refer to primary school learners who are at risk by being over age in their grade.

1.6.2 Over age learners

Defining over age learners can be difficult since entry to school can be determined in a number of ways. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1999: 1014) defines over age as: *over a certain age limit*. The South African School's Act of 1996 states that learners must be seven years of age at school entry, effective from the 1 January 2000. Jones and Maasdorp (1994: 1) refer to over age learners as '*missing youth*' in society, young people who have never attended school or who have left school before they have acquired basic educational skills. The term *missing youth* is very appropriate for over age learners in South Africa since very often they are hidden in the education system. One method for hiding over age learners is by promoting them so that they are socially included with their age appropriate peers. There is no effective educational response for over age learners. They might as well not be in school. These missing youth are defined as adolescent youth aged 13-16 years who are over primary school age. Over age learners are specifically defined by these writers as those adolescents in the 13-15 year age group who are three years or more older than the appropriate age for their particular grade level (Jones & Maasdorp, 1994: 2). According to Craig (2000: 6) over age learners are learners who are at least three years above the norm for any particular grade and who re-enter schooling after being absent from school or enter school for the first time. The

South African National Department of Education (1999:21), supported by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), circular 0142/2000: section 2, defines over age learners as being at least two years older than the normal age for the grade, with a starting age of seven years old.

Furthermore, according to the WCED circular 0142/2000, first-time learners who are 16 years and older should attend an Adult Basic Education and Training centre and should not be admitted to a school. The piece of legislation (Government gazette, no. 19377 of 19 October 1998) on which this circular is based also includes those 16 year olds who did not make sufficient progress with their peer group in school. Furthermore this circular states that over age learners between the ages of 10 - 15 years should be accommodated to a maximum of two years over the medium of the age-grade norm, with the following provisions:

- That it is in the interest of the learner
- That it do not negatively impact on other learners

For example:

- Grade 2 + 6 = age 8 (age-grade norm) plus a maximum of 2years = 10years

Over age learners are likely to have individual disabilities or learning difficulties, which are likely to have gone unrecognised and untreated (White Paper on The National Integrated Disability Strategy, 1997:5). The (White Paper on The National Integrated Disability Strategy, 1997:5) estimates that approximately 70% of learners with disabilities are presently outside of the school system. The particular sub-group of learners under study is defined as being between the ages of nine to fifteen years old. Over age learners are not a homogeneous group; they consist of a number of special categories, each with distinctive problems. Hence, there cannot be a common solution and a single approach that is universally appropriate. Over age learners can be grouped into six categories. The subgroups (Table 1.5) are those learners who:

Table 1.5 Over age subgroups

A. REPEATERS	B. LATE SCHOOL STARTERS	C. NOT-AT-SCHOOL	D. DROP-INS AND DROP-OUTS	E. SOCIAL PROMOTIONS
<p>Seven year olds; Age-appropriate grade starters but have repeated ever since and usually repeat the same grade or end up in the special class.</p>	<p>Late school starters: nine year olds and older.</p>	<p>Out-of-school, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • street learners, • learners in prison, • working learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic truancy • Changing schools too often • Chronically sick, for example HIV/AIDS 	<p>Learners promoted from grade to grade without being scholastically ready for the next grade that they are placed in.</p>

- are over age due to late entry to school. (9 years old at entry: **late school starters**).
- drop in and out of school: **mobile learners**. In 1998 approximately 25% of grade one learners dropped out of school (Cape Times: 1998).
- are over age and **not-at-school**. This particular subgroup is a limitation to the current study since the focus is only on learners in school (see Table 1.3).
- are over age due to repeating their grades: **repeaters**.
- are promoted beyond their scholastic competency for the grade they are in. These learners are socially included (**social promotion**) and appear to be grade-age appropriate but scholastically do not fit the grade they are in.
- have started school much earlier than the lawful entry age of seven years (**early starters**) and have repeated to become over age. This particular subgroup will not contribute to the over age problem from 1st January 2000 because the legal school entry age for a learner is now seven.

The above-mentioned groups are not pure categories but they do reflect the dominant characteristics of the particular category. The common denominators to the various subgroups are repetition and being mobile. Subgroup B learners are over age by default, but tend to become repeaters. Repeaters are learners who have repeated at least one year in their school career. In 1998, first-year school failures cost South Africa one billion rand (Cape Argus, 30 April 1998). Generally, repetition refers to the practice of holding a learner in the same grade for another year for reasons of academic incompetence. The Research Institute for Education Planning (RIEP) uses a similar definition of repetition, namely that a repeater is a learner who completes a given grade and repeats the given grade the following year. By this definition a learner who leaves school before completing a given grade and then returns to the same grade the next year is not a repeater but part of the outflow of one year and a new entrant the following year (mobile learner). Subgroup C is a potential learner that has never been in school. Subgroup D consists of learners whose essential feature is a high degree of mobility although this is also a general feature of the other groups. Subgroup E learners are socially but not scholastically grade-age appropriate. One reason proposed by POLP (1998) for all these groups might be that these learners are not *learning ready*. These learners will either need intermittent, limited, extensive or pervasive educational and psychosocial support (DSM IV, 1994:45, see Figure 2.6 in Chapter 2). An adaptation of three categories of learning readiness (POLP, 1998) can be identified, namely:

- Poorly prepared for learning
- Moderately prepared for learning
- Good candidates for learning

1.6.3 Foundation phase

The Foundation Phase refers to the grades ranging from pre-school to grade three that form part of the Early Childhood Directorate (ECD). Currently primary school education starts when learners enrol for the foundation phase (grades one to three) at the beginning of the year in which they turn seven. This phase lasts for three years. Basic learning activities during this

phase involve reading, writing, calculating and the development of language proficiency. A start is made at learning one additional language.

1.6.4 School clinic

At present there is a general confusion and lack of agreement among specialists in the discipline of para-educational services (school clinic services) about the most fitting terminology for school clinics. This difficulty could be ascribed to the marginalisation of services in the past to other population groups. The draft White Paper on Education (1994: 15) offers a broad definition: "... *Education Support Services encompass all education-related health, social work, specialised education, vocational and general guidance and counselling and psychological services*". The term used in this study follows the extended idea of the above definition. School clinics provide psycho-educational, therapeutic, school social work, school health support services to learners in primarily mainstream education. They have as their primary aim the promotion of the well-being of the learner and strive to support all learners in developing their mental, social, and psychological potential to the full in order to enable them to achieve optimally and to make use of the curriculum opportunities.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Merriam (1998:3), the researcher's philosophical orientation is fundamental to what is believed about the nature of reality, about knowledge, and about the production of knowledge. Merriam identifies three philosophical orientations: First, in the positivist philosophical orientation reality is stable, observable, and measurable. Second, the interpretative philosophical orientation, understanding the meaning of the process or experience constitutes reality; multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals. Third, in the critical philosophical orientation, reality is derived from the social institution with a strong focus on issues of power, privilege, and oppression (Merriam, 1998:4). The research design of this study is set within the interpretative philosophical orientation and is qualitative in nature. In the interpretative philosophical orientation, education is considered a process

and school a lived experienced. Merriam (1998:5-8) identifies five essential characteristics that cut across all forms of qualitative research:

- The researcher must try to understand the phenomenon of interest from the participants' and not the researcher's perspective.
- The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The data are mediated through the human instrument, the researcher, rather than through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer.
- Qualitative research usually involves fieldwork. The researcher must physically go to the subjects, setting, site, and institution in order to observe behaviour in its natural setting.
- Qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy. That is, this type of research builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than test existing theory.
- Qualitative research is richly descriptive. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon.

The research will be exploratory, descriptive, contextual, and interpretative and inter alia seeks to identify those indicators that can help us to understand over age learners' educational needs and why a learner becomes over age in school. The qualitative design of this research study is intended to elucidate and create an understanding of the needs of the over age learner through the medium of observations and interviews. As Patton (1990:196) explains:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe.... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organised the world and the meanings they have attached to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about these things. The purpose of interviews, then is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective.

A qualitative single case study will be used as the research format (Smith, 1978; Stake, 1995:2; Merriam, 1998:27) involving one school. This format was chosen as the most effective means of investigating the field of study, since it will allow for a deep understanding of the over age learner phenomenon and the interpretation of the data gathered (Merriam, 1998: 29). This is precisely the difference from other research designs, what Cronbach (1975: 123) calls *interpretation in context*. The interpretative understanding that may emerge from a qualitative study conveys what the item under study will mean to the people involved (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 278). Interpretation involves attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining descriptive patterns, and looking for relationships and linkages among descriptive dimensions (Patton, 1986: 268). By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon.

1.7.1 Methodology

A literature review in Chapter Two will provide the reader with an overall framework in order to explain the topic of the research and to build a rationale for the problem that is studied (Mertens, 1998: 34). The review is based predominantly on recent primary research and aims to provide a critical analysis of existing literature. This study also uses some of the procedures familiar to qualitative research data gathering procedures. Data will be gathered by means of semi-structured interviews, an extensive literature review, documents, field notes and observation within the framework of a case study. The process is intended to be generally interactive and holistic: something observed on-site is then asked about in an interview; or something that comes to the researcher's attention in a document manifests itself in an observation and perhaps an informal conversation in the context of the observation. The researcher will use three methods for data collection as described by Wolcott (1992: 19): as systematically *watching (observation)*, *asking (interviewing)*, and *reviewing (literature review, documents, field notes)*. This three modes of data collection will merge in the process of understanding and describing the phenomenon of interest. A brief description of the three modes of data collection follows.

The gathering of data in the natural setting through systematic observation of the phenomenon, Merriam called *participatory observation* (Merriam, 1998: 87). The participant observer sees things firsthand and uses his own knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed rather than relying upon once-removed accounts from interviews. Secondly, the interview is defined as conversation with a purpose. Specifically, the purpose is to gather information (Denzin, 1978; Spradley, 1979; Patton, 1980; De Santis, 1980; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Salkind, 1991; Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992; Babbie, 1983; Leedy, 1993; Berg, 1995; Merriam, 1998). Lastly, the purpose of the literature review is to provide exploratory concepts that will help in the formulation of the research problem (Silverman, 1993). This will create a framework within which the data can be gathered, processed and interpreted.

As the instrument for data collection the researcher will monitor the process as it unfolded through sensitive observations and by using empathic interviewing. The boundaries for this study will be set by purposefully deciding on the setting (school), the informants (educators), the events (interviews and observation) and the processes to be observed (observation of learners and educator in class) and then collecting data in the various forms as described above from primary school educators and the principal over a set period of time.

1.7.2 Data analysis

The most basic presentation of a study's findings is a *descriptive* account. This entails compressed data linked in a narrative to convey the meaning derived from studying the phenomenon of over age learners. Content analysis procedures will be used by which units of data will be coded into themes which will then be clustered to find the most relevant themes for interpretation (Merriam, 1998: 178). The transcribed interviews will be the basis of data analysis while the researcher's field notes will complement the transcribed interviews.

1.8. KEY LIMITATION TO THE RESEARCH

The **key limitation** to this research is that of *out-of-school learners* who are by definition not included in this study. They do not qualify for the definition of over age learners in this study, for the reason that they are not in a school. In this study 'school' refers in the narrowest sense to a learning site. In the broadest sense *learning site* refers to any place where learning takes place. The Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) developed a working definition for out-of-school youth (Everatt & Jennings, 1995 b: 6). This particular subgroup of youth was defined by CASE as being between the ages of 15-30. They are not currently engaged in studies, have not studied as far as they wanted to in their education, and express the desire to return to some form of education or training (Everatt and Jennings, 1995b: 6). CASE recognises the limitation of their definition in that it does not include learners below 15 years of age. These youth should be reclassified as ABET learners. Hartley (1997:11) uses the term *not-at-school* and defines it as those up to the age of 15 not attending school (see Tables 1.3 & 1.4). The not-at-school learners are potential learners who are not attending school yet or who have dropped out of school. A broad working definition used in this study for learners not-at-school is:

Potential learners between the ages of nine and fifteen, who are eligible for primary education but are not in formal schools and whose literacy levels are at or below the foundation phase level. These include learners who have never been to school or who have dropped out of school before passing grade four.

Adapted from Hartley (1997:11)

1.9 STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION

Chapter 1 provides an orientation to the research, research problem, and research design, stating the motivation for the research within the specific South African context of teaching and schooling.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of:

- South African and international literature on the over age phenomenon.
- At Risk indicators pertaining to over age learners in the literature with special reference to poverty.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used to execute the research in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the educational needs of over age learners.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings and a discussion according to the themes determined at the final data-analysis stage in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the educational needs of over age learners.

Chapter 5 provides the implications of the research findings and recommendations that will assist the educational needs of over age learners.

1.10 CONCLUSION

Chapter One provided a framework for this study. Throughout this chapter it has become clear that over age learners do not form a homogeneous group and that the needs of these learners can only be catered for by multi-pronged solutions. Following the system used in NEPI (1993), which, because of the sensitivity of the issue, was based on considerable debate and consultation, the following terms will be used consistently throughout the text: African (referring specifically to Black Africans), White, Coloured, and Indian. Although all such racially constructed terms are offensive and are recognised as such and rejected by the author, it is nevertheless necessary to use such terms insofar as they reflect the past history and reality of the divisions and social structures created by apartheid.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on a literature review of over age learners as well as of learners who are at risk. Only three studies of note could be located, of which two are international and one local. They are:

- An American study by Anderson (1990), *The overage student: Candidate for school failure*.
- A Namibian study by Jones and Maasdorp (1994), *Missing Youth: An investigation of non-attendants, over-age learners and drop-outs of primary schools in Namibia*.
- Research done by Pease (1996, 1998) and Craig (2000) in South Africa through an NGO, the Primary Open Learning Pathway Trust (POLP), which closed down in March 2000 due to a lack of donor funding.

The above studies and related literature on drop-outs and repeaters guided the researcher in adopting an *at risk model* to structure the literature review. Garmezy *et al.* (1984) outlined three models of responding to at risk factors. These models were summarised by Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) as cited in Donald *et al.* (2000: 10-11).

These are:

- **Compensatory model**, for example, a particular, positive influence neutralises the impact of other stresses on a specific outcome such as educational achievement.
- **Challenge model**, for example, the learner's exposure to a moderate amount of stress acts to strengthen his or her ability to cope with difficulties at later points in life.
- **Protective model**, for example, a protective factor that interacts with a risk factor in reducing the probability of a negative outcome.

Each of these models is useful in understanding how learners may respond to the stresses associated with adversity. Equally, they are useful for the design of interventions. The *at risk indicators* show the way to the possible *educational needs* over age learners might have and how to *provide for these needs*.

2.2 AT RISK INDICATORS FOR OVER AGE LEARNERS

The term *at risk* became the focus of attention with the release of the American report, *A Nation at risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In education the term *at risk* has been used to designate learners who are struggling with their school work and to separate them from the mainstream or to organise special programmes to deal with their “at riskness” (Lounsbury, J. March/April 1996: 211). In this study, the term *at risk* is used to describe learners at risk of failure to complete an appropriate academic programme or at risk of not reaching a goal, that ordinarily would have been attainable (Manning & Baruth, 1995:23). The generic term has come to mean learners who, for a variety of reasons, for example, economic, intellectual, physical, psychological and sociological are unlikely to realise their economic and personal potential in life. In addition, the effects of racial, gender and ethnic bias may further exacerbate their at risk status. Walker (1991: 112) says:

“ Every learner is at risk for some reason. We cannot wait until a learner is labelled as such to intervene; rather, we must plan for the success of all learners”.

This quote echoes the Salamanca Statement, UNESCO (1994) which proclaims that all learners have special educational needs. Reducing repetition and drop-out amongst primary school learners, specifically African Foundation Phase learners, is one of the major challenges facing the new South African education system. Another common educational strategy used in dealing with over age learners is promotion without support (Department of Education, August 1999:10). It appears that learners older than the median age for their grades are much less likely to complete courses of study leading to high school exit programmes of any kind. In this study a learner is defined as at risk if the learner:

- Was retained at least twice in grades one to six and is still unable to master the current grade level
- Is at least two years below grade level in reading or numeracy
- Is not expected to complete the foundation phase within three years

2.2.1 Poverty as the main at risk indicator for support

In contexts of widespread poverty and disadvantage such as exist in South Africa (Robertson, 1996: 21; Department of Social Services, November 1999), there is evidence that indicates that intrinsic disability may be created at up to double the incidence of privileged contexts (Wiesinger-Ferris, 1989: 101-109; Garmezy, 1991: 416-430; White Paper, November 1997: 2, 5). According to Jordaan & Jordaan (1989: 48-60) a context is a prerequisite for the understanding of experience, behaviour, problems and phenomena. By taking the context into consideration, information is seen in a new light; it becomes understandable. The School Register of Needs survey (South Africa. Dept. of Education, 1997) provides an infrastructural context in which to understand the educational realities of learners at risk. This register was the first comprehensive database of all schools, giving a picture of the extent of their physical facilities, the condition of school buildings, services provided and available resources (South Africa. Dept. of Education, 1997: 1).

Another significant document that provides a socio-economic context is the Poverty index as developed by the Department of Social Services in the Western Cape (Department of Social Services, November 1999: 27-41). The Poverty index is also known as the Human Development Index (HDI). Internationally the HDI is used as a composite index to measure relative human development of countries and communities. Internationally this index is calculated by using the indicators *life expectancy*, *literacy*, and *income*. A recent United Nations Human Development report on the state of South Africa (Sunday Times, 8 October 2000) reported that nearly 50% of all South Africans live below the poverty line of R353.00 a month income. Furthermore 60% of those with an African language live in poverty, compared to 1% of Whites. Locally the HDI is calculated by using the indicators *income*, *employment status*, *literacy* and *water supply*. An index of one is equal to a worst case scenario, and an index of zero is equal to a best case scenario (Department

of Social Services, November 1999: 27-28). The HDI in the Western Cape was developed to provide an objective instrument that can be used to distinguish communities in dire need of urgent intervention in terms of poverty and vulnerability. Again the United Nations Human Development report on Africa (Sunday Times, 8 October 2000) found that in the Western Cape close to 30% of the population lives in poverty and this province is still rated as one of the richest (1991 HDI was 0.826, Biersteker and Robinson, 2000:30) in the country.

The strength of this approach to poverty is that it sees poverty as a process of encroaching deprivation in which people gradually slip out of the mainstream of social life.

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to experience poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are widely encouraged in their communities. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are in effect excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities. This conceptualisation of poverty is in line with the emerging consensus that characterises poverty as the inability of individuals, households, or communities, to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living (Department of Social Services, November 1999: 28).

In all the literature on risk factors, poverty is singled out as the most powerful risk factor for mental health. Poverty is associated with a wide range of physical, psychological, and social disadvantages (Dawes & Donald, 1994: 3; 2000: 10-11; Biersteker & Robinson, 2000: 27-31). For example it has recently been estimated that 52% of households in South Africa earn less than the "poverty line" of R300 per month (South Africa. Ministry of the Office of the President, 1995). In the Western Cape, where the amount of R18 000 per annum has been used as a poverty line, 41.5% of all households earn less than R1500 per month, or R18 000 per annum. This figure was used in the Poverty and Inequality report prepared for the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Poverty and Inequality. If this amount is compared with the average income in the North West province of R6 000 per annum (Radio SAFM, 24 July 2000) than it is very clear that the Western Cape is indeed *rich* in

terms of its poverty line income. In this research study, in which the focus is on the African learner in the Western Cape, the rate of African household poverty is 73.4% (Department of Social Services, November 1999: 15, 26). The Provincial HDI (Department of Social Services, November 1999) for the research group area (Mfuleni) under study is 0.449. This indicator reflects indeed a poor community. An HDI below 0.5 indicates a low level of development whereas an HDI above 0.5 indicates a higher level of development. The urban-rural distribution of poor and vulnerable households in the Western Cape shows even worse conditions in that 80.2% of African households in the urban areas earn less than R18 000 per annum (Department of Social Services, November 1999: 15, 26). This lack of financial support leads to food insecurity (Jones & Maasdorp, 1994: 19, Everatt & Jennings, 1995b: 13, Richter and Griesel, 1994), overcrowdedness and lack of access to basic infrastructure like electricity (Everatt & Jennings, 1995: 13b). It also leads to a lack of access to reading material (Everatt & Jennings, 1995b: 14, Cape Times, 16 March 1998). A visit to a South African township, broadly speaking, reveals two clearly visible impressions:

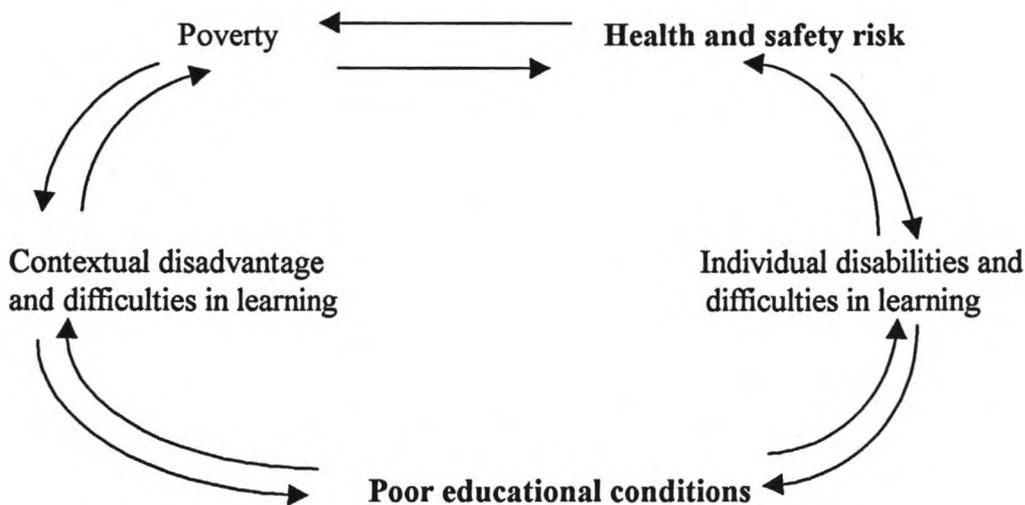
- The one is profoundly depressing, namely, widespread poverty and unemployment, and the appalling lack of facilities in education, health, and recreation.
- The other, quite pleasant: a vibrant social life and people's resilience in coping.

In a Namibian study by Jones and Maasdorp (1994), it was found that *food insecurity* was one of the reasons why children were kept out of school. These children were simply hungry. In households where food security is a problem, children are part of the household's survival strategy and are sent to look for food. A second most frequently cited reason for not sending a child to school was *distance*. Where schools are far away there are hidden costs like transport and many households simply do not have the extra funds (Jones & Maasdorp, 1994: 19). *Poverty* was the most frequently cited reason for not sending a child to school (Jones & Maasdorp, 1994: 18; Biersteker & Robinson, 2000: 39). Most schools charge school fees and this is a particular problem for households with a limited cash income base. Lack of a regular cash flow may cause some children to stop attending school and to start again only when their parents are able to afford the cost of schooling. This accounted for some of the over age learners. Some parents were sending

their children to markets to trade in order to supplement the household income. For these households utilising children for productive purposes is a higher priority than education (Jones & Maasdorp, 1994: 18).

The above situation tends to reinforce poor educational and social conditions and ultimately leads to more poverty. In South Africa, the consequence of social and educational disadvantage under the system of apartheid has created what appears to be a very large group of children with extrinsically generated special educational needs. This is reflected in excessively high drop-out rates, failure rates, and evidence of widespread underachievement in relation to potential, particularly in education in African schools (Donald, 1993: 141). A cycle of negative causes and effects tends to develop (see Figure 2.1).

Figure. 2.1 The negative cycle of poverty, health, and special need.



Source: Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwane, (1997: 144).

The above cycle comes about because poor people are more at risk to unhealthy and unsafe conditions like malnutrition, disease, infection, and injury than those who are not poor. The damaging cyclical relationship between malnutrition and cognitive development in South Africa has been consistently demonstrated (Richter & Griesel, 1994; Adams, 1996: 321) while Adams (1996: 20) further suggests that the main cause of learner

underachievement derives from underdeveloped cognitive functions. According to Everatt & Jennings of the CASE (1995b: 10-11) a common thread among out-of-school African and Coloured children and youth is the experience of *poverty* and *discontinued parenting*. The primary caregiver is predominantly a grandmother (Everatt & Jennings, 1995b: 10). The deliberate under-education of Africans, Coloureds, and Indians as part of a policy of apartheid had a profound impact on parents or primary caregivers in that they had to provide educational support when their children needed help (Everatt & Jennings, 1995: 11). It is interesting to note that 70% of schools nationally are primary schools (Department of Education, 1997: 5). When parents cannot help their children at this basic level of education, it is indeed a serious situation.

2.2.2 Mobile learners

According to Nelson, Simoni and Adelman (1996: 365) research has shown that learners who frequently change schools are more likely to experience academic, social, and emotional problems than learners who do not change as often. (Benson, Haycraft, Steyart, and Weigel, 1979; Calabrese, 1989; Ellickson, Bianca, & Schoeff, 1988; General Accounting Office, 1994; Ingersoll, Scamman, & Eckerling, 1989; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990; Wood, Halfon, Scarlata, Newacheck, & Nessim, 1993; Schaller, 1974a, 1974b; Sloan, Jason, & Bogat, 1984; Temple & Reynolds, 1999). However, there are relatively few studies on the effects of mobility for low-income learners in urban schools (Mehana, 1997).

In South Africa specifically, the research area under study, mobility of rural children to urban areas and vice versa, is very high among African learners (Sunday Times, 6 March 1998). Generally, rural children as learners move place of residence frequently. A recent study funded by Save the Children Fund UK, for the South African national Department of Health found that one in five South African children do not live with their mothers and that about three in five live in poverty (Sunday Times 21 May 2000: 2). They move from household to household locally, and regionally and are cared for by successive sets of caregivers in the absence of their own parents. Some alternate, along with their mothers, between urban and rural homes. On the psychosocial level, proper attachment cannot be developed because of the many caregivers that enter the lives of these learners. This

mobility impacts on them in a variety of ways:

- disrupting their home lives;
- disrupting peer and sibling relationships;
- causing anxiety about absent parents; and
- disrupting the learner's schooling.

(From case study field notes, 1997-2000)

This pattern of mobility is often connected to that of migrant labour. Poverty appears to force people to become mobile so that they are able to provide for their basic needs of food and shelter (see Figure 2.2). Because of this, it would appear that labour migration is likely to continue in the long term. Another phenomenon is mobility within school, for example, moving from one class to another. The current situation of learners moving from former special classes to mainstream classes is especially noteworthy. These learners are now withdrawn from the mainstream for language and numeracy support. It is therefore essential that the needs of these mobile learners be factored into the educational equation of learners with special educational needs.

In rural areas distance sometime means starting school later as parents feel that the child is not old enough and strong enough to walk long distances to and from school each day. Great distances discourage attendance because children do not arrive on time or regularly miss some classes, ultimately resulting in failure at school. Classrooms are overcrowded contributing to high failure rates because many learners “do not catch anything from the educator” in such an environment. In other words, *teaching* does take place but no learning is occurring in the classroom. Very often these learners have unmet special educational needs (Donald, 1994: 138; 141; 136-153).

2.2.3 Social promotion

One way that educators try to deal with the problem of mobile learners who have become over age for their grade is to promote them. Generally these promotions are without educational support. Social promotion is rooted in the notion that children's best interests

are served when they stay with their peer group, regardless of their academic performance (The American Federation of Educators, 1997). Social promotion occurs when a learner who is failing is passed along to the next grade because he or she seems too big or too old, even if the learner is unfit to handle the work. In their first national study of social promotion the American Federation of Educators (September 1997) came up with the finding: *It's rampant across the country*. Many over age learners are hidden in the system this way; they are age-appropriately placed based on non-scholastic factors. The scholastic needs of these learners are grossly underestimated. Motala suggests that one of the reasons for learners dropping out of school is that they are promoted beyond their academic capability (1995: 172).

2.2.4 Grade retention

A common response in catering for the scholastic needs of over age learners is to retain them. In most of the literature the terms *over age for grade* and *grade retention* are used interchangeably (Roderick, 1995). Extensive research makes it clear that retention is not the route to take in efforts to improve learner achievement. (Reynolds, 1992; The Centre for Policy Research in Education, 1990; Roderick, 1994, 1995; Sakowitz, 1996, Zill, Loomis, and West, 1997; Shepard & Smith, 1987, 1990; Meisels, 1993; McLeskey, Lancaster, & Grizzle, 1995; Holmes, 1989; Johnson *et al.*, 1990; Mantzicopoulos and Morrison, 1992; Thomas *et al.*, 1992; Dennebaum & Kulberg, 1994; Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993; Alexander, Entwisle & Duaber, 1994. The goal of grade retention is to improve school performance by allowing *more time* for learners to develop adequate academic skills (Reynolds, 1992).

Current practice in American schools indicates that by the ninth grade 50% of all learners have been retained (The Centre for Policy Research in Education, 1990). Roderick (1995) reported that the proportion of over age learners entering high school had risen to almost 40% since 1975. According to Roderick (1995), the literature on grade retention suggests three important aspects of the retention experience that place learners at risk of school failure. First, grade retention as a remedial strategy does not appear to fix the problem it purports to address. Second, grade retention is perhaps the strongest message that an educator and a school can send to a learner that he or she is not making the grade and is

not as capable as other learners are. Thirdly, grade retention, regardless of when it occurs, may increase the chances of school leaving because it makes a learner over age for grade during adolescence. According to Van der Merwe (1996: 283), many of the problems of adolescence are rooted in the early teenage years, mostly due to personal and family problems.

Learners who are retained are characterised as those who demonstrate poor academic skills, are small in stature or the youngest in the grade, have moved or been absent frequently, do poorly on a pre-screening assessment, or have limited English-language skills. In addition, a retained learner is more likely to be male and to have minority status, a high activity level, low socio-economic status, and parents who are unwilling or unable to intercede for the learner. Retention is also more common in primary grades (Sakowitz, 1996: 17-18; Zill, *et al.*, 1997; NCES, 1997). Since most schools have vague policies regarding retention, the decision to retain a learner typically falls to the classroom educator (Sakowitz, 1996: 7).

One synthesis of research indicates that the current level of retention matches that of the early 20th century (Shepard & Smith, 1990: 87). It has been estimated that 2.4 million learners are retained in the United States every year. With an average cost per learner of \$6,000 to maintain a learner in school for a year, retaining learners costs America over 14 billion dollars annually (Shepard & Smith, 1990). According to the Business Trust, it costs the South African taxpayer about R2 500.00 for every learner that repeats a grade (Sunday Times, 17 September 2000: 23). Furthermore, 20% of South Africa's 12 million learners fail exams and repeat every year, costing the South African taxpayer approximately R6 billion (Sunday Times, 17 September 2000: 23). Meisels (1993) found that approximately 40% of repeaters come from the lowest socio-economic status (SES) quartile, whereas approximately 8.5% come from the highest SES quartile. Meisels (1993) also determined that more than two thirds of all retentions take place between pre-school and 3rd grade. Learners with learning disabilities may be retained more frequently than the general learner population (McLeskey, Lancaster, & Grizzle, 1995; Zill, *et al.*, 1997). The long-held belief that early retention is best for learners continues to be refuted in the literature (Shepard & Smith, 1987; Holmes, 1989; Johnson *et al.*, 1990; Mantizicopoulos & Morrison, 1992; Thomas *et al.* 1992; Dennebaum & Kulberg, 1994). Historically,

educators have viewed retention as a means of reducing skill variance in the classroom in an attempt to better meet learner needs. Clearly, this practice has not achieved its goal.

Shepard and Smith (1990: 86) report that learners who repeat two grades have a nearly 100 % probability of dropping out of school. Roderick (1994, 1995) also found a similar, strong relationship between repeating a grade and school drop-out.

Kozol (1991) reported that *savage inequalities* exist in the USA between the quality of education provided to learners in predominantly White suburban schools and that provided to learners in predominantly Black urban schools. In the 70's Robert Coles (1973: 116) wrote about the deprived living conditions of the rural poor and the below-standard schools of the children of migrants, sharecroppers, and poor mountain people. In his book he made the following entreaty:

There are moments and I believe this is one of them, when, whoever we are, observers or not, we have to throw up our hands in heaviness of heart and dismay and disgust and say in desperation: God save them, those children, and for allowing such a state of affairs to continue, God save us too.

Not being in an Age Appropriate Regular Classroom (AARC) environment meant that the learner was held back for at least one year or placed in a special environment, for example, a special class, or special school (Vitaro *et al.*, 1999: 205-207). Vitaro, Brendgen, & Trembley (1999: 219-20) indicate two types of non-AARC learners: grade retention and special classes. These authors indicate that grade retention increases the odds of drop-out, as well as having a detrimental effect on learners' future school achievement and psychosocial adjustment, to a similar extent as did the combined effect of grade retention and special classroom environment. Non-AARC placement could be viewed as a marker of underlying problems that might be the true contributors to the process of school drop-out, such as learning difficulties or low parental values regarding education. In line with this notion Kaufman and Bradby (1992) argue that non-AARC placement represents a humiliating experience for learners with learning difficulties or behavioural problems.

The wider South African social context in terms of poverty, poor educational background

of caregivers and poor teaching impacts heavily on the educational outcomes of learners in disadvantaged and developing environments. In a study of poor survival rates in primary schooling, Motala (1995: 161-175) described disadvantaged and developing school environments as follows:

...dilapidation of buildings, the absence of visible teaching aids, broken windows...even doors missing, holes in the ceiling from which burglaries were occurring, no fencing, unhygienic toilets and no recreation facilities.

The separate educational structures and provisioning prior to 1994 have left a huge legacy in the form of unequal educational infrastructures (Motala, 1995: 164). Reducing repetition of grades is therefore one of the major challenges facing South Africa (Motala, 1995: 161). Some of the factors that influence grade retention are:

- Learners that drop in and out of school;
- Language difficulties;
- High mobility between schools that could be due to instability of housing, violence, poverty or retrenchment;
- Poor learning readiness at school entry;
- Poor assessment and promotion practices;
- Unrecognised and untreated special educational needs, for example hearing or ear problems particularly for those learners living under poor socio-economic conditions; and
- Not acquiring basic academic skills in literacy, numeracy and writing.

According to Donald (1993: 147, 152), a lack of basic educational skills in literacy, numeracy and writing is one of the major reasons why learners are held back in a grade. One of the ways of reducing the repetition rates in primary schooling is to convert the first six months of grade one to consolidating pre-school skills in literacy, numeracy and writing. This intervention will counter arguments made on the grounds that there is no money to implement a reception year. South African literature on primary schooling relating to repetition is very sparse (Motala, 1995: 163).

One indicator of a profession is that there is a body of research that guides the profession's practice (Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993). A body of research exists on the subject of retention, and it should guide the educator's practice. According to some research, retention can be positive at higher grade levels because it halts a free fall in the decline of academic achievement, but at the same time it yields no benefits in first grade (Alexander *et al.*, 1994).

2.2.5 Drop-outs

The literature indicates that there is a strong link between being old-for-grade and being a drop-out (Vitaro, *et al.* 1999: 219; Roderick (1994, 1995). In this study *drop-out* is defined as *a learner leaving school for any reason other than death* (Manning and Baruth, 1995:13). Dropping out before the completion of secondary school has become a major problem in North America. In 1992, 11% of all American youths aged 16 to 24 were drop-outs; meaning that they were not enrolled in school and had not graduated. Drop-out rates in Canada are also dramatically high, oscillating around 20% since 1992. In Canada, as in the United States, grade retention has been and still is a frequently used strategy for children with learning or conduct problems. The result of this strategy is that retained learners end up in mainstream classrooms with younger learners in what are called non-age-appropriate regular classroom (AARC) environments (Vitaro, *et al.*, 1999: 205-206). According to Vitaro *et al.*, non-AARC placement has shown to be one of the strongest precursors of subsequent school drop-out (Vitaro, *et al.*, 1999: 219). Non-AARC placement might be a marker of underlying academic and behavioural problems that are themselves caused by previous developmental deficits (Vitaro, *et al.*, 1999: 206).

It has also been found that the sex ratio of learners is dynamic with age, and changes markedly over the basic education transition from primary to junior secondary school. In Africa the transition is associated with female drop-out, while in Latin America it is largely male (Bundy *et al.*, 1997:1). Other problems associated with old-for-grade learners are higher levels of emotional distress, substance abuse, involvement with violence, and earlier onset of sexual intercourse, most noticeably among adolescents (Byrd, Weitzman & Auinger, 1997: 654; Resnick *et al.*, 1997). This research is consistent with reports in the media as cited elsewhere in this study.

2.2.6 Teaching in South Africa

The preparation of Black educators was for many years in the hands of church schools, which were often the only source of education beyond the elementary years (Hartshorne, 1992:222-23). By 1910 there were twelve such institutions. With the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953, new educator training colleges were established. The requirements set for Black primary educators were: grade eight plus two years of training (Primary educator certificate), subsequently upgraded to grade ten plus two years of training (Higher Primary educator certificate), and later to three and then four years of training (Green, 1999:92-93).

Given the poor educator training for Black educators, it is no surprise to find that 25% of learners (three million, nationally in 1998) are two or more years older for their grade than they should be (Sunday Times, 23 August, 1998). Botha, Cilliers and Van der Merwe (1992-1996) refer to the National Education Conference for addressing the crisis in education, which was held in Cape Town in 1992 and state that:

Half of all African children who enter school do not pass grade 7 in seven years. Educators are confronted with students who could be described as environmentally disadvantaged.

Malan, Ackerman, Cilliers and Smith (1996:58) maintain that the major causes of these learners' poor scholastic functioning are negative home circumstances, poor language comprehension and study skills. Other research claims that the teaching itself (Rutter, 1979 cited in Robertson, 1996:20; Financial Times, 1998; Sunday Times, 1998b; Sunday Times, 2000a: 1; POLP, November 1998:11; Cape Argus, 28 June 2000: 13; Engelbrecht, Kriegler, Booysen, 1996: x; South African Department of Education, May 2000) could be the single most important risk factor that puts over age learners further at risk. In other words, many educators received their training a decade or more ago, are under-qualified or unqualified and have become dangerous to the teaching profession. They have not kept abreast with the teaching technologies of the day, including the skills to mediate learning effectively. This situation can lead to learners' being at risk in the following ways:

- dropping out of school;
- being retained;
- being promoted without being academically ready for the next grade;
- being promoted without any support for the next grade; and
- being shuttled around within the school system.

These possibilities exclude those learners who enter school at a late age and are therefore over age by default. Hoadley's study of grade one classes in the Western Cape illustrates the at riskness of learners to the above-mentioned factors:

Not once in the course of eight days of observation were learners exposed to or required to use books. Reading consisted of working through lists of single words or sound recognition exercises. No class readers were seen or used....

(Hoadley, 1999:16)

POLP (November 1998:11) describes the weaknesses of the teaching act as:

- unsatisfactory scaffolding, assessment, matching activities to learners' needs, class management and organisation;
- under-teaching and infantilising the curriculum;
- absenteeism from the class or school of educators and excessive loss of contact time;
- use of English by educators to the detriment of first language consolidation;
- incorrect knowledge being transmitted to learners, especially in mathematics;
- unsatisfactory recording of learners work; and
- trying to cover work rather than meeting learner needs in terms of OBE.

The weaknesses in the teaching act are further compounded by the translation methodology issues of learners obtaining instructions and mediation of concepts in a mixture of Xhosa and English. Apprentice Xhosa speaking mother tongue educators that have undergone educator training through the medium of English further compounds this situation. The absence for decades of literacy and mathematics materials in Xhosa in the foundation phase impacts heavily on time-on-task (one of the six WCED focus points on

the educational agenda for the year 2000). However, educators have surprisingly little knowledge about how to teach reading or even how to teach the sounds in Xhosa (Primary Open Learning Pathway Trust, 1999).

The Mathematics Education Project at the University of Cape Town (MEP, 1998) as well as the Sunday Times (16 July 2000:1) found that the foundation phase educators generally had a severe lack of mathematical understanding as well as of the teaching of mathematical concepts, for example, educators struggled with the understanding of fractions. Although these educators are open about being under-prepared or under-trained, it seems that their actual capabilities are being overestimated. The problems faced by primary school educators, especially in the foundation phase, are grossly underplayed. This situation is especially serious as, according to the South African Institute for Distance Education (1998), cited in the Sunday Times (17 September, 2000:1), 70% of all South African schools are primary schools. Primary school education starts when learners enrol for the foundation phase (grades one to three) at the beginning of the year in which they turn seven. This phase last for three years. Basic learning activities during this phase involve reading, writing, calculating and the development of language proficiency. A start is made at learning one additional language.

The next three years form the intermediate phase (grades four to six). In this phase learning activities centre on reading and oral proficiency in the mother tongue and a second language, mathematics, history, geography, general science and a skill such as needlework, woodwork or art. The most commonly used methods of instruction at primary schools are copying from the board or book, memorisation, and rote recitation. The medium of instruction is English in the intermediate phase (from grade four). By this time, learners are expected to know both English and Afrikaans in addition to their mother tongue, which Baine and Mwamwenda (1994) believe is too much for young children. This may add to their difficulties in internalising concepts.

Low scholastic achievement can often be attributed to the massive educational deficiencies of the past several decades; therefore school marks must often be seen as an indication of the adequacy of teaching, rather than of the adequacy of learning. The Education Ministry wants to address this situation through the formation of Educator Development

Programmes that will aim at increasing the repertoire of teaching practices and the educator's ability to develop a supportive learning environment (South African Department of Education, August 1999:47; Engelbrecht, Kriegler, & Booysen, 1996:x). In the words of Gwalla-Ogisi (1990:276), children with learning problems in African schools are mainstreamed:

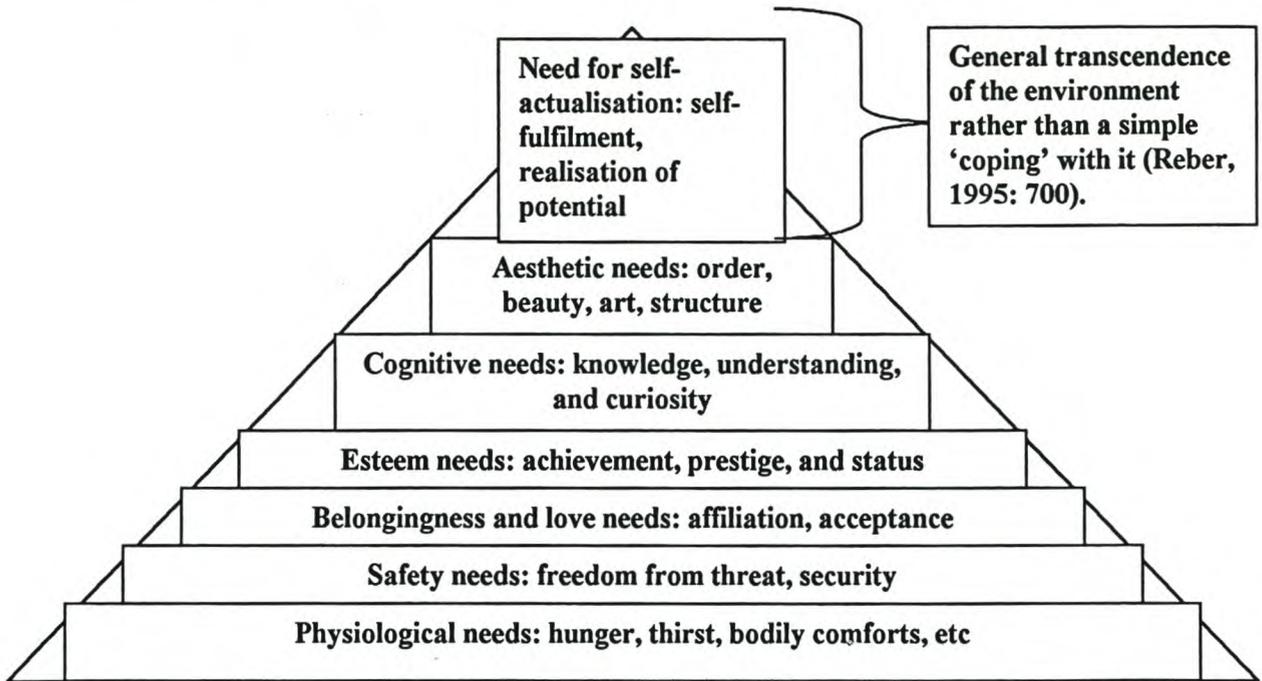
...not because it is a terrific idea and state of the art innovative practice, nor because it is a practice deemed best for handicapped learners, but only because it is the only alternative.

Over age learners can be identified as at risk for educational and often life failure. While public schools are not the proper arena for social solution strategies, for example, on poverty, they do control some of the indicators influencing school success. One such indicator is high repetition rates, a common educational strategy for dealing with learners at risk. It is therefore important to note that the impact of outcomes-based education could not be equal in unequal conditions. There has been little recognition of this reality of South African educational life (South Africa, Dept. of Education, May 2000:23). The reality is that South Africa retains large numbers of learners with the intention of improving subsequent performance, for example, 38% of grade one learners repeated the year in 1998 (Sunday Times, 23 August, 1998). In 1999 the over age learner total for WCED from grade R-12 was 130 693 (see Table 1 and Appendices 1.9-1.10). The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) provides data on the number of over age learners in South Africa for the year 1995. More specifically the ex-DET (South Africa. Department of Education and Training, 1994) provides specific baseline data to the sample under study from the ex-DET schools. The WCED provides data on over age learners, for the years 1995-1999 (see Appendices 1.3-1.10). These data exclude the former TBVC self-governing states. When looking at these statistics, it should be remembered that the homes of many over age learners are barely functional. These *children of chaos* arrive at schools at which educators presume they will learn best and be most comfortable and eager to learn because they reflect an atmosphere of *order-quiete-calm-structure*. These children are often accustomed to settings that many educators would be likely to characterise as disorganised and tumultuous. Very often, the education environment itself does reflect many of the characteristics of an unstable home

environment, for example, disruptions in school day, disorganised classrooms, gangsterism in schools, dirty classrooms and violence against learners from adults and other learners in the school.

2.3 NEEDS OF OVER AGE LEARNERS

It is a truism that children in general share certain characteristics and needs. The first task of this study is to identify these universal characteristic needs of children. A child's physical, emotional and intellectual development rests on the satisfaction of these needs. In defining *need*, Reber states that it is something or some state of affairs, which if present, would improve the wellbeing of an organism. A need in this sense may be something basic and biological (food) or it may involve social and personal factors and derive from complex forms of learning (achievement) (Reber, A. S. 1995: 484). Maslow has developed a hierarchy of need that is universally applicable to all individuals: ranging from lower order *basic needs* like food, to higher order *growth needs* like knowledge (Reber, 1995: 485) (see Figure 2.2).

Figure: 2.2 Maslow's hierarchy of developmental needs

Source: (Reber, 1995: 485)

According to Maslow each level of need must be met before the individual can move on to the next level. It is important to note that the various levels of need Maslow talks about are all simultaneously involved to varying degrees but that the lowest level of need must have a high degree of differentiation so that the next level can be successfully attempted.

2.3.1 Basic academic skills

Learning to read, write and do mathematics are the basis of all education (South Africa. Dept. of Education, May 2000: 24, 55). This basis is the gateway to the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for effective participation in further education and community life. This gateway to fulfilling the academic potential of over age learners is particularly limited. Donald (1993: 147, 152) writes about an *out of age* group of children who, in almost all cases have not acquired adequate basic academic skills in literacy, numeracy and writing. He says that it is the fundamental relationship of these skills to all other dimensions of the curriculum and the inability of these learners to progress without these skills that creates the need for special educational support. What is not possible is for

these children – who are mostly considerably older than the average first-time school entrant - to acquire these skills at a late stage of development in the same way as young children do (Donald, 1993: 145). Basic academic skills in reading, writing and numeracy promote *lifeskills* which enable an individual to reason, solve problems and interpret critical issues and information presented in society e.g. health messages. Here, lifeskills are defined as *cognitive skills* (e.g. literacy, numeracy, decision-making, critical thinking, problem solving), *psychosocial skills* (e.g. conflict resolution and management, negotiation skills, communication skills) and *technical skills* (e.g. environment skills, home/family management, childcare, employment skills) (Jones & Maasdorp, 1994: 1). This definition is also in alignment with the World Health Organisation's definition as cited in the South African report on *Quality Education for All* (Department of Education, November, 1997: vii), namely:

Lifeskills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable us to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

A common response for addressing the lack of basic academic skills is through compensatory education and remediation programmes for learners. Means, Chelemer & Knapp (1991: xi) suggest that the most widely accepted prescriptions for remedying the learners' deficiencies emphasise teaching the basics through curricula organised around discrete skills in a linear sequence. Because basic academic skills underlie advanced skills, basic instructional tasks must precede advanced instructional tasks. Unfortunately, this approach puts disadvantaged learners at an even greater risk by denying them access to advanced knowledge and skills. The argument made is that at risk adolescents are unmotivated to learn because the tasks they are asked to complete are not challenging to them (DiCintio & Gee, 1999: 231). Pease (1998a: 36) refer to this lack of motivation as an infantilisation of the curriculum.

Over age learners are poorly prepared for schooling (Cape Times, 16 March 1998) and need special attention to accelerate their development of basic academic skills. To address this need, the Primary Open Learning Pathway Trust (POLP) advocates *Open Learning* as a principle and practice (Pease, 1998a: 13). *Open Learning* is defined as an approach to education that seeks to transform the nature of educational opportunity and to remove

all unnecessary barriers to learning, so that as many people as possible are able to take advantage of meaningful learning opportunities throughout their lives. Learning should take place in a variety of contexts, in a multiplicity of sites, through a variety of mechanisms, and for people of all ages (Hall & Hofmeyer, 1996; Craig, 2000: 6). This principle is consistent with the National Qualifications Framework (Government Gazette No. 1521, 4 October 1995). The unbundling of the separate educational structures in South Africa, especially within the ELSSEN sector has left the needs of the over age learner unattended. Over age learners appear to need an age-appropriate cohort with a learning-appropriate curriculum. Nearly everyone agrees that conventional teaching methods are less effective for these learners and that conditions at home and in the community do not support their learning at school (Lee-Manning & Baruth, 1995: 24). The question being asked is not: *how is the learner handicapped, but rather, What are the learner's educational needs?* There are two major groups of educational programmes for at risk learners that seem to address the latter question:

- Compensatory or academic programmes, for example Headstart, and special education.
- Programmes addressing specific at risk conditions, for example alcohol and drug programmes.

Compensatory education is an effort by the school to provide special instruction for learners whose out-of-school experiences are considered to be so different from those of most learners that they are disadvantaged in the regular school programme, for example,

- Economic and social deprivation
- Poverty
- Family instability and other social conditions that hinder education.

(Lee-Manning & Baruth, 1995: 25)

Compensatory programmes seek to improve educational experiences for economically disadvantaged learners. These at risk programmes usually include some emphasis on learning basic academic skills.

African learners in school are taught from grade four mainly through the medium of a second language (Adams, 1996: 315). The mediation of basic literacy and numeracy skills through the medium of a second language is especially problematic (Adams, 1996: 315, Lemmer, 1996: 331). In this situation learning difficulties are created that are rooted in the curriculum and the philosophy and culture of the institution. These learning difficulties are often not seen as system related but as learner related, and such learners are often, erroneously, labelled as “slow” or are referred to special classes or public schools for LSEN (South Africa. Department of Education, August 1999: 47). The parents’ educational background cannot provide these over age learners with the necessary educational support. For instance, ten million South Africans aged between 15-59 years have not completed a basic education (South Africa. Department of Education, August 1997:26). According to the census report (1996), released in October 1998, among people aged 20 years or older, more than four million South Africans have never had any education. This is why the current national education minister, Kader Asmal, has made it one of his nine priorities to address the issue of illiteracy. Many of the parents of over age learners are functionally illiterate, meaning that they are partially educated but barely able to read.

2.3.2 Development

One cannot teach fifteen year olds as if they are 7 year olds

(Adapted from Pease, 1996a)

Over age learners are often treated as if they are grade ones; their cognitive, physical, and psychosocial developmental needs are not taken into account. The literature indicates that most over age learners find themselves in the adolescent developmental phase, described by the World Health Organisation, (WHO, 1992: 2) as between ten and eighteen years old. It therefore becomes important to understand the adolescent developmental phase so that these learners are not put further at risk by inappropriate relational and educational responses.

Development refers to a progressive series of changes in an orderly, coherent pattern (Freud, 1965, Piaget, 1970). For the purposes of this study the discussion of human

development will be confined to the notion of what counts as developmental progress and developmentally appropriate teaching. The multiplicity of factors both intrinsic and extrinsic to the person and the complexities of their interaction are recognised. This study observes that development has discontinuous features (e.g. stages). Characteristic psychological processes determine the possibilities of the child's action or thought at a particular stage. Learners' life circumstances can restrict the optimal development of their adaptive powers and hence their ability to engage actively in the world (Dawes & Donald, 1994: 23). What is not possible is for these learners, who are mostly considerably older than the average first-time school entrant, to acquire these skills at a later stage of development in the same way as young children might (Donald, 1993: 145). This framework of developmental stages is useful when discussing development in adverse circumstances.

Underlying development are the following basic assumptions about human growth and development (Hohman & Weikart, 1995: 15; Robertson, B. 1996: 3-4):

- Human beings develop capacities in predictable sequences throughout their lives. As people mature, new capabilities emerge.
- Despite the general predictability of human development, each person displays unique characteristics from birth that through everyday interactions, progressively differentiate him or her into a unique personality. Learning always occurs in the context of each person's unique characteristics, abilities and opportunities. The realisation of these learnt resources occurs when they are needed in response to life challenges, for example, the onset of puberty.
- There are times during the life cycle when certain kinds of information and skills are learned best or most efficiently, and there are teaching methods that are more appropriate at certain times in the developmental sequence than at others.

The developmental approach sees learning difficulties and problem behaviour as lags in skills or capacities that prevent the learner from manifesting age-appropriate development (Swanson and Reinert, 1979: 7). Learners at different developmental stages manifest different characteristics and needs in behaviour and learning. The common characteristic

pattern for each stage of development is considered normal.

Given that developmental change is a basic fact of human existence, but that each person is also developmentally unique, and that there are optimal times for particular kinds of learning, developmentally appropriate education can be defined by three criteria. According to Hohmann and Weikart (1995: 15), an educational experience, procedure, or method, whether adult- or child-initiated, is developmentally appropriate if it:

- exercises and challenges the learner's capacities as they emerge at a given developmental level;
- encourages a unique pattern of interest, talents and goals; and
- presents learning experiences when learners are best able to master, generalise, and retain what they learn and can relate them to previous experiences and future expectations.

Because young adolescents as a group are so vulnerable, they need special attention from committed adults to help them navigate this developmental stage (Hechinger, 1992). This makes it imperative to know the developmental tasks of adolescents. Some of the more obvious developmental tasks are: learning how to handle a more mature body, forming a sexual identity, continuing to progress with such abilities as reading and writing and beginning to explore career options. At risk factors compound the problems of early adolescents, the years characterised by the most significant developmental changes that occur during the entire human life span, with the exception of the first two years of life. Early adolescence is a time of heightened sexual awareness, independence and self-identity, and new interpersonal relationships.

Adults can put these learners at risk if they respond inappropriately to the developmental needs of adolescents. For example, a characteristic of early adolescents is defiance. If looked at in broader terms, it can be seen that defiance is a vehicle for the developmental task of personal autonomy. Therefore, how adults respond to these behaviours can trigger a rocky or a smooth transition into adulthood (Irvin, 1996: 222).

2.3.2.1 Cognitive development

Unique to early adolescence are the new cognitive abilities of dealing with problems in more abstract ways and having multiple perspectives. Learners are moving from the concrete stage (able to think logically about real experiences) to the formal stage (able to consider “what ifs”, think reflectively and reason abstractly). Most learners begin the process at about age twelve and display formal thinking consistently at age fifteen or sixteen. Like any new skill, formal reasoning must be practised repeatedly in a safe, encouraging environment. Young adolescents are egocentric but the emerging formal thinker is, for the first time, able to consider the thoughts of others and perceive him or herself as the object of attention of others (Irvin, 1996: 223). In fact, adolescents assume themselves to be the focus of most other people’s perspective much of the time (Keating, 1990: 71). As adolescents develop the capacity to think about their own thoughts, they become acutely aware of themselves, their person, and ideas and, resultingly, they become egocentric, self-conscious, and introspective (Rice, 1990: 183). As they become accustomed to this new ability, they outgrow the egocentrism so characteristic of early adolescents.

According to Craig, (2000: 6), the issue of over age learners touches on a difficult cognitive theoretical problem; one that almost divides theories about cognition (the study of the development of thinking, learning/coming to know) into two camps. On the one side are those theorists (represented by Piaget) who conceive of cognitive competence in terms of the development of general, regulating mental structures, and on the other, those (represented by Vygotsky) who argue that all higher psychological processes are developed by human cultures over time, with an emphasis on the socio-cultural nature of learning. Parents and teachers act as mediators of the learning process and provide support for learning and problem solving in various forms, e.g. encouragement, breaking down problems into steps. Graphically, developing cognitive competence can be represented on a continuum as follows:

and solve problems, they get the self-esteem building messages that their voices count, they experience a sense of belonging to a community, and they hone their ability to reason and analyse (Kohn, 1994: 279).

2.3.2.1 Personal and social development

Social skills

Socialisation is an important developmental task. Savin-Williams and Berndt (1990: 277-90) concluded that learners who have satisfying and harmonious friendships typically report positive self-esteem, a good understanding of other people's feelings, and relatively little loneliness. Additionally, those learners with harmonious friendships tend to behave appropriately in school, are motivated to do well and often receive high grades. Adults often ridicule the time and intensity of telephone conversations, frenzied note passing, and frequent broken hearts, but those interactions are critical interpersonal bridges that move adolescents toward psychological growth and social maturity.

Recent research (Brown, 1990: 174-80) shows that young adolescents do not routinely succumb to peer pressure. In fact they are more likely to follow the advice of adults rather than peers in matters affecting their long-term future and they actually rely on their own judgement more often than that of either peers or parents. A peer group then becomes a place to try out roles and ideas and serves as a validation of values within a social unit beyond the family. Brown further concludes that learners seek out the peer group best suited to meeting their needs for emotional support and exploration or reaffirmation of their values and aspirations. Without the achievement of basic trust, autonomy, and assertiveness the learner is ill-prepared to meet the demands of socialisation required in the classroom, within the peer group, and in early contacts with the larger community (Robertson, 1996: 5).

- **Autonomy**

Another developmental task that sometimes leads to emotional trauma is a young adolescent's need to establish autonomy. Disagreement becomes a vehicle to inform parents and other significant adults (for example educators) about changing self-conceptions and expectations and an opportunity to shed the view that parents can do no wrong. If relationships are not strong before puberty, this fighting can become destructive.

Although much young adolescent behaviour appears rejecting, this is not the time for adults to alienate themselves from their children. Early separation from adults may result in an increased risk of susceptibility to negative peer influences and participation in unhealthy, even risky behaviours (Irvin, 1996: 224).

- **Character development**

The development of character is intricately linked to socio-emotional and cognitive growth. A new capacity for abstract thinking allows adolescents to ask the "what ifs" and social-emotional growth provides the context for the answers. Character develops within a social environment (Leming, 1993: 69). Young adolescents will acquire a value system with or without the help of parents and educators. At a stage of development when learners are emerging as reflective citizens, educators can help them to be consciously aware of constructive values, to think logically about consequences, to empathise with others, and to make personal commitments to constructive values and behaviour (Davis, 1993).

All young adolescents are at risk of not successfully completing developmental tasks and of bearing the emotional scars of inappropriate and negative interactions with adults (see table 2.1: 60). Educators do, however, have control over their interactions with young adolescents. By understanding and appreciating the normal behaviours necessary to accomplish developmental tasks, they have the power to eliminate or at the very least reduce the attendant risk, for many young people.

2.3.3 Resilience

The sample under study is usually defined as at risk for school and other kinds of failure, due almost entirely to the conditions of poverty, neglect, and hopelessness that are characteristic of low-income African communities in urban settings. The great challenge facing educators, parents, and community leaders is to translate out-of-school time into constructive experiences that promote healthy cognitive, personal and social development. James Comer (1992) noted that the supportive and protective functions of neighbourhoods are practically non-existent for today's youth. Many neighbourhoods and communities now represent a hostile environment of violence, crime, drug use, and school failure.

Comer sees the need to develop caring communities in the school. According to Allen and Splittgerber (1996: 216), the caring community emphasises the socio-personal three R's of respect, responsibility, and relationships. Caring demonstrated through serving has shown positive benefits for young adolescents (Schine, 1989). According to Scales (March/April, 1996: 226), young people are more likely to stay in school if they like it there. And they are more likely to like it there if they feel safe, if someone cares for them there, if they have successes there, and if their friends, neighbours, and family are proud of what they have achieved there. This approach strives to create for learners that come from environments of stress, the conditions of support to become resilient. Scales (1996:226) further says that learners do not drop out; they slide out, day by day, year by year, and that this process really accelerates during the middle school years, from grade six to eight, which correspond to early adolescence. He says that the goal is simple: "The more schools provide success with caring, the more capable our young people will be." (Scales, 1992a: 5).

Resilience is the ability to respond actively and positively to life conditions, stress, and trauma in such a way that the individual such as the learner is able to bounce back and continue to approach life with positive actions (Christiansen et al., 1997: 87). According to Joseph (1994: 33), a resilient individual is one who is "responsible, positive, self-reliant, committed, and socially skilful". These resilient learners have been found to share some common characteristics. Werner (1989: 72-81) noted that the identified characteristics

fell into four groups:

- Learners who are resilient tend to approach problems proactively.
- Resilient learners are often good-natured, gaining positive attention from others. They are easy to be around and usually have a close bond with a caregiver or significant adult.
- Learners who are resilient are able to accept and work with life's challenges.
- Resilient learners have a sense of control over their lives and this allows them to maintain order and structure in their lives.

Research supports the notion that learners are resilient and that their psychological wounds will heal if given the opportunity (Garmezy, 1983: 73). Although the mechanisms of protection and prevention are not fully understood, it has been hypothesised that social support, in the form of acceptance, understanding, and companionship provided by a significant person or group, is in some way involved (Dawes, 1994). Rutter (1990) outlines some of the mechanisms that mediate protective processes for children at risk:

- Reduction of risk impact, for example, by supervision of peer group activities.
- Reduction of negative chain reactions, for example, risk may be cumulative like in parental divorce but also with the hostilities being taken out on the child. Measures which prevent such an accumulation and perpetuation of risk factors will serve a protective function.
- Self-esteem and self-efficacy, for example, a secure and harmonious parent-child relationship helps children feel they can cope with life's problems, and the experience of success in a task that is meaningful to the child.
- Opening of opportunities, for example, continuation of education enables more opportunities for career fulfilment than dropping out does.

A learner's lack of academic achievement is often accompanied by a lack of social success and involvement in school activities. Further, when family and home circumstances are less than desirable, some learners' problems are compounded, and they become vulnerable to the lure of gangs. Table 2.1 is very instructive in that it indicates a vulnerable

environment in which gangs provide the kind of support described above. This is particularly true in South Africa. Gonzalez (1991) studied the question, Why do youth join gangs? He arrived at six answers:

- Identity - to be recognised and regarded as part of something unique.
- Bonding - to be included in something meaningful, something with a sense of family.
- Competence - to be successful even in areas not valued by society.
- Safety - to feel both physically and mentally secure.
- Change - to be a part of something different, something exciting.
- Meaning - to be a part of something that accepts the youth while offering him or her a reason for being.

Not one of the above reasons deals with the desire for money or material possessions; they all relate to how young people are valued. Gang membership is simply a way in which some youth meet their human needs for connection and a measure of self-esteem.

- **Mentors:** Mentors serve as a critical support for learners who are at risk as a result of poverty, trauma, substance abuse, or other life events. Learners who have a significant attachment to or bond with an adult, or sometimes another child, tend to face their challenges more productively and are more likely to experience success (Garmezy, 1987, 1992; White-Hood, 1993). In practice, this means a specific adult must take special interest in a learner and develop a nurturing, facilitating relationship.
- **Family support:** According to Clark (1983), active involvement of one or more family members in the learner's education can serve as a protective factor.
- **Turning point events:** These are events that can provide at risk learners with an opportunity to develop in ways not previously accessible to the learner (Katz, 1994). According to research (Rutter, 1979; Werner, 1989; Smokowski, Reynolds, Bezruczko, 1999), such turning points may be special relationships, unique opportunities, acquired interests and hobbies which can all open doors to new worlds and create opportunities for change.

2.4 GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORT FOR OVER AGE LEARNERS WITHIN THE WIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT

2.4.1 Inclusive education

South African education is moving away from "special" education for learners with special educational needs towards a policy of inclusion. Donald (1993: 142) argues that the usual definition of special educational need (SEN), is premised on the assumption of disability and is not acceptable in the South African situation. This point needs to be stressed, because such a definition indicates a deficit intrinsic to the learner. Such learners do exist, but Donald argues that the majority of learners in South Africa with special educational need do not have intrinsic disabilities, in fact, they appear to have extrinsic educational needs. These learners have difficulty in graduating from the foundation phase with basic educational skills in reading and numeracy (Sunday Times, 16 July 2000: 1). The intent of creating more schools of skill by the WCED appears to go in the direction of

acknowledging the extrinsic dimension of special need.

In the former DET interactive SEN (a reciprocal relationship of intrinsic and extrinsic needs) (NEPI, 1992: 33; Du Toit:1996: 14 - 15) had only been developed since 1990. The inadequacy of information systems in many African schools complicated the process (Motala, 1995: 167-168; Pease, 1998b: 7) of determining the extent of interactive SEN, for example:

- lack of systematic storing of information;
- records missing because of burglaries and poor administration;
- incomplete information (e.g. parental occupation not recorded);
- lack of a systematic approach to entering information (e.g. some information was obtained from record books, other from schedules, other from registers, number and name assigned to child changes from year to year);
- vital information missing (e.g. transfers only noted if it happens in the middle of the year and not at the end); and
- in records of educators who had to be relied on as sources.

The NEPI report (1992) on special education tried to broaden the concept of special needs (See Figure 2.4).

Figure: 2.4 A conceptual continuum of Special Educational Need (SEN)

INTRINSIC SEN	INTERACTIVE SEN	EXTRINSIC SEN
SEVERE AND CHRONIC <i>(Disability-based)</i> Individual dysfunction		TEMPORARY AND REMEDIABLE <i>(System-based)</i> Environmental disadvantage in the socio-educational dimension.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical disability • Sensory loss • Neurological disability • Moderate and severe mental handicap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild mental handicap • Specific learning disability • Speech and language impairment • Emotional and behavioural disorders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of basic education skills especially literacy and numeracy.

Sources: NEPI (1992: 29), Donald, (1993: 142).

Over age learners appear to fit the profile of the extrinsic part of the need continuum, which occurs mainly, though not exclusively, in the former DET schools (NEPI, 1992:34, Donald, 1993: 145). Extrinsically generated need does not imply a deficit in the learner; the need is structurally and systematically created. However to date there has been no explicit recognition of this category of need by the educational community. Donald (1993: 142) says:

What is still left, however, is the problem of establishing a more precise indication of the extent of the need. Without such an indication, policy decisions regarding the distribution and deployment of scarce resources are unlikely to be influenced and, no matter how cogently arguments are put, meeting special educational need may continue to be seen as a peripheral issue.

Direct explicit teaching is necessary if learners' skills are to be developed, particularly in the early stages of learning (Craig, 2000: 14). Learners with SEN do not develop skills incidentally, but need to learn skills so that they can later apply these skills in new learning situations (Knight, 1999: 5). The educator is thus working at the learners' instructional level and also within each learner's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Craig (2000: 7), this means that tasks must be set that will elicit change – tasks that will provoke cognitive adaptation. Furthermore, she argues that the social nature of learning, as emphasised by Vygotsky, indicates that each learner grows into the intellectual life around him or her, and what the learner does today with *assistance* he or she will do tomorrow on their own. As she indicates, this is indeed a very distressing view *if* the intellectual life around learners is poor, such as is the case with over age learners.

South Africa's educational policy documents since 1994 espouse the view that inclusion as a principle in providing education for LSEN is here to stay (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 1999: viii). However, what we see in practice is a stronger focus on *integration* which is a process through which learners are supported to enable them to participate in existing (largely unchanged) programmes of schools (Ainscow, 1998: 70-75). In contrast inclusion suggests a willingness to restructure the school's programme in response to the diversity of learners who attend. Inclusion in education is, therefore, essentially about a learner-centred approach to meeting individual needs. Whereas integration has tended to emphasise adjusting the physical environment in which learning takes place, inclusion focuses on adjusting to the learning needs of individuals and adjusting teaching approaches accordingly (Johnstone & Warwick, 1999: 8). Over age learners are clearly not included, they are integrated into the school's programme irrespective of whether this meets their needs or not.

Inclusion is a principle informing a framework in which schools accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Inclusion should include disabled and gifted learners, street and working learners, learners from remote or nomadic populations, learners from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and learners from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups (UNESCO, 1994: 6). In education and training, this means the promotion of the equal participation of and non-discrimination against all learners in the learning processes, irrespective of their

disabilities, within a single, seamless system and a *continuum of learning contexts and resources according to need* (South Africa. Department of Education, August 1999: 9; figure 2.6). The report on *Quality education for all* (South Africa. Department of Education, 1997: 55) elucidates the above point:

The separate systems of education which presently exist ('special' and 'ordinary') need to be integrated to provide one system which is able to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of the learner population. Within this integrated system, a range of options for education provision and support services should be provided. Learners should have the ability to move from one learning context to another, e.g. from early childhood education (ECD) to general education and training (GET), from a specialised centre of learning to an ordinary centre of learning, or from a formal to a non-formal programme. The system of education should be structured in such a way that, irrespective of the learning context, opportunities for facilitating integration and inclusion of the learner in all aspects of life should be provided.

In terms of inclusion, learners with disabilities are viewed as true full-time participants and members of their neighbourhood schools and communities. With inclusion, learners should come to a mainstream classroom that has all the specialised services they require. Every child has unique learning needs requiring an educational programme implemented to take into account the diversity of learners' characteristics and needs. Older learners are at risk of being stereotyped by *age* if separated into special groups. Stainback, Stainback, East and Sapon-Shevin (1994: 489) state that the goal of inclusion is not to erase differences, but to enable all learners to belong within an educational community that validates and values their individuality.

2.4.4 Policy interventions

The state as basic provider of education in South Africa guarantees in terms of Section 29 of the Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996) the right to basic education to all persons in South Africa. The Bill of Rights (Chapter Two of the Constitution) provides in section 29(1) that every person shall have the right:

- to basic education and to equal access to educational institutions;
- to instruction in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable;
- to establish, where practicable, educational institutions based on a common culture, language or religion, provided that there shall be no discrimination on the ground of race.

The Education White Paper (South Africa. Dept. of Education, 1995) affirms the rights of the over age learner. It ascribes to certain values and principles, which include the following:

- the basic right to education, irrespective of race, class, gender, creed or *age*;
- lifelong education and training;
- open access to education;
- redress of educational inequalities;
- a unitary education system;
- the total development of all learners.

Although it is clear that all individuals have a right to education, the right is qualified in that it refers to basic education only. However, “basic education” is not defined in the Bill of Rights. The White Paper (South Africa. Dept. of Education, 1995:39-40) seems to indicate that basic education means functional literacy: to read, write and count, as well as elementary economic, cultural and political knowledge. This standard is also referred to as General Education Certification, which is equivalent to grade 9 level. With regard to the mobility of learners, the National Assessment Policy (South Africa. Dept. of Education, 1998: 10) in the General Education Training (GET) Band, that is grades R to 9 and Adult basic education and training (ABET), states that it is expected that learners will progress with their age cohorts. The notion of promotion from grade to grade is replaced by progress through the curriculum with the emphasis on the support of the needs of the learner.

However, the highest levels of repetition are still found among African learners and as a result, African learners remain in school three to four years longer than the other

population groups. On the other hand, they may simply drop out of school. In 1998, South Africa was spending one-third of its education budget on over age learners and drop-outs (Sunday Times, 23 August 1998). Girls predominate in senior schooling, although more boys enter the schooling system in grade 1. Thus male drop-out is a particular problem for schools. In his report to the president, education minister Professor Kader Asmal reported that there is still no policy on the adequate educational provision for over age learners (South Africa. Dept. of Education, October, 2000: 3). However, he does indicate that this provisioning might take place in the Further Education and Training (FET) Band (South Africa. Dept. of Education, October, 2000: 3). On average, African learners are three years older than White and Indian learners in grade 12.

The WCED policy on admission age as set out in circular 001/98, states that learners should attend school from the first day of the year in which they turn seven. The national norms and standards for school funding, as published in Government gazette no.19347 on 12 October 1998, state that, with effect from 1 January 2000, only learners turning seven during the grade 1 year, may be admitted to a public school.

The Interim policy for early childhood development (South Africa. Dept. of Education, 1996: 18) states that children who are older than 5 but are within the age range of 5-10, and who have for one reason or another missed a schooling opportunity will be allowed admission to a reception programme. In such instances *mixed-age classes* will be the norm especially for those over 10 years old who require access to a reception programme. Learners who are two or more years older than the age-grade norm should be assisted, through specialised programmes, to catch up so that they can be placed in the appropriate grade. Over age learners, well outside the compulsory age for school education, should be provided with access to adult basic and further education and training (Department of Education, August 1997:21, 26-27).

2.4.5 Mixed-age realities

Little (1995: 1) says that the multi-age reality has characterised hundreds of thousands of schools throughout the twentieth century and will continue to do so well into the twenty-first century. Pease (1996a) talks about the *multi-age-within-grade reality*, which is

common in developing countries. The accepted view in South Africa, which is that all forms of learners should be part of a comprehensive framework, that advocates inclusion, is supported by the deliberations at international conferences (UNESCO, 1994, 1990).

In developed countries like America and Canada, the multi-age classroom reality differs greatly from similar classes in developing countries like South Africa. In the former, the multi-age classes are deliberately encouraged as an innovation beneficial to the learners concerned; or are chosen for financial reasons. The older learners are invariably more literate and both younger and older learners benefit from this multi-age environment. This situation is also true for the educationally advantaged families in South Africa. Older school learners often model lifeskills and general school readiness behaviour for younger learners. In contrast, South African rural, farm and ghetto urban schools often reflect a multigrade-multi-age reality in which South African over age learners tend to have low literacy and numeracy levels, as well as poor self-esteem.

Among the reasons behind the trend in developed countries towards multi-age grouping is widespread concern about:

- the high proportion of young learners who are retained in the early grades;
- increasing recognition that grade repetition does not help learners overcome difficulties in meeting narrow and specific achievement expectations;
- attempts to implement developmentally appropriate teaching and curriculum practices in the early grades; and
- growing awareness of the potential benefits of cross-age interaction to intellectual and social development.

(Katz, Evangelou, & Hartman, 1990)

A confusing variety of terms is used in discussions of the theoretical and practical issues surrounding age grouping practices. Sometimes the terms “ungraded”, “nongraded”, “continuous progress”, “mixed- or multi-age grouping” are used interchangeably (Willis, 1991). The terms “split classes”, “blended classes”, “family grouping” and “vertical grouping” are also used (Katz, 1992). Katz (1992) has created four broad categories that

encompass all the various age grouping terms. These terms will be briefly explained.

2.4.5.1 Nongraded or Ungraded grouping

These terms, first introduced by Goodlad and Anderson (1959), refer to grouping learners in classes without grade level designations and with more than a one-year age span. In this approach to nongradedness, the main goal is to increase the homogeneity of ability of instructional groups rather than the interaction across ability groups.

2.4.5.2 Mixed-age or Multi-age grouping

These terms refer to grouping learners so that the age span of the class is greater than one year, as in the nongraded or ungraded approach. However, the terms “mixed-age” or “multi-age grouping” are used to emphasise the goal of using teaching and curriculum practices that maximise the benefits of interaction and co-operation among children of various ages. In mixed-age or multi-age classes, educators encourage learners with different experiences and stages of development to turn to one another for help with all aspects of classroom activity, including the mastery and application of basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, in mixed-age classes, educators use small temporary subgroupings of learners who need the same kind of instruction to help them acquire basic academic skills.

2.4.5.3 Continuous progress

Generally, the term implies that learners remain with their classroom peers in an age cohort regardless of whether they have met prespecified grade-level achievement expectations. The term “continuous progress” is usually associated with a strong emphasis on individualising the curriculum so that teaching and learning tasks are responsive to the previous experiences and rates of progress of each learner regardless of age. This practice is sometimes called social promotion. The main rationale for this practice is that separation from the age cohort may stigmatise a child.

Like the nongraded and ungraded approaches, programmes focussed on continuous

progress are not primarily aimed at maximising the educational benefits of learners of different ages and abilities learning together. Rather, the goal is to let learners progress according to their individual rates of learning and development without being compelled to meet age-related achievement expectations.

2.4.5.4 Combined grades

Combined classes include more than one grade level in a classroom. Such groupings are sometimes referred to as “split”, “blended” or “double year” classes. Little (1995:1) talks about “multigrade classes”. The main goal of these kinds of classes appears to be to maximise personnel and space resources rather than to capitalise on the diversity of ability and experience in the groups with mixed ages.

Grouping learners in classes with a wide age range cannot by itself yield the benefits implied by research on cross-age interaction and multi-age grouping (Katz & Chard, 1989). According to Katz (1992, 1995), *teaching strategies* likely to result in learners realising the benefits of a wide age range include:

- encouraging more knowledgeable and experienced learners to assist less able ones, regardless of age;
- encouraging younger learners to request assistance from more competent classmates; and
- encouraging older and more experienced learners to take responsibility for helping others.

2.4.6 Outcomes-based education

South Africa is currently experiencing a paradigm shift in education in which the move from a content-based to an outcomes-based system has been thus far, linguistically, a very disrupting experience for thousands of educators and learners:

For those who struggle to find a place and a voice within the schooling

environment – children with special needs, second-language English speakers, poor and hungry scholars.... They should not be expected to struggle with an obscure curriculum vocabulary as well as those hidden and invisible conditions and practices, which push out and marginalise people within schools (South Africa. Dept. of Education, May 2000: 26).

An issue that clouds ELSEN in South Africa is the curriculum. It is the experience and belief of a number of educationalist in South Africa that the school curriculum and, more specifically, the delivery thereof, is the main cause that there is such a high percentage of ELSEN in this country. Over age learners are currently subjected to a non-age-appropriate curriculum hence their developmental needs are also being overlooked.

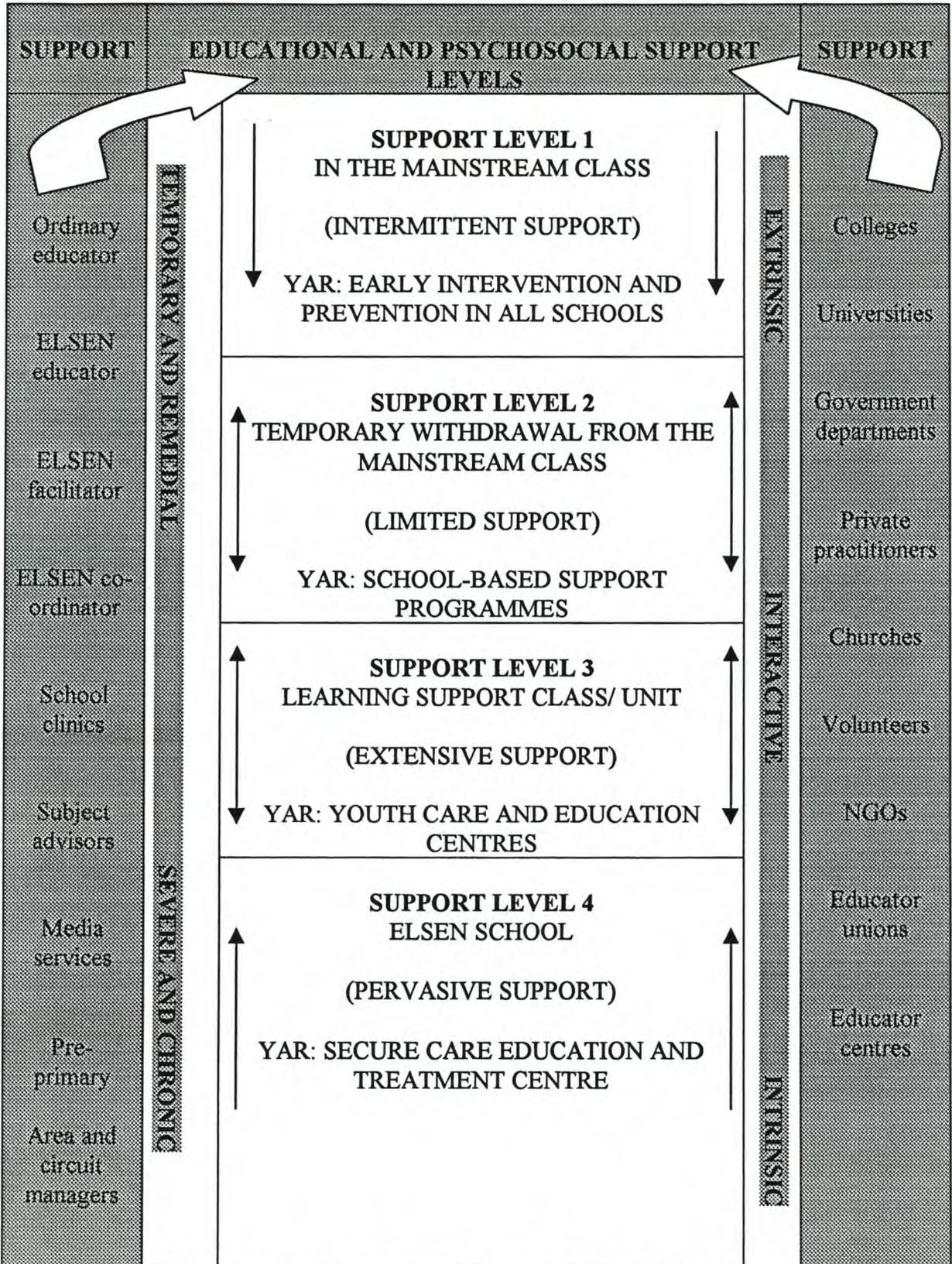
The vehicle for Outcomes-based education (OBE) is Curriculum 2005 which is designed to cut across traditional divisions of skills and knowledge to encompass the concept lifelong learning for all (Archer, Rossouw, Lomofsky, Oliver, 1999: 108). However, the impact of outcomes-based education cannot be equal in unequal conditions. There has been little recognition of this reality of South African educational life (South Africa. Dept. of Education, May 2000: 23).

Outcomes-based education was introduced in 1997 together with ten years of compulsory education (South Africa. Dept. of Education, May 2000, March 1997). However, cracks started to appear in the implementation of outcomes-based education via Curriculum 2005 (South Africa. Department of Education, May 2000:15). Proposed changes to Curriculum 2005 resulted in it being adapted to Curriculum 21, which will be guided by a National Curriculum Statement (Sunday Times, 4 June, 2000: 6; South Africa. Dept. of Education, May 2000). The national education ministry is of the view that separate curricula should not be developed for learners who experience learning difficulties and exclusion. However, the ministry recognises that learning programmes and materials should be customised to accommodate differences in sensory modalities, learning styles and rates of learning (South Africa. Department of Education, 1999: 43). The focus of the new curriculum is on the development of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes and the development of creative and innovative thinkers who are ready to be integrated into the workplace and society (South Africa. Department of Education, March, 1997: 24-26).

The WCED model of learning support provides educational and psychosocial support to LSEN on various levels, as determined by the intensity of their needs. The model also endeavours to avoid stigmatising learners. The educational principle “education in the least restrictive environment” is applied as far as is possible. Educational and psychosocial support has been synchronised to the various levels as outlined in Figure 2.5.

2.4.7 WCED learning support model

Figure: 2.5 WCED support continuum of learning contexts and resources.



Source: Adapted from WCED Conference (23-25 March 1999), Support for the school as organisation.

2.4.7.1 EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

- **Support level one: In the mainstream class**

LSEN are accommodated in the mainstream classroom. This implies that the regular mainstream educator will, with support, be able to provide LSEN in the mainstream and further that the mainstream curriculum will need to be developed in such a way as to provide for the needs of ALL learners.

- **Support level two: Periodic withdrawal from the mainstream class.**

The LSEN educator withdraws LSEN from the mainstream classes individually or in groups and assists them where necessary. After being helped in this way for some time, the LSEN should return to the mainstream class.

- **Support level three: ELSEN classes or Units**

Should the support set out above still not meet the needs of the LSEN, an ELSEN class can be established at the school. This class can provide for a diverse range of LSEN. These ELSEN classes will replace the existing special, adaptation and remedial classes. As soon as learners are ready for mainstream classes again, they must return to them. An extension of this support level would be to consider the establishment at regular mainstream schools of ELSEN units, each consisting of two or more ELSEN classes. These units can accommodate LSEN who at this point in time need to be accommodated in ELSEN schools far from their homes.

- **Support Level Four: ELSEN schools**

LSEN who cannot progress in any of the above-mentioned options could still be placed in separate schools for ELSEN. The objective in these highly specialised schools must be to return the LSEN to the mainstream as soon as it is desirable. The aims of the ELSEN model are primarily to:

- give all learners equal educational opportunities within an inclusive system; and
- prevent learning difficulties and offer all learners optimal learning opportunities.

2.4.7.2 Psychosocial support

- **A model for the education of youth at risk**

The Western Cape Directorate of Special Educational Needs, in conjunction with the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) for Youth at Risk (YAR), developed on the basis of the above ELSESEN model (see table 2.5) the YAR model. Youth at Risk can be described as learners experiencing behavioural problems: youth in conflict with the law, street children, abandoned children, learners with serious disciplinary problems, et cetera (WCED Conference, March 1999). The IMC recommended four levels of intervention for youth at risk which were adapted for the educational context by the WCED. These levels are: level one: prevention, level two: early intervention, level three: statutory process, and level four: continuum of care (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000: 45).

- **Support level one: In the mainstream class**

Learners with behavioural problems in the mainstream classroom should be identified and helped by providing the necessary lifeskills such as social skills, conflict management skills and problem-solving skills. This also includes programmes for parents on how to deal effectively with the education of their children. According to the World Health Organisation (1993) lifeskills are defined as those abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour, that enable an individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

- **Support level two: Periodic withdrawal from the mainstream class.**

Where necessary, the ELSESEN educator should withdraw learners with behavioural problems from the mainstream classes individually or in groups and assist them. After being helped in this way for some time, the LSEN should return to the mainstream class.

These educators will be trained for this function by psychologists and will be supported by youth care centres and NGOs.

- **Support level three: Youth care centres.**

The WCED intends to replace its current schools at places of safety, schools of industry and reform schools with community-based youth care centres. Should the support set out above still not meet the needs of the learners in question, these centres, in conjunction with school clinics, will be used to help the learners who are at risk.

- **Support level four: Secure youth care centres.**

The WCED also intends to establish a secure youth care centre for those learners with serious behavioural problems who cannot progress sufficiently in any of the above-mentioned options. All the above support levels mirror the four support levels of intellectual functioning difficulties of the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR, 1992), namely: intermittent, limited, extensive and pervasive support. These support levels are meaningfully descriptive in terms of an educational and psychosocial response to need.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The actuality of this study can be placed within the realm of advocacy for the reason that there is a scarcity of research on the needs of over age learners. These learners find themselves in the precarious position of falling between the cracks of mainstream education and education provision for learners with special educational needs in South Africa. These two educational systems have, at least theoretically, been merged into one seamless, inclusive education system. In practice there are still two separate bands of educational provisioning, namely the mainstream band and the special education band. In South Africa the attempt is being made to build bridges between these two provisioning bands in order to facilitate the inclusion of all learners into a seamless inclusive education system. The inclusiveness of the current educational system did not factor into the

equation the needs of over age learners. In its review of the South African Schools Act of 1996, the *Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET)* and the *National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS)* (South Africa. Dept. of Education, 1997) concluded that the Act is not prescriptive enough in providing for the development of an inclusive, integrated education system. There is as yet nothing in the act, which indicates how the education system can contribute to overcoming the causes and effects of learning difficulties that have led to exclusion and the sustained marginalisation of significant sectors of the South African population (South Africa. Department of Education, August 1999:20). This study attempts to provide a picture of the very specific needs of over age learners whose “age” can become a barrier to learning.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation for the methodology of the research study in terms of research design, research process, research format, data collection methods and data analysis.

3.2. RESEARCH QUESTION

As explained in Chapter One, this research study served the following purposes:

- It placed the research problem in context in order to understand more about over age learners' educational needs (**Chapter One**).
- It provided information on all relevant research on over age learners (**Chapter Two**).
- It explained the research methodology (**Chapter Three**).
- It enabled the researcher to synthesise the information (**Chapter Four**).
- It enabled the researcher to come to a conclusion (**Chapter Five**).

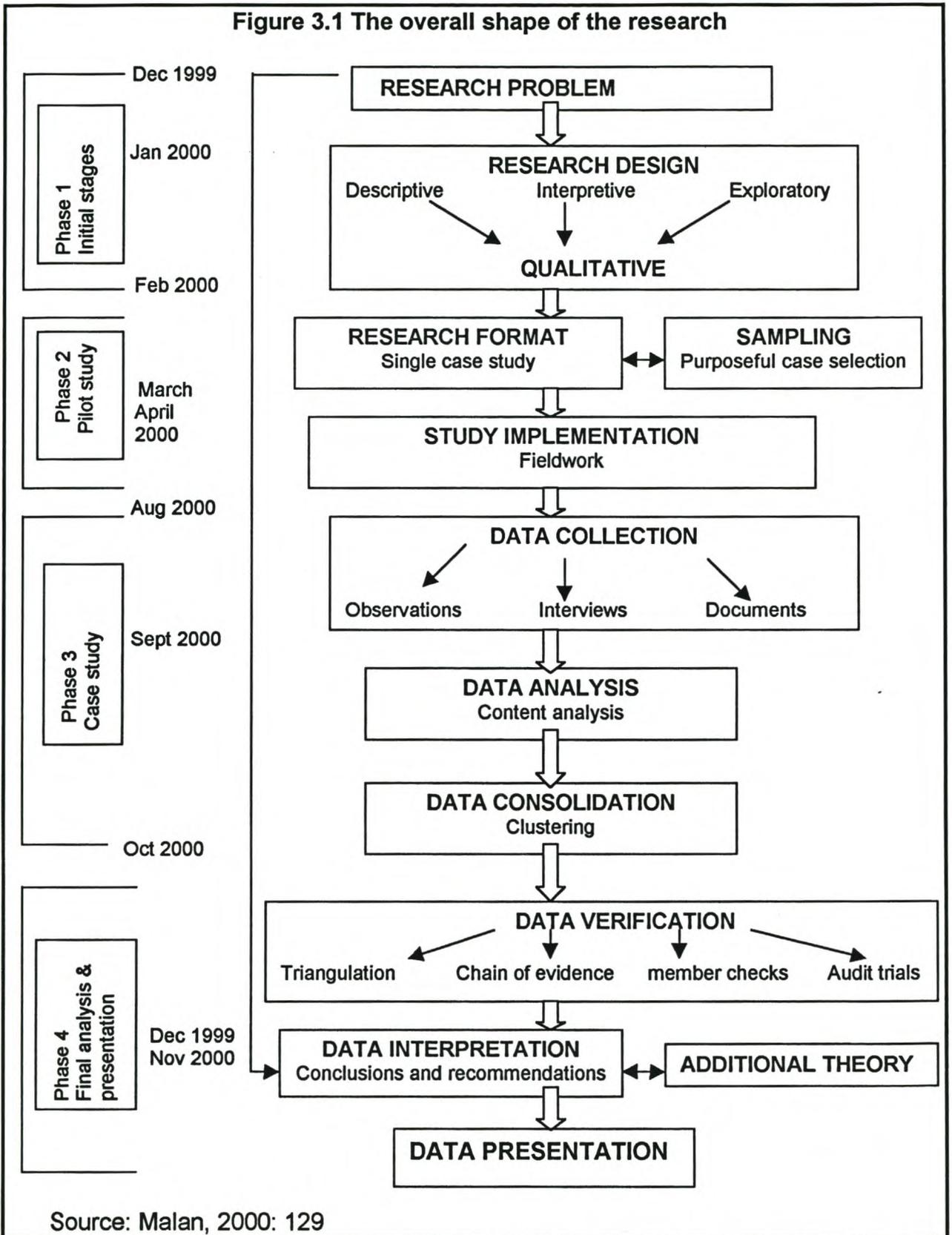
The research question stems directly from the research problem, namely: **“What are the educational needs of over age learners in the foundation phase?”** As discussed in Chapter Two, the socio-personal and cognitive development of over age learners tend to mismatch their scholastic performance. This could result in a lack of scholastic confidence that often contributes to dropping out of school, being retained or promoted without support. In order to accommodate these learners with greater effectiveness and efficiency, this research focussed on an analysis of the educational needs of over age learners in the Kuils River area. The focus of this research was to identify basic educational needs that can be met in formal educational settings.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. (Mouton & Marais, 1989: 32).

As discussed in Chapter One, this research design is qualitative in nature and set within the **interpretative philosophical orientation**. The researcher followed the following research process (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 The overall shape of the research



Source: Malan, 2000: 129

As a point of reference Figure 3.1 illustrates the overall shape of the research, including timeframes collated to the four phases of the research. The researcher found it necessary to use various headings to provide a sense of structure in recording the research. However, it must be stressed that there was overlapping between stages, and that the analysis of data was an ongoing process.

As discussed in Chapter One, a single case study is used as an example of a phenomenon of interest that is studied in depth in a bounded context (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 25). A qualitative single case study is therefore an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity or phenomenon (the case) bounded by time and activity (a programme, event, process, institution, or social group). The qualitative single case study collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time (Patton, 1986: 12; Merriam, 1998: 27).

Merriam (1998: 27) concludes that the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in *delimiting* the object of study, the case. The following special features, as described by Merriam (1998:29-30), of case study research were used to aid the researcher in delimiting the case to be studied, namely, the case is **particularistic, descriptive and heuristic**:

- A **Particularistic** case study focus on a *particular situation*, event, programme, or phenomenon. It can suggest to the researcher what to do or what not to do in a similar situation. It can examine a specific instance but illuminate a general problem. It may or may not be influenced by the author's bias.
- A **Descriptive** case study mean that the end product of a case study is a detailed and rich description of the phenomenon under study. It can illustrate the complexities of a situation, for example, the fact that not

one but many factors contribute to it. It includes vivid material, for example, quotations, interviews, newspaper articles, and so on. The researcher obtains information from a wide variety of sources, which cover many years and describe how the preceding decades led to the situation. The emphasis of this particular research was an in-depth description of the needs of over age learners through the perspective of purposefully selected educators as well as observations in the classroom. A good deal of time was therefore spent observing classroom dynamics between learners and learners, and learners and teachers. The researcher then went on to describe as carefully as possible what was observed.

- **Heuristic** means that a case study illuminates the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under study. It can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience or confirm what is known. It can explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened, and why. The research design also included elements of exploration and discovery since the study was intended to elucidate and provide new insight into the phenomenon. The exploratory nature of the study was captured in that the research design allowed for categories or themes to emerge from the respondents (Creswell, 1994: 58), as well as including those themes identified before the research began.

3.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the instrument for data collection, the researcher monitored the process as it unfolds through sensitive observations and by using empathic interviewing. Data collection here involves setting the boundaries for this study by purposefully deciding on the setting, the informants, the events

and the processes to be observed and then collecting data in various forms over a set period of time.

3.4.1 Selection of participants

Qualitative researchers frequently work with small groups, doing an in-depth study in a specified context. The research question and conceptual framework determine the focus and boundaries of the research group (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 24). The participants in this study have been purposefully selected (as opposed to random selection) and consist of six educators of over age learners at two former DET schools in the Kuils River area. One school was the research site for the pilot study and the other was the research site for the case study. The participants consist therefore of a typical group whose opinions and ideas can be seen as representative of educators teaching over age learners and they therefore fulfil the requirements of the research question in this study. The following specific criteria regarding the choice of research respondents were chosen:

- Respondents should be in the foundation phase;
- Respondents currently teach to over age learners;
- Respondents were willing to be observed;
- Respondents had at least three years teaching experience;
- At least one of the respondents must be part of the management team of the school; and
- At least one of the respondents must be from the intermediate phase.

The researcher therefore engaged in purposeful sampling in terms of selecting the interviewees on the basis of what they could contribute to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon of over age learners in school (Merriam, 1998:83).

In case study research, the crucial factor is not the number of interviewees but the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998:83).

3.4.2 Research procedure

3.4.2.1 Phase 1: The initial stages of the research

During the preliminary stages of the research, the research site and sample were determined, access was negotiated with the principal and selected educators, background information about the sample was ascertained and rapport was established with the selected educators for the research.

As a member of the CIPP steering committee under the auspices of POLP, I had access to schools that had participated in a research project on the curriculum needs of over age learners in former DET schools. This enabled me to search for suitable interview candidates and sites for observation. The construction of my interview schedule was partly based on the deliberations (contained in the minutes) of the various role players in the CIPP committee as described in Chapter One. The literature review informed the rest of the interview schedule construction.

3.4.2.2 Phase 2: The pilot study

A pilot study was conducted in order to test experimentally a semi-structured interview schedule with a small purposefully selected sample similar to the intended group of respondents (Mertens, 1998: 117) (see Appendix 3.1). A semi-structured interview was conducted with two

chosen educators to pilot the interview schedule. Both the researcher and the respondents participated in the interviews in English.

The educators were personally approached as part of my routine visits to schools in the Kuils River school clinic area. Pilot interviews, as discussed here, took place at the schools that were purposely selected.

I began by orientating the educator to the goals of the research, explaining that I was interested in understanding the needs of over age learners. I explained the use of the tape recorder for research purposes but gave them the assurance that they could request that I switch off the tape recorder at any time. Issues around confidentiality were clarified with the research respondents. I then reiterated my interest in the needs, particularly the educational needs, of over age learners, at which time I switched on the tape.

The researcher's mother tongue is Afrikaans and that of the respondents is Xhosa. The respondents' understanding of Afrikaans is limited and the researcher's understanding of Xhosa is non-existent. English is the second language for both the researcher and the respondents. Fluency in English is one of the requirements for licensing as a teacher in South Africa. It is also the language that almost all African teachers use as an instructional language from grade four onwards. However, language can be regarded as a limitation to this study in that the research respondents would have been able to express themselves more effectively in their mother tongue.

A tape recorder was used during the interviews. Although the educators were given enough time to prepare for the interview, the researcher found it necessary to build an open structured question into the interview format, with guidelines that allowed the respondents to prepare in a structured way for the interview. The educators received a copy of the

unedited transcript of the interview, and were invited to comment on it. The educators were re-approached to collect their comments and discussion of them if necessary.

The following procedures, as discussed by Mertens (1998: 117-118), were used in piloting the interview schedule and the observation checklist for a small sample similar to the intended group of respondents:

- A pilot sample was purposefully selected that was similar to the population under study;
- The preliminary interview schedule and the observation checklist included all the possible questions and issues gleaned from the literature review and field notes;
- Pilot respondents were instructed to point out questions that were not clear or had no relevance to over age learners;
- The administrative procedure followed was to tape record the pilot interviews and make field notes;
- The data were collected via observations relating to difficulties experienced in responding to the questions, comments made by respondents of issues not covered in the research interview schedule, misinterpretations of questions asked and, finally, transcription of the interviews;
- A brief analysis of the pilot data guided the researcher to change, add, or delete questions as needed.

3.4.2.3 Phase 3: The case study

The research site was Mfuleni Primary, and five educators (including the principal) were purposefully selected for the study. During this phase an attempt was made by the selected educators to describe the educational needs of over age learners. Meetings with the selected participants for the

research were arranged for the class-observations and semi-structured interviews. The meetings consisted of:

- Semi-structured interviews with the selected educators to obtain information on the experiences of teaching over age learners;
- Semi-structured interviews with the principal on his experiences of having over age learners in his school;
- Twice weekly class observations for two weeks of research respondents teaching over age learners; and
- Attending CIPP meetings.

During the observations and interviews the researcher was caught up in the process of making sense of the events and, afterwards, in transcribing and entering these events the researcher often gained an understanding of events that had been totally overlooked before (Ely, 1991: 79). Data collection for the research terminated at the end of November 2000.

After the thesis is completed I plan to share my findings with all the participants through workshops, giving them a brief summary of the findings and advising them how they can obtain the thesis should they wish to consult it.

3.4.2.4 Phase 4: The final analysis and presentation phase

This phase consisted of data reduction, data display and data interpretation. The data from the various sources were analysed using the content analysis procedure of open coding. To develop themes the researcher divided the data into semantic units, which were subjected to a pre-determined set of questions. Verbatim narrative was selected so as to link the raw data to these themes. The units of data, which were coded

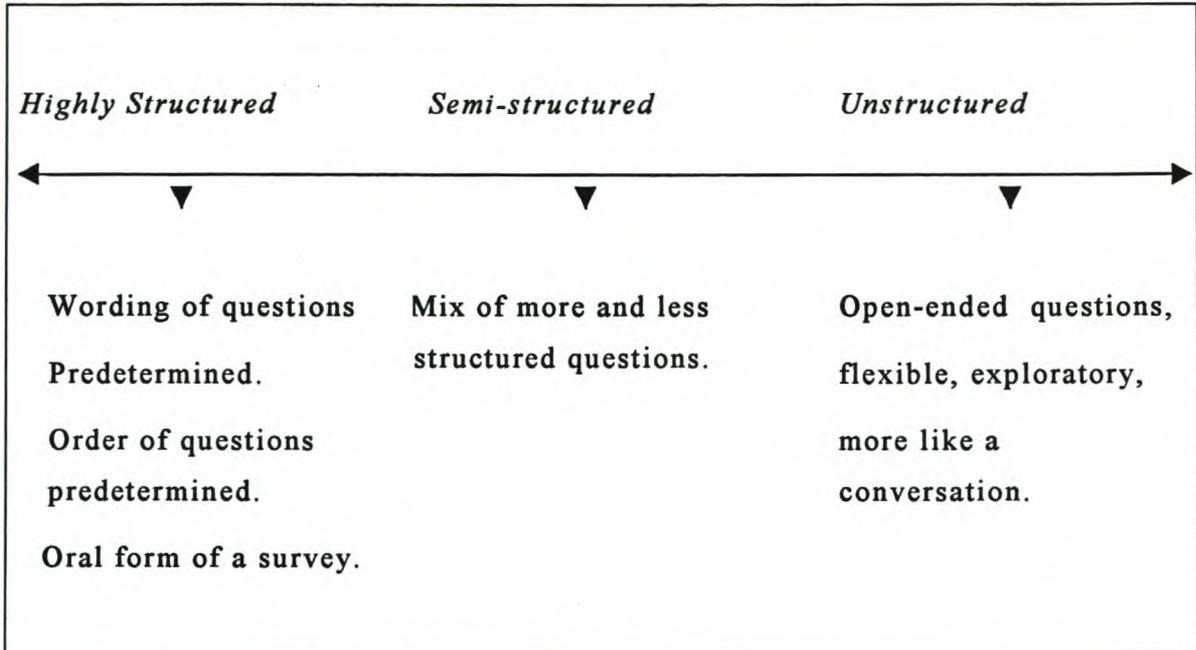
into themes, were clustered to find the most relevant clustered themes for interpretation.

3.4.3 Methodology

3.4.3.1 The Interview

Once the research problem has been identified, the researcher has to decide what information is needed to address the problem and how best to obtain that information. Dexter (1970:11 cited in Merriam, 1998:72) says that interviewing is the preferred tactic of data collection when this method will obtain better data or more data or data at a lower cost than other tactics.

The interview is defined as “conversation with a purpose”. Specifically, the purpose is to gather information (Denzin, 1978; Spradley, 1979; Patton, 1980; De Santis, 1980; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Salkind, 1991; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992; Leedy, 1993; Berg, 1995; Merriam, 1998). This conversation can range from being highly structured to being unstructured (see Figure 3.).

Figure 3.2. Interview Structure Continuum

Source: Merriam, 1998:73; Berg, 1995: 31-32

A semi-structured interview format is used in this research study. This format enabled the researcher to move between less structured formats in order to provide the individual participants with the opportunity to define the world in unique ways. In contrast, highly structured formats in qualitative research may not allow access to the participants perspectives and understandings of the world (Merriam, 1998:74; Berg, 1995:33). The semi-structured interview format allows the researcher to follow-up something already asked. This probing in itself involves questions (Berg, 1995:38), which can take the form of asking for more detail, examples or for clarifications (Merriam, 1998:80; Berg, 1995: 33-35). Glesne and Peshkin (1992:85) point to more forms of probing, which range from silence, to sounds, to a single word or to a complete sentence.

The structured part of the interview schedule contains an open-ended exploratory question and sociodemographic questions like:

- level of formal education;
- years of teaching over age learners as part of a mainstream class;
- name of school; and
- approximate percentage of over age learners in the particular school.

An exploratory open question (Appendix 3.1) was used in this study to initiate the conversation. The question that was posed to the research respondents was:

Can you comment on your experiences of over age learners?

The following guidance was offered: *Create your own themes and respond in detail to each one as far as is possible.* This was done so that the teachers could meaningfully structure their responses out of their own experiences. Furthermore, the question was aimed to elicit cognitive and emotional responses about teaching to over age learners. Struass, Schatzman, Bucher and Sabshin (cited in Merriam, 1998:76) propose a list of four major categories of questions, which were used in the interviews with the respondents (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Four Types of Questions with Examples from the Over age learner Interview Schedule

Interview schedule.

Types of Question	Example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypothetical Question: ask what the interviewee might do or what it might be like in a particular situation; Usually begins with “What if” or “Suppose” • Responses are usually descriptions of the person’s actual experience 	<p>“Suppose it is my first day.... What would it be like?”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devil’s Advocate Question: challenges the interviewee to consider an opposing view. • Particularly valuable when the topic is controversial and you want people’s feelings and opinions. 	<p>“Some people would say.... What would you say to them?”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal Position Question: ask the interviewee to describe an ideal situation. • Elicits both information and opinion and can be used with virtually any phenomenon under study. 	<p>“What would you think the ideal...would be like?”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretative Question: advances tentative interpretation of what the interviewee has been saying and asks for a reaction. • Provides a check on what you think you are understanding or provides an opportunity for yet more information, opinions, and feelings to be revealed. 	<p>“ Would you say... is different from what you expected?”</p>

Source: Merriam, 1998: 76-77

This question format was followed up with what Berg (1995: 38-39) calls “throwaway” and “probing” questions. Throwaway questions may be essential demographic questions or general questions used to develop rapport between interviewer and subjects. Probing questions (Merriam, 1998: 80, Berg, 1995: 38) allow interviewers to draw out stories that are more complete from respondents. According to Merriam (1998: 80), using probes is the advantage of using a primary instrument of data collection (in this case the researcher). Probes are phrases like:

- “You mentioned.... Could you tell me more about that?”
- “What happened next?”
- “How come?”

The following type of question was avoided, as proposed by Merriam (1998: 79) and Berg (1995: 41-42), in the development of the interview schedule and in the probing of the interviewee:

- **Multiple Questions:** A series of single questions that does not allow the interviewee to answer each question in turn. Keeping questions brief and concise allows clear responses and more effective analysis of the responses.
- **Leading questions:** This type of question sets the interviewee up to accept the researcher’s point of view.
- **Yes-or-No questions:** Any question that can be answered by a simple yes or no.

All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed on to a disk from which master copies of each transcript can be printed. The act of transcription itself excludes many non-verbal meanings from the data, and involves

interpretation in terms of punctuation and emphasis. This practice ensures that everything said is preserved for analysis. After each interview the researcher immediately recorded his reflections in writing. These reflections might contain insights suggested by the interview, descriptive notes on the behaviour, verbal and non-verbal, of the interviewee, parenthetical thoughts of the researcher, and so on (Merriam, 1998: 88). The transcribed interviews are the basis of the data analysis. The researcher's field notes complement the transcribed interviews.

3.4.3.2 Literature review

As discussed in Chapter one, the literature review formed an important building block of this research study. The purpose of the literature review was to provide exploratory concepts that would help in the formulation of the research problem (Silverman, 1993). The literature review, therefore, created a framework within which the data could be gathered, processed and interpreted.

3.4.3.3 Documents

Important documents of the Department of Education, such as policy documents, information booklets, manuals, newsletters, circulars, minutes of meetings and the like were included here. These documents provided the researcher with a basic source of information about programme activities and processes, which gave the researcher further ideas about important questions to pursue through more direct observation and interviewing (Patton, 1986: 152).

3.4.3.4 Field notes

The gathering of data in the natural setting through systematic observation of the phenomenon is termed by Merriam “participatory observation” (Merriam, 1998: 87). The researcher followed Gravett’s (1993: 24) proposed structure of organising field notes into appropriate themes. Gravett (1993: 24) identifies three kinds of field notes and these are used in this study:

- *Observation notes*, which are essentially a description in words of the situation, people, actions and conversations. There is very little interpretation or none at all;
- *Theoretical notes* that purposefully interpret the observation notes;
- *Methodological notes*, which serve as an instruction on data analysis, methods, assumptions and uncertainties for the researcher.

According to Merriam (1998: 106) field notes usually include the following:

- Verbal descriptions of the setting, the people, and the activities;
- Direct quotations or at least the substance of what people said;
- Observer comments-identified by italics and the initials “OC”.

3.4.3.5 Observations

All research depends on observation. According to Merriam (1998: 94), observations as a research tool can be distinguished from interviews in two ways:

- First, observations take place in the natural field setting instead of the location designated for the purpose of the interview;

- Second, observational data represent first hand encounters with the phenomenon of interest rather than a second hand account of the world obtained in an interview.

Kidder (1981: 264 cited in Merriam, 1998: 95) says that observation is a research tool when:

- It serves a formulated research purpose;
- Is planned deliberately;
- Is recorded systematically; and
- Is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability.

In order to meet the demands of participatory observation, the researcher also took heed of the limitations of observations. Shipman (1988: 68) pointed out that the researcher's observations and perceptions are not passive.

The participant observer sees things first hand and uses his own knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed rather than relying upon once-removed accounts from interviews. The researcher in this study used his earlier informal observations of over age learners in the context of his previous and current working environments to help determine the current patterns of observation (Hawkins, 1982: 22; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993: 200). The observation checklist (see Appendix 4.3) was developed as a guideline (semi-structured) to the process of observation. Just as interviews (see Figure 3.2), observations also consists of a similar continuum of structure (Merriam, 1998: 97).

During the observation period, the researcher used the checklist as a point of reference to develop his observation notes and observer comments. In raising questions about what was observed or speculating as to what it all

mean, the researcher engaged in some preliminary data analysis (Merriam, 1998: 106). The written account of the observation constitutes the field notes, which are analogous to the interview transcript (Merriam, 1998: 104) (see Appendix 4.6).

3.4.4 Data analysis and data transformation

3.4.4.1 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense of data by consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what subjects have said and what the researcher has seen and read (Merriam, 1998:178). All the data gathered are organised chronologically to build the database and the data (themes) from various sources are analysed according to the content analysis procedure of open coding as described in Berg (1995:185) and Merriam (1998:178-79). In one sense all qualitative data analysis is content analysis in that the content of interviews and field notes is analysed. Content analysis was historically quantitative in nature (see Figure 4.2) though it can be used qualitatively (see Figure 4.3) for themes and recurring patterns of meaning (Merriam 1998:160). In its adoption for use in qualitative studies, “content analysis”, focuses on the communication of meaning and analysis which is inductive. Though selected themes initially guide the study, others are allowed to emerge through the study. The following guidelines were adhered to during open coding (Merriam, 1998:159, 170-187; Berg, 1995:179-190):

- Data from interviews and observations were divided into semantic units such as paragraphs, lines, or phrases.
- Each unit was subjected to a specific, consistent pre-determined set of questions (Berg, 1995: 175-178). Each unit was read and initially the question was asked: Is this relevant to the research question? If so,

how is it relevant? The second question asked of each semantic unit was: What themes were discussed? Merriam uses categories and themes interchangeably (Merriam, 1998:162, 179). This study opted to use the wording "themes" throughout.

- Initially the data were minutely analysed **within-case**, including many themes. These themes were then recorded **across-cases** and a list of themes was identified (Appendix 4.5). The themes which were identified were useful hints for categorising and may be defined as "a simple sentence, a string of words with a subject and a predicate" (Berg, 1995: 181).
- The coding was frequently interrupted to write reflection notes for later use (Merriam, 1998: 165). These reflective, marginal notes were used to describe and highlight the meaning of the particular unit of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 67,72).

The final analysis and presentation phase (Phase Four of the study) attempted to make sense of the data through three activities: *data reduction*, *data display* and *data interpretation* (Miles & Huberman, 1994:10). Data collection and analysis are simultaneous interactive activities and begin with the first interview, the first observation and the first document read (Merriam, 1998: 151).

In this research study, data analysis was contextualised within the framework of a case study that was an intensive, holistic description and an analysis of a single bounded unit. Conveying an understanding of the case was the key in analysing the data (Merriam, 1998: 193). Stake (1995: 78) explains:

Keeping in mind that it is the case we are trying to understand.... We are trying to understand behaviour, issues, and contexts with regard to our particular case.... We try to find the pattern or the

significance through direct interpretation, just asking ourselves 'What did it mean?' For more important episodes of text, we must take more time, looking them over again and again, reflecting, triangulating, being sceptical about first impressions and simple meanings.

During the more intensive phase of data analysis of a case (with-in case analysis, Merriam, 1998: 194), all information about the case is brought together in what Patton (1990: 386-387) calls the "case study record". This study consisted, for example, of interview transcripts, field notes, reports, records and so on that pulled together and organised the substantial case data into a comprehensive primary resource package. Each case was treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself. Once the analysis of each case was completed, cross-case analysis began (Merriam, 1998: 195). The researcher here attempted to build a general explanation that fitted each of the individual cases, even though the cases varied in their details (Yin, 1994: 112). The researcher attempts to see processes and outcomes that occur across many cases so as to try and understand how they were qualified by local conditions (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 172). However, Miles and Huberman (1994: 205-206) warn the researcher that cross-case analysis is tricky in that simply summarising themes across cases will tell the researcher little. The researcher in this study had to look carefully at the complex configuration of processes within each case and understand the local dynamics, before he was able to see patterning of themes that transcend particular cases. Because of this, the basic strategy of the themes was given code numbers (Appendix 4.5), according to which the units of data were analysed.

3.4.4.2 Data reduction

Data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organises data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn and verified (Ely, 1991: 140). At this point the researcher takes note of the fact that the data were still just raw data and have not been transformed into information. For this transformation to take place the raw data must be coded, weighed, collated, processed, analysed and synthesised to produce information. This meant that the data collected were not immediately available for analysis, but required some processing (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 9). The data from the various sources (interviews, observations) were accordingly analysed using the *content analysis* procedure of *open coding* as described in Berg (1995:185, 190). The central purpose of open coding is to open inquiry as widely as possible. Berg (1995:186) offers the following guideline of open coding to the researcher: "Believe everything and believe nothing".

Content analysis involves the interaction of two processes: the examination of basic content elements (content characteristics) and the application of explicit rules for identifying and recording these characteristics (Berg, 1995:183). The unit of data to be used for analysis in this study is the theme: in its simplest form, a theme is a simple sentence, a string of words with a subject and a predicate (Berg, 1995: 181). A unit of data is any meaningful (or potentially meaningful) segment of data. Merriam (1998:179-180) indicates that a unit of data must meet two criteria:

- The unit should reveal information relevant to the study.
- The unit should be the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself, that is, it must be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the

context in which the inquiry is being carried out. The theme fulfils both these criteria.

Data were grouped under tentative themes and the themes were revised when needed (Ely, 1991: 150). Verbatim narrative was selected so as to link the raw data to these themes (see Appendices 4.5 and 4.7).

To develop themes, the researcher applied a combination of processes proposed by Berg (1995: 186-187). The following basic guidelines were adhered to during open coding:

- **Subject the data to a specific and consistent set of questions.**

Data were divided into semantic units, such as paragraphs, lines and phrases (Berg, 1995: 178). Each unit was subjected to a specific, consistent pre-determined set of questions:

- Is this relevant to over age learners?
- What is its impact?
- Does it comply with the original objective of the study?
- What are the themes that are discussed here?

- **Analyse the data minutely**

The researcher used Berg's metaphor of a traditional funnel beginning with the wide opening of the funnel, that is including as many themes, incidents and interactions as possible. These were coded minutely during open coding. As the researcher approached the narrow opening of the funnel, more systematic coding took place, building the information into clustered themes that emerged from the numerous elements during the open coding phase (Berg, 1995: 181).

- **Frequently interrupt the coding to write a theoretical note.**

The researcher engaged in a continuous process of reflection and analysis. This included writing impressions and reflections into the margins of the pages (free association of ideas, remarking on lines of interest, jotting down questions about the text) as well as insights gained so as to refine the themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 9; Ely, 1991: 87).

- **Never assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable such as age, sex, social class, and so forth until the data shows it to be relevant.**

One of the traditional variables mentioned above has been taken to be analytically relevant to this study, namely age. If the data fail to support this assumption, the researcher must accept the result. As Berg (1995: 187) indicates, "even those mundane variables must earn their way into the grounded theory."

Due to the fact that the researcher used content analysis to analyse data, any weakness in locating unobtrusive messages relevant to the particular research questions was minimal or non-existent (Berg, 1995: 194).

3.4.4.3 Data consolidation

The units of data, which were coded into themes, were subsequently clustered to find the most relevant clustered themes for interpretation (Merriam, 1998: 178). The themes used were determined by the focus of the study. The researcher developed themes by applying the following processes proposed by Merriam (1998: 183-185):

- *Themes should reflect the purpose of the research.* Merriam (1998:83) says that themes reflect the answers to research question(s).
- *Themes should be exhaustive.* The researcher tried to fit all the data that were important or relevant to the study into a theme or sub-theme.
- *Themes should be mutually exclusive.* The researcher tried to fit a particular unit of data into only one theme and limited any overlapping into other themes.
- *Themes should be sensitising.* The naming of a theme should be as sensitive as possible to what is in the data. In this study the names of the themes originated from the researcher, the participants and the literature study.
- *Themes should be conceptually congruent.* For the researcher this was the most difficult criterion to apply. The researcher made use of a scheme to display the set of themes in the form of a chart so that themes and sub-themes would not be confused and data thus wrongly placed. In this way the researcher tried to make sure that the same level of abstraction would characterise all themes at the same level. The purpose statement was placed at the top of the display so that the researcher could immediately see whether the themes were possible answers to the research question. In seeking to elaborate, substantiate and interpret these aspects, the researcher moved to the final stages of data analysis, namely data display, and data interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 1994:10).

The themes clustered according to the identified patterns were recorded in the format of matrixes (as described in Miles & Huberman, 1994: 239-286). This was done in order to identify the main problem areas, and to facilitate the integration and discussion of the findings. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 contain the matrixes that were produced from the data. Thus in essence, the researcher scrutinised the data for general ideas and themes (Struass & Corbin, 1990: 61), which were then used to develop a set of

clustered themes. Using a coding scheme, all the responses were tabulated within the respective themes and recorded with representative quotes for each (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 133; Miles & Huberman, 1994: 249).

3.4.4.4 Data display

According to Miles and Huberman (1994:11) "a display is an organised, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action". Miles and Huberman emphasise that humans are not very powerful as processors of large amounts of information. The researcher therefore decided to assemble the organised information into an immediately accessible, compact form by using data descriptive display formats (matrixes) designed to answer the research questions (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3). The formation of data displays involved a process of systematically summarising the data (Miles & Huberman 1994:120).

The researcher used the ecosystemic model as proposed by Donald (Figure 1.1, Chapter one) as a guideline to cluster all the themes that emerged during the open coding process of data analysis. Examples of coded data were organised onto displays (see Figures 4.2 & 4.3) and from them conclusions of a descriptive nature were drawn and verified (Miles & Huberman, 1994:307). Designing these displays had clear data reduction implications and thus formed part of the analysing process (Miles & Huberman, 1994:11). As the coding of data (data reduction) led to new ideas on what should go on to the data displays and as the displays subsequently filled, preliminary conclusions were drawn (Miles & Huberman, 1994:12).

3.4.4.5 Data interpretation

Basic tactics used for drawing conclusions from the displays were: noting themes and patterns, and making contrasts and comparisons (Miles & Huberman, 1994:243). The conclusions went beyond descriptive summation and reached to explanation. The researcher checked the conclusions against the data whilst additionally clarifying the conceptual import of those conclusions and how they tied onto the theoretical framework derived from the literature review (Miles & Huberman, 1994:1, 69). Interpretations were made by looking for relationships among the themes and noting patterns to see "what goes with what" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 245). Recommendations were finally made from the data interpretations.

3.4.4.6 Data verification

The question, "Can the data be trusted?" is at the heart of data verification. According to Ely (1991:93-94), trustworthiness is more than a set of procedures; it is a belief system that shapes the procedures in process. Therefore, being trustworthy as a qualitative researcher means, in the least, that the processes of research are carried out fairly and ethically, and that the products represent as closely as possible the experiences of the people who were studied. Merriam (1998:198-212) identified three particular processes that help with the trustworthiness of research results: congruency, consistency and generalisability.

- **Congruency**

Congruency (internal validity) deals with how alike the research findings are with reality. Merriam suggests six strategies for enhancing the congruency of the research study (Merriam, 1998:204):

- **Triangulation - by using multiple data sources.** The concept of triangulation is based on the assumption that any bias inherent in the particular data sources, investigator and method will be neutralised when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigator and methods. This researcher triangulated by means of multiple data sources of information: the recorded and transcribed interviews, the classroom observation transcripts, literature and document overviews, and field notes. Checking data obtained by a variety of methods was therefore one way of contributing to the trustworthiness of the results of this study.
- **Member checks** consisted of taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results were plausible. The researcher therefore sent the participants a full transcript of the interviews to comment on. Their responses confirmed the accuracy of the work, which added to the validity of the transcriptions. The researcher further gave the data and emerging themes to a friend and colleague unacquainted with the field to evaluate critically and scrutinise the data and analysis procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1994:274). In addition, an independent researcher read a protocol of the data and indicated additional themes. These themes were then compared with those of the researcher.
- **Repeated observations of the same phenomenon** were accomplished through the use of *rich descriptions*, enabling a chain of evidence to be established. (This was possible through the researcher being part of the POLP research project via CIPP over a period of two years.) This enabled the researcher to ask questions that followed on the decisions observed earlier, which benefited this study enormously.
- **Peer examination** consisted of asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerged.

- **Participatory modes of research** involved participants in all phases of research from conceptualising the study to writing up the findings.
- **Researcher's biases** involved clarifying the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study.
- **Consistency**

Consistency (also called reliability) means that if different researchers were to carry out the investigation again, using the same methods; the researcher would wish outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results makes sense in that they are consistent and dependable. The question then is not whether the same findings will be reach again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 1998:206). Checking data obtained by a variety of methods was therefore one way of contributing to the consistency of the results of this study. The researcher followed Merriam's (1998:206-207) suggestion of using three ways of optimising consistency in the results of the data:

- *The investigator's position* with regard to his assumptions and theory behind the study formed the basis for selecting informants and a description of them and the social context from which data were collected.
- *Triangulation* consisted of checking data obtained by a variety of methods and was therefore one way of contributing to the congruency and consistency of the results of this study.
- *Audit trail*: In order for an audit to take place, the researcher must first describe in detail how data were collected, how themes were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study. Dey (1993:251) remarks: "if we cannot expect others to replicate our account, the best we can do is explain how we arrived at our results". The researcher therefore logged and described the research procedures clearly enough

so that others could understand them, reconstruct them and subject them to scrutiny.

- **Generalisability**

Essentially, generalisability (also called external validity) refers to the applicability of the research to other contexts and settings (Merriam, 1998:207). In qualitative research, a single case is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, and not to find out what is generally true of the many. Merriam (1998:210) asserts that the general lies in the particular; that is, what is learnt in a particular situation can be transferred or generalised to similar situations subsequently encountered. Full and thorough knowledge of the particular allows one to see similarities in new and foreign contexts (Merriam, 1998:211). Therefore Merriam (1998 211) suggest three ways to enhance the generalisability of the study:

- **Rich, detailed description**, by providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation.
- **Typicality**, by describing how typical the individual is compared with others in the same class so that users can make comparisons with their own situation. Therefore, in this study the characteristics of the sample of persons and settings were fully described in order to permit adequate comparisons with other samples. The over age learner was representative of the population of over age learners in former DET settings. The educators were representative of the population of the educators teaching over age learners in former DET settings.

- **Multisite designs** consists of using several cases, sites, and situations, especially those that maximise diversity in the phenomenon of interest. This can be achieved through purposeful or random sampling.

3.5 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

According to Merriam (1998:200), the primary rationale of qualitative research is *understanding* peoples' construction of reality, in other words, how they understand the world. Therefore, the criteria for trusting the research (internal validity) should be the observer's critical presence in the context of occurrence of phenomena, observation, hypothesis-testing (by confrontation and disconfirmation), triangulation of participants' perceptions, interpretations and so on (Merriam, 1998:200). This makes the role of the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research that more important, because interpretations of reality are accessed directly through his or her observations and interviews. The researcher is thus in a sense "closer" to reality than if a data collection instrument had been interjected between the researcher and the participants (Merriam, 1998:203).

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical considerations suggested by Merriam (1998:212-218) were taken into account in attempting to protect the rights of the respondents in this research study:

- The right to privacy of the respondents. The researcher avoided asking unnecessary questions.
- The right to remain anonymous. The researcher identified respondents by providing pseudonyms.

- The right to confidentiality. The respondents had every right to insist that data collected from them be treated with confidentiality.
- The right to informed consent. The participants were informed what the study involved and freely gave their consent to participate.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The research methodology has been discussed in this chapter. The qualitative research design and case study research format allowed the researcher to study the over age learner phenomenon and to identify themes as they arose. The research methods have been discussed. It was shown how the trustworthiness of the study was verified according the criteria of congruency, consistency and generalisability. Notwithstanding the fact that studying one case does not permit broad generalisations to all possible cases, the researcher found that logical generalisations could be made from the weight of evidence produced in studying the single, critical case (Patton, 1986: 103). The data were interpreted and will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DISPLAY AND DISCUSSION OF DATA AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The discussion that follows will present the main findings of this study and relate these findings to the literature study and the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two. The integration of the data with the theory will enable authentication and verification of the findings of this research. **All the data were gathered through the lens of the educators' perspectives, the observations of the researcher, and a particular theoretical point of departure.**

4.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Mfuleni Primary is situated in an impoverished community. The Provincial Human Development Index (HDI) for the research group under study (Mfuleni area) is 0.449. (Western Cape. Dept. Social Services Sub-Directorate: Social Research and Western Cape Population Unit, 1999: 15, 26). This indicator reflects a poor community indeed. An HDI below 0.5 indicates a low level of development whereas an HDI above 0.5 indicates a higher level of development.

The school has the minimum basic infrastructure of water, electricity, flush toilets, telephones, and brick as well as asbestos buildings, which are minimally equipped with the necessary tables and chairs, blackboards and pin-up boards at the back of the classroom. The school is very cramped, having no sport fields or adequate playing space. There is only one quad, which is used for assemblies. The school has no audio-visual equipment like a television, overhead projector, or radio. It has one photocopy machine.

It is the only primary school serving the area and has a learner population for the year 2000 of just over 1300 with 31 serving educators including the principal. Six educators were interviewed. They have a diverse range of teaching experience and qualifications (see Table 4.1). The school has over 200 over age learners from grade 1

to grade 7, ranging in age from 9-17 years old. The specific group under study was that of the foundation phase learners ranging in age from 9-15 years old (see Appendix 4.2). In 1999 a snap survey by the education area offices in the Western Cape on learners with special education needs reported almost 500 cases of special educational need at Mfuleni Primary. See Table 4.2 for a display of the various kinds of special educational need at Mfuleni primary. It is interesting to note that by the end of the year 2000 the learner population has dropped to 1179 learners. It is obvious that many learners left the educational system during the course of the year.

Table 4.1 PROFILE OF RESEARCH RESPONDENTS

Interview #	Date	Designation	Grade	Respondent #	Qualification	Teaching Experience at school
Pilot 1	16. 11. 1999	Injongo Primary Open Learning Class Teacher	1-3	6	B.Ed (Junior Primary)	7 yrs
2	19. 09. 2000	Mfuleni Primary Deputy Principal Foundation Phase	1	1	Primary Teacher Certificate + Senior Diploma In Education (Home Economics)	21yrs
3	3.10.2000	Mfuleni Primary Teacher	3	2	Primary Teacher Diploma + Further Diploma In Education	9yrs
4	5. 10. 2000	Mfuleni Primary Principal	***	4	B.A + University Education Diploma	4yrs
5	11. 10. 2000	Mfuleni Primary Deputy Principal Senior Phase	6	5	Senior Primary Teacher Diploma	10yrs
6	17. 10. 2000	Mfuleni Primary Teacher	2	3	Pre-primary Teacher Diploma + Diploma in Technical Education + B. Tech.	13yrs

Table 4.2 1999 SNAP SURVEY ON LSEN AT MFULENI PRIMARY IN THE WESTERN CAPE

LSEN	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Behaviour	2	3	1	14	12	6	6	44
Chronically ill	*	*	*	1	*	*	*	1
Epilepsy	*	*	3	*	*	*	1	4
Language	1	7	7	19	59	46	15	154
Maths	2	5	5	10	42	17	23	104
Physical	3	1	9	3	*	4	*	20
Scholastically backward	*	*	8	13	5	1	2	29
School readiness	18	5	*	14	8	7	*	52
Vision	1	*	1	14	17	34	22	89
Total	27	21	34	88	143	115	69	497

Source: Local education area offices in the Western Cape.

4.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.3.1 Introduction

Findings are presented in terms of the five clustered themes that were identified in the data of this study. The number of themes identified for each clustered theme and pattern is also included (see Table 4.3). This quantitative information gives an indication of which themes appear to be playing the most significant role in terms of influencing the educational needs of over age learners. The themes, clustered according to the identified patterns, were recorded in the format of matrices (Tables 4.3 & 4.4) as described in Miles & Hubermann (1994: 239-286). This was done in order to identify the main problem areas and facilitate the integration and discussion of the findings. A quantitative and qualitative matrix display follows with a brief explanation of each clustered theme.

Table 4.3 FREQUENCY OF THEMES PER PATTERN AND CLUSTERED THEME

Data: Interviews/ observations		PATTERNS			Total
CLUSTERED THEMES		Learners	Educators	Parents	
	THEMES				
	Intra-personal factors	28	14	4	46
	Classroom factors	20	39	8	67
	School factors	12	47	4	63
	Inter-personal factors	19	4	8	31
	Community factors	12	1	4	17
	Total	91	105	28	224
THE WHOLE SOCIAL SYSTEM					

Table 4.4 DESCRIPTIVE DISPLAY AND FREQUENCY OF THEMES PER CLUSTERED THEME

Data: Interviews/observations		PATTERNS		
		Learners	Educators	Parents
		THEMES		
CLUSTERED THEMES	Intra-personal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical (5) • Social-emotional (13) • cognitive (10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes (14) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes (4)
	Classroom factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic academic skills (8) • Discipline (2) • Non-age appropriate classroom (4) • Learner-to-learner support (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping practices (11) • Discipline (2) • Learner support (9) • Assessment (6) • Placement (11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of involvement (8)
	School factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome school environment (6) • Mobile learner (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome school environment (9) • Discipline (5) • Placement issues (33) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic academic skills (2) • Documentation (1) • Lack of involvement (1)
	Inter-personal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety (13) • Relationships (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punitive • Relationships (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety (4) • Lack of involvement (4)
	Community factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late starters (2) • Mobile learner (6) • Safety (2) • Distance (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration (1) • Poverty (2) • Documentation (1)
	THE WHOLE SOCIAL SYSTEM			

The factors impacting on the educational needs of over age learners reflect the theoretical approach of this study. Different levels of the system (including the individual) influence and are influenced by one another.

- **Intra-personal factors** of over age learners impacting on their educational needs

This clustered theme refers to the individual and his or her inner world, which includes emotions, behaviour, needs and beliefs of the over age learner.

- **Inter-personal factors** of learners, educators and parents impacting on the educational needs of over age learners

This clustered theme refers to the interpersonal relationships among individuals between and within systems.

- **School factors** affecting the educational needs of over age learners.

This clustered theme refers not only to school policy and the school environment affecting the educational needs of over age learners but also to the **classroom (as a sub-system within the school system)**. The classroom-clustered theme refers to teaching and learning needs in the classroom.

- **Community factors** affecting the educational needs of over age learners.

This clustered theme refers to factors beyond the control of the school like unemployment and gangsterism.

4.3.2 Thematic research findings

The data from this research appear to support findings in the literature that over age learners are found mostly in rural areas and urban slums. Furthermore, learners in this study display nomadic qualities in that they go where their parents go, usually in

search of work opportunities (Ranaweera, 1989:8; Little, 1995:5). Four integrated themes appear to emerge from across the clustered themes:

- A sense of displacement for the over age learner
- An unwelcome school environment for the over age learner
- Basic skills of the learner, teacher and parent
- Provision of support for the learner

These integrated themes are supported with relevant quotes from the raw data and will now be discussed.

4.3.2.1 A sense of displacement

Over age learners experience a sense of displacement: they feel that they do not fit in with their grade peers. On an **intra-personal level**, the socio-emotional issues of displacement come very strongly to the fore in the data. This sense of being displaced Donald (1993:152) describes as being “out of age”.

Some of them are worried of their age. They say “My age is of Joe Slovo High”. So they become ashamed. They start not to wear the uniform of this school, they start to wear the uniform of Joe Slovo, pretending to be a member of that school. I don’t confront them about wearing that uniform; I can see their pain. (Respondent 6, lines 101 - 105)

[To be an over age learner] It wouldn’t be a good experience to me because I’m aware that I’m older and I’ll be treated in a young manner (Respondent 5, lines 104-105)

Displacement seems to be a central theme as far as over age learners are concerned. At a **community level** this is reflected in the high rate of mobility where parents moved from rural to urban areas looking for work. Learners tend to change schools often as well as displaying a high degree of truancy and absenteeism. The non-age appropriate classroom placement of learners is another variation of displacement.

Even at the school level, learners are being promoted and then demoted back to a lower grade. This form of being displaced is very humiliating for the learners and causes them to feel unwelcome at school.

Furthermore, it's also so unfortunate, that is, of the unacceptable migration from rural areas to the townships, particularly of learners, that is this year he's in Cape Town, the next year he's in Transkei, just moving up and down, up and down. Why I say unfortunate; it's caused by factors which is beyond the control of the education system, like the socio-economic factors, the working opportunities of parents, and so on. We cannot run away, we've got to accept those kids. (Respondent 4, lines 248-254)

I think he failed std 8 twice, okay. This HOD, what she did was - she said this boy must go to the next standard the following year. Okay, that was fine. And this thing was discovered round about March. To our understanding he is suppose to be repeating the previous standard, okay. Now we had to confront the HOD, now the learner had to be taken out of the class to a lower class, You see the damage in morale that the very same teacher, who thought she was helping was doing to this learner. Okay ... the learner moved down to std 8 but he did not stay long and dropped out. (Respondent 4, lines 315-324)

One of the consequences of being displaced for over age learners was that they had difficulties in producing appropriate documentation for placement at schools.

Now here at Mfuleni, when learners come here from [the] Eastern Cape, Transkei, different rural areas ... immediately when that learner arrives here ... that learner has no report ... that put[s] us in a predicament because this child must be placed somewhere and this child is already over age at a certain grade. (Respondent 5, lines 26-30)

They [over age learners] come to your school, you ask for a birth certificate. Okay, maybe if you are fortunate enough you'll get a birth certificate. (Respondent 4, lines 256-258)

Another factor is that of distance. Learners have to walk long distances to school and find themselves displaced as far as family, friends and familiar surroundings are concerned. They have difficulty in dealing with their new surroundings.

...its so hard for them [over age learners] to fit into the schooling system, that is, the culture of the school. (Respondent 4, lines 279-280)

One day I took a ride with my car then I find out, hey, this school is right at the far end of the corner, the rest of the location is far ... far... far... far. They have to travel by foot. I think a second school is highly needed in this location. And this distance is a real problem for the entire school (Respondent 3, lines 94-98)

4.3.2.2 Unwelcome school environment

Many of the themes relate to an unwelcome school environment. Placements of over age learners are a major issue for schools. Schools experience real difficulty in deciding what to do with these learners and where to place them appropriately. It is especially difficult for schools to decide whether a learner who has failed should be retained or promoted. At a **community level**, the expectations of educators and parents mismatch the needs of over age learners.

Now some parents becomes very frustrated saying this learner is suppose to be in standard seven (grade 9) and he is still in primary school. I think these parents becomes desperate, because [they] can see that their neighbours' child is progressing. (Respondent 6, lines 88-91).

... in primary school we expect lots from [over age learners] because at their age in class we expect them to understand. But the feedback wouldn't be what is expected of their age. (Respondent 5, lines 99-101)

In fact, by this promotion I feel that there is an element of disservice that we are doing to this kids because there is the age factor that say they should move to the next grade. But due to the fact that they are too much old for their

previous grade and then we take them to the next grade - okay, that's fine. But personally I really feel they've done a little bit of disserve to those kids. They've got a kid, if maybe - for instance in grade 1 a kid has got to be taken from point 1 to point 6, even that old boy that is an over age learner, he's got to go through the same process and one has got to gauge his performance. That is, promotion to me should be by performance and not by the age factor (Respondent 4, lines 99-108)

On the **inter-personal level**, safety issues appear to play a prominent role. An unwelcome school environment is created in that over age learners tend to be chronically in trouble with authority figures as far as bullying younger learners and truancy is concerned. Being bullied is traumatising many of the younger learners. Many over age learners are subjected to peer pressure in dealing with the taunting of younger learners themselves. The safety of the younger learners is also at risk as they are influenced inappropriately by the life experiences of older learners.

... there are a lot of cases here at school from the younger learners saying that they are being bullied by the older ones.... (Respondent 1, lines 222-224)

At a **school level**, almost all the older learners are being marginalised deliberately by educators. The punitive nature of the relationship between learners and educators is marked by the quiet resistance that educators display that indicates that they do not want these learners in their classes.

... they feel this kid should not be accommodated. I usually negotiate with the teachers to accommodate them, although you'll find a quiet resistance. (Laughing heartily) (Respondent 4, lines 378-380)

They do not accept the older ones but as the time goes on they will just cope with one another.... (Respondent 3, lines 157-159)

On the **intra-personal level**, this of kind subtle rejection impacts quite severely on the socio-emotional issues relating to over age learners.

Some of them are worried of their age. They say "My age is of Joe Slovo High". So they become ashamed. They start not to wear the uniform of this school, they start to wear the uniform of Joe Slovo, pretending to be a member of that school. I don't confront them about wearing that uniform; I can see their pain. (Respondent 6, lines 101 - 105)

[To be an over age learner] It wouldn't be a good experience to me because I'm aware that I'm older and I'll be treated in a young manner (Respondent 5, lines 104-105)

Physically over age learners feel out of place in the classroom, once again making it an unwelcome environment for the over age learner.

(Long silence) In the class, they can feel they don't fit in. You see, if maybe the one child is old in the class he doesn't have someone to communicate at their level; they reaching puberty and are in grade 3, the other one are then too young, you see, and they feel lonely. (Respondent 2, line 132-136)

It appears that the disciplinary issues generally emanate from the over age learner not having a sense of belonging to a community of learners. On a wider societal level, many of the special educational need categories are clearly identified and even to some degree recognisable to educators. However, being over age appears to be the stepchild of the special educational need categories. This could be one of the reasons why educators do not know how to respond to the needs of over age learners.

What comes to mind is an issue of discipline, classroom discipline; it's so hard for them to fit into the schooling system.... (Respondent 4, lines 278-279)

To be honest with you, it's not encouraging, its negative because some teachers, once a learner is to old they feel being threatened. Now not in a manner where the learner knows too much but as a person, that is, if maybe I want to implement such behaviour patterns, this kid might rebel againgst me and, by rebelling in front of the class, I mean that boy or girl would be

degrading you to other learners and you might even lose some respect. (Respondent 4, lines 368-374).

At a classroom level, although late school starters appear not to be a significant group they are still in a very precarious position in that often they are placed in a grade one class, although they are between ten and fifteen years old. Many of them are working learners with very different life experiences than the regular childlike Grade one learner. This is surely an unwelcome school environment for these late school starters.

...in the past we had some instances whereby you had a learner of 10 years of age starting schooling, that is, being placed in Grade 1. (Respondent 4, lines 29-31)

...kids are kept at home to look after cattle... (Respondent 5, line 23)

4.3.2.3 Basic academic skills

Virtually all the over age learners have difficulties in their school work. Most often these difficulties are related to literacy issues in the languages and to numeracy. Because the education system operates in a grade defined system, in which learners move in a step-like manner up the ladder as they progress to more advanced levels of literacy and numeracy, over age learners find themselves having to start at the bottom three rungs of the ladder. This is also the place (foundation phase) where *basic academic skills* are being developed to enable the learner to benefit from the advanced work higher up the ladder.

Some over age learners struggle to write. (Class observation 2, line 77)

But numeracy and literacy you know, there is that unbalanced work, but you'll find that he can read, but he can't write - he omit some vowels and some other things, you know, and then you've got to go back to grade one work. And that

is the thing that waste our time, going back to grade one work. (Respondent 1, lines 244-248)

Even the educators' lack basic skills that pertain to practising their job-related skills. One of the skills required is to be able to work with small or large groups of learners. Another skill is to be able to assess learners and teach according to the needs identified in the assessment. Educators appear to struggle with these two basic but very essential skills.

- **Learner groupings**

If you mix them, like a 13 year old, 9 and 10 years old, there won't be a problem, there will be a competition between them. Then the older learner will see from the 9 and 10 year old learner that they are coping. Then he or she will tell you, "Let me do like those", so the child is building his self-esteem. If you separate them, there will be no competition, there will be no sharing of ideas because they have already detected they are old. (Respondent 3, lines 139-146)

Groupings of learners are mixed-age. (Class observation 1, line 10)

- **Assessment**

You'll find now that parents send their kids to school despite being fully aware that my kid has got this problem etc. And the parent, he wouldn't tell you that my kid has got this learning problems yourself. And the main problem is that even with teachers who have not been fully trained to identify those problems at an early stage. (Respondent 4, lines 294-298)

...Sometimes teachers are aware the child has a problem but they do not know how to diagnose the problem, so they tend to ignore the child saying "I don't know what to do with the child". (Respondent 6, lines 34-36)

Finally, it also appears that parents lack basic skills as far as parenting is concerned. Many parents display ignorance of providing structure, routine or any form of boundary limiting that provides the learner with a safe environment at home.

...the parents are drunk, the parents are not looking after them [their children], they've no time for the child.... (Respondent 1, lines 273-274)

...and running away from this child abuse from the "location". Maybe the parents are not there for the whole day and the child will stay there all by him or herself. (Respondent 1, lines 312-314)

4.3.2.4 Provision of support

At the **school level**, there is a strong resonance from educators that over age learners do not belong with the young learners. There is also a strong call for overage learners to be separated from the younger learners. It is felt that overage learners would be better supported as a group with very specific needs, than being with the younger learners.

I think they [over age learners] should have a special class, maybe a remedial class. You see, so that they can work in their pace, you see and at their, level maybe. (Respondent 2, lines 66-68)

So when they are in one class they don't feel stigmatized by age. Their age ranges are between 10 – 15 years old in these class, which basically is a special class because most of these learners are having problems to learning. In this special over age class learners have the opportunity to accelerate their learning progress so that they can join their age-grade peers. (Respondent 6, lines: 53-61)

I think a special school[would be the ideal situation], because they would be treated at the same level with other also over age. (Respondent 5, lines 98-99)

At a **classroom level** it appears that many learners support one other with school work. This learner-to-learner support takes place mostly by default.

My belief is that if the ones [over age learners] that are sort of copying - but at the same time must not copy all the time - they will learn from the brighter ones [usually the younger learners]. (Respondent 1, lines 128-130)

But there was one parent who said, "Well teacher, I can't read or write but there is one at home, the sister, who can give assistance". (Respondent 1, line 107-109)

Sometimes educators would deliberately design the provision of learner-to-learner support.

Then, as time goes by, she copes, so I put her next to one who is much faster, who understands better than her so she can see and cope. (Respondent 3, lines 41-43)

The scenario of learners supporting educators as educator assistants is common.

I don't want to say they are teacher aids (Laughing heartily). They helping others in the group while you [educator] are moving with other groups. They are helpful in that sense. (Respondent 2, lines 78-80)

But some of them, the older ones in some cases, they are of good help in class.... (Respondent 1, lines 122-123)

Finally, provision of educational support from parents seems to be non-existent. Parents advance various reasons for their lack of involvement. Generally this lack pertains to work-related issues. At other times they acknowledge their low educational attainment as a barrier to providing support to their children at school.

Parents doesn't know anything about school, so she relies on the teacher.... "But my problem is that I cannot read and write". This is why she does not know what is really, really happening at school. (Respondent 3, lines 66-72)

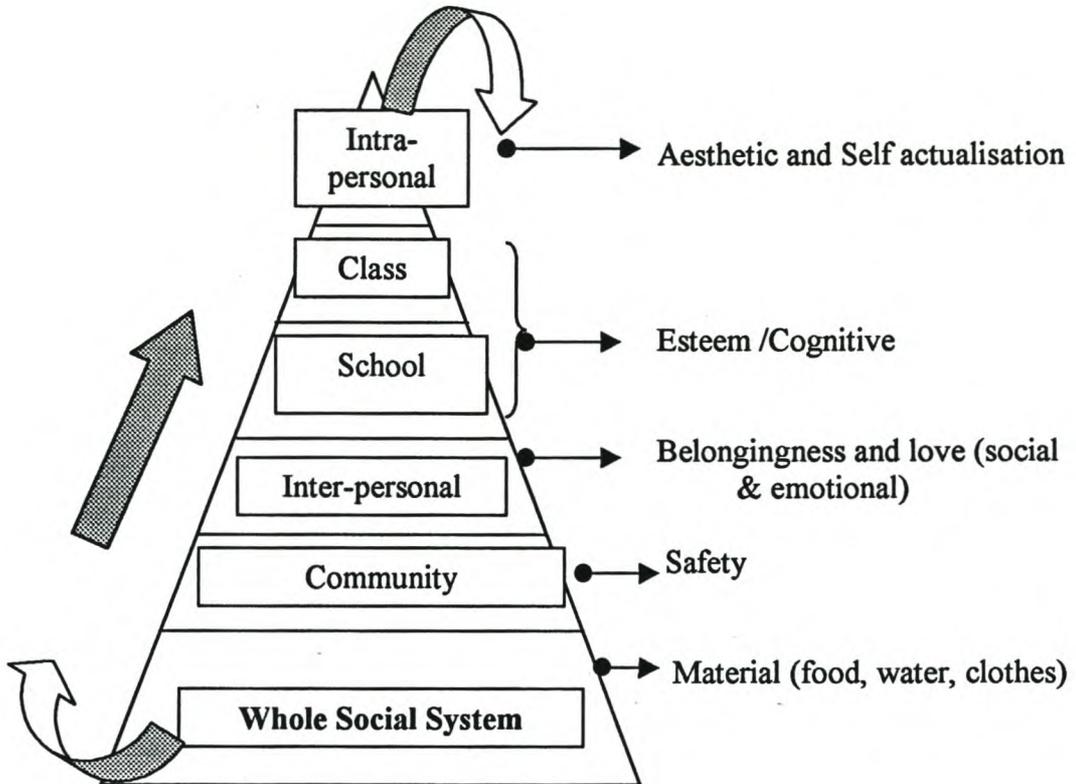
And you get reports from the parents saying that, "No we are working too late, we leave home early in the morning..." (Respondent 1, lines 62-64)

I can say totally there is no support [from parents]. They [the learners] only open their books when they are in the classroom, that's all, and it ends there. (Respondent 1, lines 287-288)

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.4.1 Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the discussion will incorporate the four integrated themes. If Table 4.3 is superimposed on Maslow's needs hierarchy triangle, it is interesting to note that the clustered themes mirror the needs of over age learners from an eco-systemic perspective (see Figure 4.1). The old paradigm viewed the needs of over age learners from a medical-deficit perspective, in other words, in terms of what is wrong with the learners. In contrast the eco-systemic perspective asks how the needs of the learners can be supported within their context. In fact, the new paradigm reflects eco-systemic barriers that impact on the needs of over age learners. This new perspective tells us that it does not matter if the over age learner has an intra-personal need, it is how the system provides for that need that might lead that learner to achieve his or her potential (self-actualisation).

Figure 4.1 NEW PARADIGM: An Ecosystemic Perspective

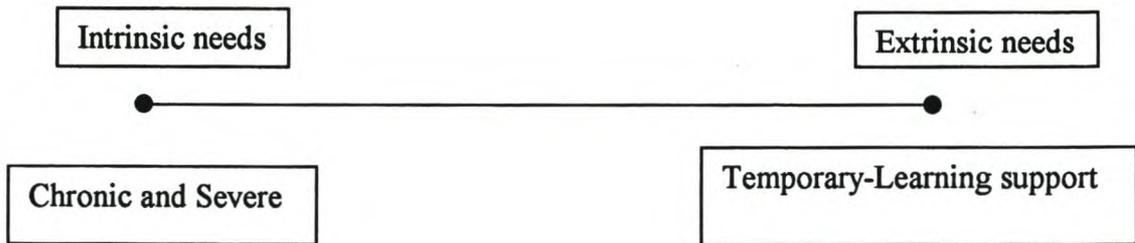
The arrows show the circular nature of interaction.

4.4.2 Educational support dimensions

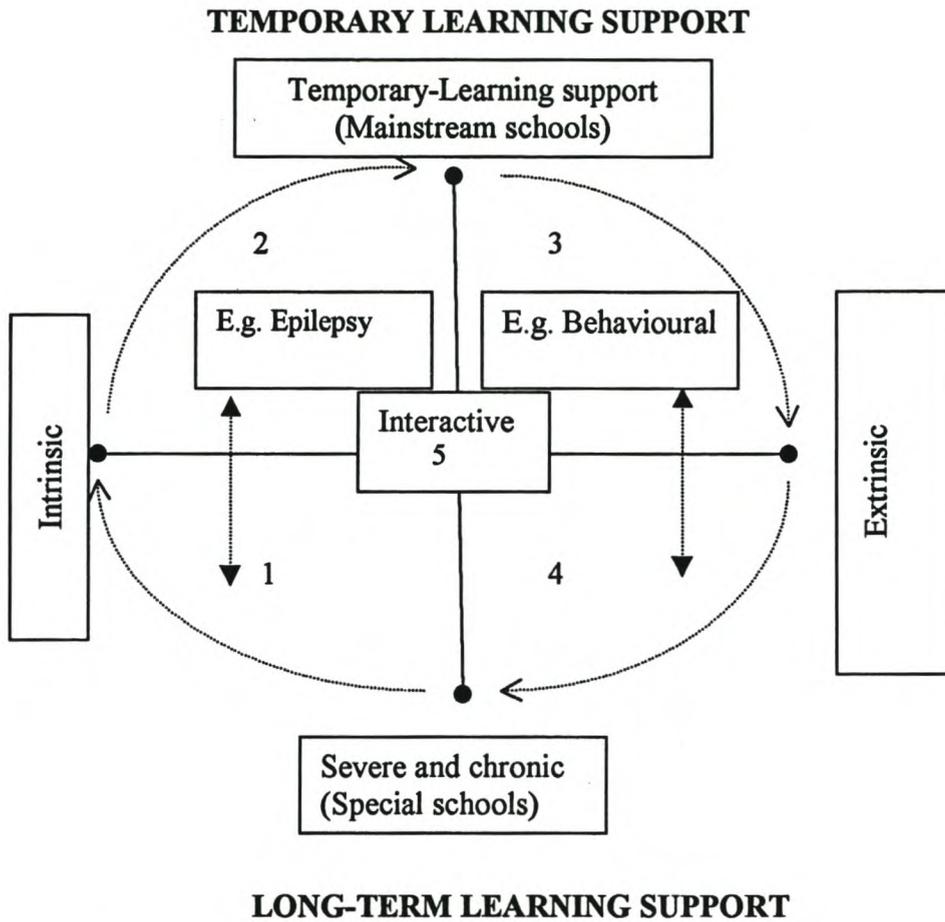
As discussed earlier, the findings should be viewed through the lens of disadvantaged contexts as mediated through the interviews of the educators and the observations by the researcher. From the analysis of the data it appears that the following aspects are important as far as provision of support to over age learners are concerned. According to the National Education Policy Investigation document (NEPI, 1992: 28-30), the special educational needs of learners are conceptualised on a continuum from intrinsic to extrinsic deficits. Parallel to and superimposed on this continuum are the different degrees of chronic and severe disabilities relating to the intrinsic dimension

of the continuum, whereas the extrinsic end of the continuum reflects the temporary-learning support nature of the learning difficulty (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 TRADITIONAL LINEAR CONCEPTUALISATION OF SUPPORT



This linear conceptualisation does not articulate very well the needs of over age learners; a more circular conceptualisation is called for. For example, it appears that a significant part of the learning difficulties and needs of over age learners are indeed of an extrinsic nature (system related) but these needs are often of a severe and long-term nature and not always of a temporary-learning support nature (see Figure 4.3). Figure 4.3 attempts to portray a circular perspective on the above-mentioned linear continua. Quadrants one and two (Figure 4.3) represent a temporary learning support dimension. According to Reber (1995: 11), support in the temporary learning support dimension is generally highly sensitive and extremely responsive to the needs of learners. Quadrants three and four (figure 4.3) represent a long-term learning support dimension in which, according to Reber (1995: 125), support is generally drawn out and extends over a long period of time.

Figure 4.3 CIRCULAR CONCEPTUALISATION OF SUPPORT

There are five quadrants representing possible provision of support in Figure 4.3. They are:

1. Intrinsic: long-term learning support dimension (pervasive support)
2. Intrinsic: temporary learning support dimension (limited support)
3. Extrinsic: temporary learning support dimension (intermittent support)
4. Extrinsic: long-term learning support dimension (extensive support)
5. Interactive learning support dimension

These quadrant dimensions will now be discussed with selected examples from the data. The quadrants reflect the intensity, duration, nature and form of support given to learners.

4.4.2.1 Intrinsic dimensions

- **Intrinsic: long-term learning support**

This support focuses on the traditional, severe and chronic physical, neurological and medical disabilities like quadriplegics, learners living with HIV/Aids and so on. The data had only one reference that could be categorised under this quadrant. This reference related to some learners being delayed due to illness and medical conditions.

....most of the parents would say she [the learner] was delayed because all the time the child was sick, for instance, the child had severe seizures. (Respondent 6, lines 17-20)

This quadrant therefore appears not to be significant as far as the needs of over age learners are concerned. If one looks at the cognitive continuum (Figure 2.4) as discussed in Chapter Two, it is interesting to note that this quadrant is also the one that mainstream educators use to provide support by default. This support is often based on the notion of *age-ability*, which suggests that the learner has the innate ability in terms of his stage of development to make a success of the school work presented to him. The data suggest that this is not the case, since too many of the older learners struggle with the basics of school work. The data further suggest that the other end of the cognitive continuum, namely mediation, appears to be neglected by educators. In essence, this means didactical neglect by educators. The following quote could be the reason why educators didactically neglect their learners:

Maybe when he's in grade 3 he'll catch up, he will fill in that gap, given the age ability.... Maybe his brain has matured for the grade.... My belief is that he can use his age ability. (Respondent 1, lines 194-197)

- **Intrinsic: temporary learning support**

This support focuses on a category of learners that has medical, neurological or physical problems but, with appropriate supportive devices and/or medical care, can be successfully included in the mainstream. Such learners include those living with epilepsy and learners needing wheelchairs, hearing aids, spectacles and so on. This quadrant can also be extended to include attitudes as a learning barrier. These attitudes are mainly found in the educator fraternity. Educators tend to adopt a form of quiet resistance to accommodating the needs of over age learners. These attitudes toward over age learners could be the defining at risk factor within the teaching situation. Inclusion-by-default becomes a prominent feature of the over age learner profile in that their needs are covertly undermined.

A brief clarification of the concept *attitude* will be given below, in keeping with the limits/needs of this study. Baron and Byrne (1991: 138) describe attitudes as fulfilling the following role in an individual's life:

...attitudes are internal representations of various aspects of the social or physical world - representations containing affective reactions to the attitude object and a wide range of cognitions about it (for example, thoughts, beliefs, judgements). Attitudes reflect past experience, shape ongoing behaviour, and serve essential functions for those who hold them.

The *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (Reber, 1995: 67) describes an *attitude* as follows:

An attitude is viewed as something that relates to an internal affective orientation that would explain the actions of a person. The contemporary usage entails several components:

- Cognitive - consciously held beliefs or opinions
- Affective - emotional tone or feelings
- Evaluative - positive or negative (judgement)
- Conative - disposition for action (behavioural)

According to Baron and Byrne (1991: 141), there is a relationship between attitude and behaviour, which is largely determined by the **cognitive** and **affective** components. According to them there is not always congruence between the emotional and the cognitive components of a person's attitude towards a certain object, person, idea, or event. These inconsistencies may then influence the person's **behaviour**, depending on the circumstances.

There is one dominant pattern emerging from the data relating to the identified theme attitudes. This is the **cognitive-evaluative** component of attitudes as far as educators are concerned. Educators in primary school have certain beliefs about the practice of teaching to older learners. This belief is mostly negative in orientation. They take for granted that over age learners know everything or at least should be able to cope with the work.

Generally, they [educators] took it that the child knew everything, should cope with the activities of this class, as of being older than the other [learners] in the class. So that child must know everything. (Respondent 2, lines 89-91)

The mere fact that the learners are old puts them at risk for teaching and learning in the classroom on account of the educators' belief that this learner being much older than the others in the class, should therefore be cognitively matured enough to deal with the work in the class.

...so that I could see what they know first. Because they are old I think they have something in them, before I can put in something or correct what has been given. (Respondent 2, lines 100-102)

This latter quote also reflects the educator-centredness of teaching. It reflects a position that knowledge resides in the educator. These educators are clearly stuck in an old paradigm and have not made the move to being learner-centred, a position where the learner participates in meaning making. The teaching methodology employed by educators towards over age learners who are included in the mainstream is influenced to a large degree by their out-of-date attitudes to didactics.

4.4.2.2 Extrinsic dimensions

- **Extrinsic: long-term learning support**

This support focuses on the category of learners (youth-at-risk) that have severe and chronic behavioural difficulties and that are found in institutions previously called reformatories, schools of industry and places of safety but which are now called youth care centres. This category can also be extended to severe and chronic conditions related to learning difficulties in reading, writing and numeracy that result from a lack of mediation. The data indicates that this is the dominant quadrant. Many of the issues relating to over age learners who are having difficulty in mastering the educational basics arise from a lack of mediation from parents at home and educators at school. This mediation in terms of learning support appears to come from their grade peers.

- **Extrinsic: temporary learning support**

This support focuses on the traditionally marginalised and disadvantaged learners that are from disadvantaged contexts, for example, street children. Traditionally, the educational needs of over age learners would have been framed in this quadrant but, as the data suggest, the chronic lack of mediation, both at home and at school suggest that their learning needs are not temporary in nature.

4.4.2.3 Interactive learning support dimension

This support focuses on any combination of the above four support dimensions, which can also include emotional, behavioural, mild mental disability, learning disability, speech, and language problems. It is evident that many factors influenced the educational needs of over age learners. The findings will now be further discussed using the identified integrated themes.

4.4.3 A typical over age learner profile

The socio-emotional needs of over age learners are clearly not accommodated at school. Physically, these learners are generally at a pubescent stage of development

and therefore much more mature than their grade peers. Most of them find themselves in non-age appropriate classrooms while at the same time struggling to cope academically, for example, with even the basic academic skills of reading and numeracy (Donald, 1993: 141; POLP, November 1998:11). Cognitively, over age learners appear to have the underlying potential but, due to a severe lack of mediation, do not appear to benefit from the formal school curriculum (Craig, 2000:14). These learners tend to be mobile: changing schools frequently, frequently being absent from school, displaying nomadic tendencies by travelling with their parents wherever the latter can find work, and dropping in and out of school in a continuous cycle (Nelson, Simoni, & Adelman, 1996: 365).

These learners tend to disregard safety boundaries with regard to themselves and others (Van der Merwe, 1996: 283). In this regard bullying of other learners is a prominent feature. Negative peer pressure is another form of bullying. Other factors that impact negatively on the well-being of over age learners is that they come from poorly resourced contexts, for example, some of them come hungry to school (Robertson, 1996: 21; Western Cape. Dept. of Social Services. Sub-Directorate: Social Research and Western Cape Population Unit, 1999).

Overall, these learners find themselves in an unwelcome school environment. They feel that they do not fit into the school environment. Some of the over age learners are late school starters coming from rural areas and have difficulty adjusting to the school routine.

A typical over age learner profile according to the data is the following:

- A cyclical drop-in and drop-out pattern (truancy)
- Nomadic and mobile (displacement)
- Bullying , peer pressure
- Pubescent (Development)
- Underdeveloped academic skills

A fair number of these learners move from rural schools to urban schools without any official documentation. These learners can be described as *ghost learners* since they are mobile and attend school between urban and rural areas. In this particular case study, many of the learners move from the Eastern Cape to the Western Cape, with the result that they could be registered in both provinces as learners

4.4.4 Unwelcome school environment

On an intra-personal level the attitudes of parents and educators and the younger classroom peers towards over age learners present a learning barrier as far as the age of the latter is concerned. The assumption that parents and educators have towards the notion of age-ability prevents them from seeing these learners as learners with special education needs. Age has become a barrier to learning due to the belief that educators hold, which appears to inform their educational practices. The following quote from one of the respondents is illustrative of this belief:

Sometimes you promote him. Maybe when he's in grade 3 he'll catch-up, he'll fill in that gap, given the age ability you know. Maybe his brain has matured for the grade...My belief is that he can use his age ability. (Respondent 1, lines 194-197).

There is still a deep-seated focus on the learner's **problem**, rather than looking at the **needs** the learner is experiencing. The ecosystemic perspective allows the educator to identify needs not learners (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:36). The comments of the respondents generally indicate that the learner's needs are marginalised. Educators do not know what to do about the learners' needs. A radical shift is needed from focussing on the problem to focussing on the needs of the learner, which will assist educators in developing appropriate educational responses.

One of the issues over which over age learners are marginalised relates to socio-emotional issues. Over age learners really feel like unwelcome guests which result in a huge loss of self-esteem. Like unwelcome guests, they are treated like outsiders. Yet they, most of all, need a caring community that emphasises respect, responsibility, and relationships (Allen & Splittgerber, 1994: 216).

On an interpersonal level, over age learners are treated in a pseudo-adult manner in terms of educator relationships but presented with child-like activities in the classroom. The punitive nature of the relationship between learners and educators is marked by the quiet resistance that educators' display in not wanting these learners in their classes. Their beliefs about over age learners play a significant role in the way in which they accommodate the needs of over age learners; they believe that over age learners can benefit from education from the mere fact that they are older than their grade peers. Bullying appears to be a common characteristic of over age learner-to-learner interaction and this includes peer pressure. Parents appears to leave these learners to their own devices but these learners do need the structure which gives them a sense of safety as well as a caring attitude from their parents.

4.4.5 Displacement of learners

- **Basic skills**

The majority of over age learners are essentially *dis-placed* in terms of their academic needs. It is interesting to note that the teaching strategies in the classroom do not make provision for the fact that many of the parents and learners have insufficient reading and writing skills. Furthermore, the way in which educators assess the work of learners is limited to marking of books and giving marks for tasks completed. It is necessary for educators to become proficient in, for example, a teach-assess-teach model of assessment. This model is especially critical in that classroom assessment and reporting practice is a key element in an *outcomes based approach* to the curriculum. The learning and teaching approaches should be appropriate to the outcomes (objectives requiring active learning on the part of the learner and not taught in a didactic manner only) and the different types of learners e.g. learners returning after absence, informal settlement learners, rural learners and so on. Progression should occur on a *learning continuum* at the cognitive, socio-emotional and psychomotor levels. Progression should take place in such a way that learning develops from the *concrete stage* of thinking, through to a *semi-concrete stage* and then to an *abstract stage*. In effect this means achieving the basic outcomes first before moving on to more difficult work; from a childlike, immature attitudinal

disposition (immediate satisfaction, emotional reaction) to a mature attitudinal disposition (can await opportunities, rational behaviour) and so on. In other words, concepts should be firmly *mediated* in relation to the cognitive stage and outcomes achieved before moving on to more advanced work.

Often learners' lack of academic achievement has a direct impact on their socio-emotional success and involvement in school activities. This is especially true for over age learners. The data suggest that they do struggle with basic academic skills (Donald, 1993: 147, 52; Jones & Maasdorp, 1994: 1).

- **Placement of learners**

The very term *displacement* once again captures the placement of over age learners in school. All the respondents are in agreement that these learners cannot be taught together with very young learners. All the respondents indicate a separation from the younger learners to "special" classes or "special" schools. The respondents are of the opinion that over age learners will be better supported if they are grouped together. This appears to make sense since the physical and socio-emotional development of most of these learners' does not match that of the younger learners. However, social inclusion appears not to benefit these learners since academically they are too far behind to deal with the school work of their age peers. **Locational inclusion** appears to be a better option as argued by many of the respondents in that the over age learners are placed in a class of their own.

The majority of over age learners find themselves in a non-age-appropriate classroom, except for those promoted beyond their academic competency to be with their age peers (social inclusion). This placement represents a humiliating experience for learners with learning difficulties or behavioural problems, (Vitaro, Brendgen & Trembley, 1999: 219-220; Kaufman & Bradby, 1992). The whole issue of appropriate placement is evident within this educational context, e.g. should the learner be retained, promoted or skip a grade. Placement of over age learners appears to be a serious dilemma for educators (Sakowicz, 1996: 7). They have to decide whether an over age learner needs to be promoted or retained. Another serious problem is the

difficulty in assessing the scholastic needs of these over age learners in order to appropriately place them or to provide appropriately for their teaching and learning needs.

- **Mobility of learners**

As discussed earlier, these learners also tend to move wherever their parents are going, often without any documentation for school entry. This high degree of mobility puts over age learners at risk from reaching their educational goals of being literate and numerate. Schools will have to look at creative ways of accommodating over age learners so that they can benefit from schooling. The following quote leads the way in creative solutions for the needs of over age learners.

Beside academic teaching, I think they have to be taught some skills like woodwork, gardening, metalwork.... (Respondent 4, lines 288-289)

One of the prominent features at the community level is the mobility of parents. This mobility impacts negatively on over age learners who often have to go wherever their parents go. Parents often go after work and it does not matter where they find work. Many parents work long hours, leaving early in the morning and coming home late, making it difficult for them to see their children off to school or assist them in the evenings because other chores take over. Furthermore, many of the parents lack basic skills in reading and writing which prevents them from assisting their children academically (Everatt & Jennings, 1995b: 10-11).

Some of the over age learners have been child workers, looking after cattle in rural areas, and come to urban areas, starting school for the first time far beyond the school going age. If parents lack the financial resources to sustain their families and have to go where they can find those resources (South Africa. Ministry of the Office of the President, 1995), it is then a very short step to displacement of the family in terms of discontinued parenting (Everatt and Jennings, 1995b: 10-11). It would appear that the issue of poverty in the rural areas contributes significantly to the cyclical migratory pattern of families between rural and urban areas. This creates an unstable learning-

mediation environment for many learners but especially for over age learners who do not have time on their side (Craig, 2000: 15).

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a clear description of the research findings portraying the factors impacting on the educational needs of over age learner. The following factors emerged:

- The *educational environment* is not very sympathetic towards the needs of over age learners. This is largely due to the fact that educators do not know what to do with these older learners. These learners find themselves marginalised as far as the *provision of educational support* is concerned. It would appear that educators try to promote them out of the school system as fast as possible.
- The *mobility* of over age learners impacts negatively on their school learning. This is especially relevant within the broader context where parents display a high degree of mobility in going after work opportunities.
- These learners tend to be *educationally displaced*. It appears that the educational displacement of learners is influenced by the beliefs of educators in terms of age-ability.
- Over age learners display an under-development in school related basic academic skills.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study noted the lack of research regarding over age learners and specifically their educational needs. The purpose of this study therefore was to make a meaningful contribution to understanding the needs of over age learners and specifically their educational needs. A literature review and a qualitative investigation accomplished this.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Chapter 1 provided an orientation to this study. Being *over age-for-grade* has clearly become a learning barrier for thousands of learners. These learners are not just one homogeneous group but can be categorised into sub-groups, for example:

- Repeaters
- Late school starters
- Not-at-school learners
- Drop-ins and drop-outs
- Social promotions

These are learners who are a minimum of two years older than the grade they are in. They are at risk of becoming drop-outs, being further retained or promoted without educational support. It is against this background that the aim and research question were formulated:

The aim of this study was to provide a clearer understanding of the needs of over age learners that can contribute to addressing their poor educational survival in the

foundation phase. The research question that derived from this aim, was formulated as follows:

What are the educational needs of over age learners in the foundation phase?

The theoretical point of departure was to look at the needs of over age learners through the lens of an ecosystemic perspective, which has as its main concern how individuals and groups at different levels of the social context are linked in dynamic, interdependent and interacting relationships.

The research design and methods used in this study were discussed and the clarification of concepts was provided.

Chapter 2 reviewed related literature on drop-outs and repeaters as there is a lack of research on being over age-for-grade. An at risk indicator framework was used to structure the literature review. The following at risk indicators were found to be useful:

- Poverty
- Mobility of learners
- Social promotion
- Grade retention
- Drop-outs
- Teaching

The literature indicates two possible needs of over age learners: basic academic skills in reading, and developmental needs. According to the literature, mixed-age realities characterise the experiences of over age learners and therefore provide the basis for an inclusive educational experience for over age learners.

Chapter 3 provided the theoretical basis for the qualitative, exploratory and descriptive nature of the study. The qualitative design was suitable for the research since it allowed for rich and detailed descriptions of the needs of over age learners.

Prior to the case study, a review of suitable literature was undertaken to provide the theoretical framework and clarity for the research question and interpretation of the research findings. A qualitative single case study was used as the research format. In order to select the case, purposeful sampling was used.

The following methods of data collection were used:

- In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with six educators. All the interviews, except the pilot interview, started with an introductory exploratory open question, namely:

Can you comment on your experiences with over age learners?

- Observations in the classroom and playground were made over a period of one month. More than eight hours of observations - consisting of nine classroom observation sessions and two playground observation sessions.

The data from the various sources were analysed using the content analysis procedure of open coding. To develop themes the researcher divided the data into semantic units, which were subjected to a pre-determined set of questions. Verbatim narrative was selected so as to link the raw data to the development of themes and subsequently these themes were further developed into clustered themes. These clustered themes were then developed into integrated themes for interpretation.

Since some of the themes that emerged seemed to overlap; consideration of the overlaps and interrelationships between and within themes provided the basis for the integrated analysis of themes. The following integrated themes were developed: *provision of*

support, unwelcome school environment, a sense of displacement and basic academic skills.

This chapter further indicated how the research design was structured to verify reliability and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Chapter 4 provided the research findings and the discussion thereof, by describing the factors impacting on the educational needs of over age learners. The following factors emerged:

- It appears that socio-emotional factors play a significant role in the life of over age learners. This is further compounded by the negative attitude displayed by educators.
- The beliefs held by educators, parents and learners about *age-ability* directly impact on their educational responses to over age learners. These responses were problem focussed whereas a needs orientated approach would be more helpful.
- Over age learners generally have a backlog in their basic literacy skills. They struggle with reading and numeracy activities.
- Over age learners are extremely mobile, playing truant from school, changing schools very often, and moving between rural and urban settings frequently. It appears that a school environment unwelcome to the needs of over age learners is a contributory factor to the mobility of over age learners. This unwelcome school environment could explain the sense of displacement being experienced by these learners.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were drawn from the research findings:

- It is very clear that schools do not know what to do about the educational needs of over age learners. There is a tendency to promote or even fast track these learners out of the school system.

- There is limited support from the educational authorities to help schools deal with this issue mainly because it appears that suitable solutions have not yet been developed in response to the needs of over age learners.
- The basic teaching skills of educators in the areas of group dynamics and assessment are poorly developed or non-existent and cannot meet the needs of learners in general, let alone those of over age learners in particular.
- The migration patterns of over age learners are not factored into any appropriate educational responses that are specifically related to the weak basic academic skills of over age learners.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this study and its findings, the following recommendations are made:

5.4.1 Recommendations in terms of training needs of educators

In-service training should focus on:

- The developmental needs of learners in general, but specifically on those of over age learners. Specifically, the socio-emotional and cognitive needs of over age learners need to be understood.
- Basic teaching skills around assessment and group dynamics. Specifically the early identification of learning needs could go a long way to preventing a learner from becoming over age-for-grade.
- Class management skills in terms of basic ground rules and classroom organisation.
- Teaching to mixed age, multi-ability classes.

Pre-service training need to focus on:

- The interface between school and ABET curriculum issues as well as teaching and learning issues related to older learners.
- Developing skills in teaching to mixed age, multi-ability classes.
- Developing skills in teaching to older learners.
- Developing skills in teaching, in an *open learning* environment, to older learners in school.
- Developing skills in teaching, in a grade defined environment, to learners over age-for-grade.

5.4.2 Recommendation in terms of placement needs in the foundation phase

- It is in the interest of over age learners to be separated from the younger learners and to be locationally included in the mainstream, in a special school or a youth basic education and training programme (YBET), which could be at a centre or a school. These YBET programmes should include training designed to provide appropriate skills, which support the lifestyles of learners, for example, cattle herding, agronomic skills in crop cultivation or crop diseases, sewing, handicrafts, welding, blacksmithing and so on. These skills can be supported by functional literacy lessons for the learners. Alternatively mixed age teaching could benefit over age learners *if* the above mentioned recommendations are in place.

5.4.3 Recommendation in terms of intersectoral collaboration

- It is necessary for an inter-departmental approach to support the vocational skills of learners. For example, the Department of Agriculture would be able to assist in the provision of the agronomic skills.

5.4.4 Recommendations in terms of learning and teaching needs in the foundation phase

- Because these learners display very weak basic academic skills in reading, writing and numeracy at an older age, it appears that direct explicit teaching is needed to help over age learners to catch up with their age peers.
- Their curriculum however needs to be different from the regular curriculum of their age-peers which is subject focussed. It is recommended that their curriculum consist of ABET related literacy skills in reading, writing and numeracy with low-level vocational skills, since these learners rarely complete a school exit programme successfully.
- **A modular curriculum response** could be the best kind of support for these learners. This modular curriculum response could be phase-linked and should not be grade-linked. Core competencies in reading, writing, numeracy and life skills should form the foundation of an appropriate educational response and must be aligned with the National Qualifications Framework as well as with the (Adult) Basic Education and Training programme. The portability of these modular curriculum responses will go a long way to addressing the needs of over age learners and their parents as far as basic academic skills in reading, writing and numeracy is concerned.
- Modular units of work would be very useful in that many of the learners are highly mobile. The focus of support needs to be in the classroom since very limited educational support is given at home. Another way of providing support is to create

partnerships with the community to develop low-level vocational skill programmes that will directly benefit schools. For example, schools are becoming Section 21 institutions, which essentially means that they will be semi-privatised. This will enable the schools to employ the skills needed for school maintenance, like gardening, welding, fixing windows, carpentry, and so on. Creating vocational programmes around these needs will provide some of the solutions asked for by respondents, namely, the development of vocational skills for over age learners.

5.4.5 Recommendation in terms of monitoring school related mobility patterns of learners

Learners' mobility patterns, related to school, need to be properly documented. This includes: transfers, absenteeism, sickness, drop-outs, repeaters, promotions, and skipping of grades. This data could serve as an index of school related learner mobility and could point to particular educational needs of learners.

5.4.5.1 Recommendation in terms of the foundation phase movement of over age learners

- An ungraded foundation phase should be introduced along the lines of ABET levels.

5.4.7 Recommendations in terms of over age prevention guidelines

- A pre-school adjustment period in Grade one, before introducing Grade one work, would help over age learners adjust to the school environment.
- Advocacy campaigns to motivate parents to send their children to school at age seven.
- Reviewing of grade retention and promotion practices, especially since these practices appear to be without support.

- A “back to basics” in the foundation phase. Learners need direct explicit teaching that includes, for example, practices of drilling, rote learning and so on. This is crucial for the foundation phase *only*.

5.4.8 Recommendations in terms of research needs

- Investigate the viability of mixed age, multi-ability classroom teaching in South Africa.
- Not-at-school learners who are still within the boundaries of compulsory school-going age were not factored into this study.
- Investigate the capacity of the current schools of skill to accommodate the needs of over age learners.
- An investigation of the needs of high school over age learners over the age of 15 years was not part of this study.
- The development of a type of ABET-vocational related curriculum for over age learners that could be modular and linked to the NQF.
- Finally, it must be stressed that learners and parents were not directly involved in the gathering of data by the researcher. Data was gathered through the perspectives of educators and the observations of the researcher. Therefore it is crucial that learner and parent perspectives be taken into account in future research on the needs of over age learners.

5.5 A FINAL WORD

It appears that over age learners need an educational space of their own within an inclusive education environment. It would further appear that over age learners need to

be acknowledged as being a specific category of learners with learning barriers, otherwise their needs will continue to be marginalised by the educational fraternity. I started this study by quoting Robert Cole (1973: 116) and would like to end this study with the following oriental story cited in Peseschkian (1986 :165) called **Give me your hand:**

A man had sunk into a swamp in northern Persia (modern day Iran). Only his head was still sticking out of the morass. At the top of his lungs, he screamed for help. Soon there gathered a crowd of people at the site of the accident. One decided to try to help the poor man. "Give me your hand," he cried over to him. "I will pull you out of the swamp." But the man stuck in the mud just kept crying for help and did nothing to enable the man to help him. "Give me your hand," the man demanded several times. But the answer was always just a wretched cry for help. Then someone else stepped up and said, "Don't you see that he will never give you his hand? You must give him your hand. Then you can save him."

This story illustrates the precarious situation that over age learners find themselves in. They need the educational community to reach out and recognise their needs. Only then can they be helped.

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APPENDICES

CHAPTER 1

- 1.1. Distribution of pupils according to age and standard–1992. (Ex-DET)
- 1.2. Learners according to age and gender for 1995:all provinces
- 1.3. Learners according to age and gender for WCED 1995
- 1.4. WCED over age learners statistics (March 1996)
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CHAPTER 3

- 3.1. Semi-structured interview schedule

CHAPTER 4

- 4.1. Interview transcripts of research respondents 1-6
- 4.2. Over age learner statistics at Mfuleni primary – Grade 1 - 5
- 4.3. Observation checklist
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- 4.6. Observation transcripts and summary of observations
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APPENDIX 1.1

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING (MONOGRAPH 1994)													
DISTRIBUTION OF PUPILS ACCORDING TO AGE AND STANDARD -1992													
AGE	GR 1	GR 2	GR 3	GR 4	GR 5	GR 6	GR 7	GR 8	GR 9	GR 10	GR 11	GR 12	TOTAL
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
6	175492	9534											185026
7	104042	88332	9358										201732
8	49858	80213	67928	10162									208161
9	22677	52210	66389	56737	12117								210130
10	10841	30794	51361	54403	44441	11359							192380
11	4532	14581	33273	42326	49547	37987	10134						192324
12	2440	8175	21135	32749	44166	42257	32551	8851					181078
13	1164	3754	11182	19943	35214	38119	37257	27420	7025				172903
14	456	1606	5555	10941	24065	31336	34261	38377	20883	5423			163942
15	192	615	2613	5618	14928	21687	28584	39434	30569	15281	4421		152995
16	91	256	1032	2283	7517	12910	19908	35484	34091	24193	12441	2789	133960
17	34	92	339	856	3118	5948	11189	25814	30231	26920	20469	8950	110412
18	9	47	139	314	1066	2239	4949	15363	22853	24441	23405	15587	84289
19	5	14	41	86	338	728	1872	7685	14366	18548	21883	18723	57118
20	1	4	15	31	109	271	610	3154	7006	11391	17042	17484	37866
21	1		9	12	34	55	190	1158	3234	6397	11573	15203	36808
22+	2	2	5	6	22	37	115	552	1717	4467	10165	19718	2524323
TOTAL	371843	290229	270374	236467	236682	204933	181620	230292	171975	137061	121399	98454	4845447
3jr	42445	59940	75338	72839	86411	75211	67417	89210	79407	65244	60663	52405	826530
%	11%	21%	28%	31%	37%	37%	37%	39%	46%	48%	50%	53%	17%
4jr	19768	29146	42065	40090	51197	43875	38833	53726	49176	40803	38780	34921	482380
%	5.32%	10.04%	15.56%	16.95%	21.63%	21.41%	21.38%	26.43%	28.59%	29.77%	31.94%	35.47%	19.11%

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING (MONOGRAPH 1994)

APPENDIX 1.2

LEARNERS ACCORDING TO AGE AND GENDER FOR 1995															
<i>(Include Public, special and Independent (Private) schools)</i>															
ALL PROVINCES															
Distribution of male and female learners according to age and grade															
AGE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION														GRAND
	GR 1	GR 2	GR 3	GR 4	GR 5	GR 6	GR 7	Special	Total	GR 8	GR 9	GR 10	GR 11	GR 12	TOTAL
									Gr1-7 Spec						
6	825177	53126	1133	261	35	16	28	3788	883564						883564
7	466199	453121	53198	1809	62	7	15	934	975345						975345
8	200801	353619	371525	54941	2339	113	47	1970	985355						985355
9	91629	187825	310630	335426	57939	3354	265	2866	989934						989934
10	48816	101108	195046	278550	299946	56637	3932	3718	987753	78				0	987831
11	19962	46640	106606	173420	248012	262723	54201	4524	918348	4176	288	5	25	1	922843
12	11850	25797	64683	114347	179943	220105	242271	3972	862968	56385	4856	334	27	9	924579
13	5875	12368	34900	66925	126287	157931	201537	3683	609486	213458	49667	4179	356	36	877182
14	2908	6038	17461	36675	76288	109958	144208	2792	396328	202308	179961	40301	3570	580	823048
15	1644	2775	8547	19950	46375	72347	107934	2024	261596	167405	170329	151272	34960	3198	788760
16	735	1083	3590	8187	23530	39956	68151	1550	146782	128343	139525	142473	126716	30168	714007
17	344	425	1388	3359	10663	19606	38331	1043	75159	87915	107534	116811	118827	109768	616014
18	151	256	649	1536	4894	9307	20454	630	37877	58121	79587	96844	102257	100839	475525
19	70	111	342	605	1847	3886	9384	387	16632	32666	52522	70442	83749	84635	340646
20	31	46	107	262	807	1540	3980	135	6908	17145	30821	47974	65145	73739	241732
21	19	19	51	80	303	569	1653	68	2762	8197	16437	29744	47302	64851	169293
22	62	55	144	157	301	440	1453	26	2638	6502	13443	28129	50612	91901	193225
TOTAL	1676273	1244412	1172260	1096490	1079551	958495	*897844	34110	8159435	982699	844970	728508	633546	559725	11908883
Average	184096	196721	240728	252083	291275	257609	251340	0	0	338889	300344	273133	246808	230491	3063517
2yrs %	11%	16%	21%	23%	27%	27%	28%	0%	0%	34%	36%	37%	39%	41%	26%

SOURCE: DOE: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (EMIS) JUNE, 1995

APPENDIX 1.3

LEARNERS ACCORDING TO AGE AND GENDER FOR WCED 1995 (Include Public, special and Independent (Private) schools)																	
AGE	PROVINCE: Western Cape																
	Distribution of male and female learners according to age and grade																
	LEVEL OF EDUCATION																
	GR 1	GR 2	GR 3	GR 4	GR 5	GR 6	GR 7	Special	Total	GR 8	GR 9	GR 10	GR 11	GR 12	TOTAL	TOTAL	
																gr 8 - gr 12	
6	70213	6001						70	76284							76284	
7	22923	42709	5053	1				242	70928							70928	
8	6093	24245	37183	4770	4			485	72780							72780	
9	2200	8996	23261	35574	4611	5		876	75523							75523	
10	917	3295	10166	20932	33424	4915	2	1256	74907							74907	
11	314	1261	4361	10674	19248	31392	5381	1555	74186	8					8	74194	
12	180	653	1836	5211	10446	17860	29599	1600	67385	5338	8	1			5347	72732	
13	78	255	825	2476	5804	9652	16382	1626	37098	27885	4700	4			32589	69687	
14	46	112	354	1092	2999	5593	9443	1236	20875	15875	24042	4090	2		44009	64884	
15	50	72	157	447	1434	2907	5347	871	11285	9918	15019	20326	3658	1	48922	60207	
16	28	46	92	213	578	1279	2747	681	5664	5716	9417	12096	16778	3059	47066	52730	
17	28	33	49	104	269	528	1198	545	2754	2853	5504	7445	9636	14804	40242	42996	
18	16	31	23	42	121	234	480	307	1254	1643	2667	4170	5298	7376	21154	22408	
19	13	15	4	20	33	72	172	158	487	623	1142	2105	2976	3796	10644	11131	
20	2	3		5	9	15	56	64	154	258	596	1197	1723	2118	5892	6046	
21	1	2		1	2	25	20	33	84	77	265	670	1103	1631	3746	3830	
22	0	0	0	1	4	9	9	0	23	48	271	786	1322	3496	5923	5946	
TOTAL	103102	87729	83364	81563	78986	74486	70836	11605	591671	70242	63631	52890	42498	36281	265542	857213	
Overage	3873	5778	7701	9612	11253	10662	10029			11218	10445	8928	7126	7245		103370	
2yrs %	4%	7%	9%	12%	14%	14%	14%	0%	0%	16%	16%	17%	17%	20%	0%	12%	

SOURCE: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (EMIS) WCED, MARCH 1996

APPENDIX 1.4

WCED OVERAGE LEARNERS STATISTICS (March 1996)																
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Special	Other	Total
3	38															38
4	431															431
5	7959	12597														20556
6	1935	60396	7515											6		69852
7	89	20561	44223	5439										92		70404
8	4	5325	22759	38241	4813									334		71476
9	1	1655	7225	23493	35454	4713								603		73144
10		737	2700	9215	21832	34923	4747							998		75152
11		277	1049	3545	10435	19649	32634	5047						1206		73842
12		101	433	1468	4942	9839	18472	30462	5250					1348		72315
13		39	172	604	2205	5337	9760	17321	28724	4822				1356		70440
14		20	61	221	932	2487	5182	8782	18052	24768	3997			914		65416
15		2	26	102	368	1097	2585	4871	10350	15619	20602	3632		544		59798
16		2	6	24	124	406	1041	2226	5812	9103	13092	17399	3055	272		52562
17		1	1	6	26	123	377	920	2778	4888	7797	10012	14741	126	2	41798
18				3	4	25	136	340	1372	2335	4217	5359	8066	44		21901
19					2	10	43	130	706	1246	2441	3053	4173	10		11814
20					2	8	13	36	373	700	1438	1969	2536	3		7078
21						1	3	15	171	350	888	1179	1742			4349
22				2			1	2	56	157	557	763	1176			2714
23+								3	35	128	491	933	2632		5	4227
TOTAL	10457	1E+05	86170	82363	81139	78618	74994	70155	73679	64216	55520	44299	38121	7856	7	869307
Overage	94	8159	11673	5975	8605	9494	9381	8543	11303	9804	10032	13256	12259			118578
2yrs %	1%	8%	14%	7%	11%	12%	13%	12%	15%	15%	18%	30%	32%	0%	0%	14%

SOURCE: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (EMIS) WCED, MARCH 1999

APPENDIX 1.5

WCED MALE OVERAGE LEARNERS 1997																	
AGE	PP	GR R	GR 1	GR 2	GR 3	GR 4	GR 5	GR 6	GR 7	GR 8	GR 9	GR 10	GR 11	GR 12	SPECI	OTHE	TOTAL
3	30	2	2	8	15										1	111	169
4	121	144	9														274
5	439	4410	3306	8													8163
6	75	929	29023	1963	11										11		32012
7	7	44	13414	20239	1412	2		2							68		35188
8		2	2984	13809	16809	1066	4	28							233		34935
9			819	4100	13385	14884	1021	27							406	4	34646
10		1	363	1408	5041	12893	13431	1069	8					1	585	2	34802
11			121	562	1979	6484	11971	13264	1043	10					778	10	36222
12			45	249	871	3102	6137	10739	12920	1176	22			2	827	3	36093
13			23	110	392	1414	3315	5534	10117	12269	1209	25		3	785	8	35204
14			10	33	179	602	1430	2996	5237	9851	11148	1159	16	3	619		33285
15			2	8	43	229	663	1539	2760	5666	8214	9430	1002	9	319		29889
16				3	19	73	309	669	1322	3145	4725	6868	7696	798	147	2	25776
17				1	4	25	71	216	600	1490	2528	3872	5028	6321	79		20235
18				3	1	10	16	77	258	608	990	2090	2542	4194	23	1	10813
19					1	3	8	24	82	239	492	986	1347	1998	14	1	5195
20								4	28	106	296	598	811	1026			2869
21					1			1	9	44	114	292	434	536			1431
22								2		18	69	178	300	391			958
23									1	7	26	81	161	354			630
24										2	9	25	76	180			292
25						20	24	14			1	4	5	48	133		249
25+	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	0	50	2	2	10	33	100			249
TOT	672	5532	50124	42504	40163	40807	38452	36205	34435	34634	29848	25619	19494	16049	4895	149	419579
Overage	7	3	1383	2377	3490	5478	5888	5542	5110	5662	4530	4265	3210	2720			49665
2yrs %	1%	0%	3%	6%	9%	13%	15%	15%	15%	16%	15%	17%	16%	17%	0%	0%	12%
TOT	1379	11083	93195	83507	79297	79538	75735	73001	68980	70320	62560	55276	42697	37333	7626	169	841696

SOURCE: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (EMIS) WCED, MARCH 1999

APPENDIX 1.6

WCED FEMALE OVERAGE LEARNERS 1997																	
AGE	PP	GR R	GR 1	GR 2	GR 3	GR 4	GR 5	GR 6	GR 7	GR 8	GR 9	GR 10	GR 11	GR 12	SPECIAL	OTHER	TOTAL
3	32	2															34
4	137	159															296
5	469	4334															4803
6	69	950	28771	2362	7										1		32160
7		87	11079	21811	1801	6									53		34837
8		18	2205	12059	19244	1430	11								136		35103
9		1	661	3171	11970	17255	1488	22						2	229	3	34802
10			241	989	3917	11831	16646	1452	14						304	4	35398
11			90	363	1299	4822	10963	16588	1615	21				2	422	3	36188
12			12	164	582	2023	4576	10622	15813	1640	76			3	447	4	35962
13			8	49	213	835	2111	4495	9715	15130	1919	55		4	439	3	34976
14			6	22	60	346	924	2122	4136	9758	14011	1799	75	6	317	1	33583
15				5	25	125	374	961	2007	4729	8353	12119	1633	12	151		30494
16			1	4	11	36	132	379	803	2464	4231	7210	9907	1500	91		26769
17				1	2	16	38	103	289	1064	2209	3831	5324	8437	82	2	21398
18					1	5	16	36	104	486	943	2128	2684	4430	43		10876
19						1	2	12	25	213	481	1155	1521	2092	12		5514
20							2	2	21	96	258	619	851	1303	2		3154
21								1	2	54	125	328	486	846			1842
22									1	20	57	198	345	671			1292
23										8	31	106	170	850			1165
24										2	11	44	80	590			727
25				3	2			1			1	29	58	290	2		386
25+		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	36	69	246			358
TOT	707	5551	43074	41003	39134	38731	37283	36796	34545	35686	32712	29657	23203	21284	2731	20	422117
Overage		19	1019	1600	2195	3387	3599	3617	3252	4408	4119	4643	3580	4796			40234
2yrs%		0%	2%	4%	6%	9%	10%	10%	9%	12%	13%	16%	15%	23%	0%	0%	10%

SOURCE: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (EMIS) WCED, MARCH 1999

APPENDIX 1.7

WCED MALE OVERAGE LEARNERS 1998																	
AGE	PP	GR R	GR 1	GR 2	GR 3	GR 4	GR 5	GR 6	GR 7	GR 8	GR 9	GR 10	GR 11	GR 12	SPECIAL	OTHER	TOTAL
A03	33	25	7														65
A04	97	127	44														268
A05	214	4219	2581	63											21		7098
A06	48	1351	29989	1749	9										39		33185
A07	1	19	14187	21659	1394	5									69	7	37341
A08			2898	15747	18685	1036	10								220	14	38610
A09			814	4481	14876	15889	857	8							436	25	37386
A10			342	1370	5021	14102	14356	813	27						576	23	36630
A11			105	484	1746	6732	12666	13402	910						771	29	36848
A12			50	213	853	3182	6565	12034	13517	1068	13	4			822	15	38337
A13			43	78	385	1441	3606	6233	11146	13296	1103	70			798	13	38212
A14			32	21	136	596	1584	3338	5421	11160	11472	1041	30		564	13	35408
A15			31	3	46	231	737	1558	2942	6376	9569	10184	1027	22	301	4	33031
A16				4	20	67	246	629	1309	3464	5174	8125	8055	835	138	4	28070
A17			15	14	2	14	87	231	563	1411	2813	4376	5520	7008	47	2	22103
A18						9	25	90	265	570	1126	2530	2727	4458	22	1	11823
A19					1	1	10	17	67	269	579	1175	1488	2043	1	1	5652
A20					2	3	1	6	16	113	236	565	789	1100			2831
A21							1		11	42	140	338	402	728		1	1663
A22									1	13	61	195	251	471			992
A23										12	24	87	168	354			645
A24											9	44	62	204			319
A25											4	13	50	140			207
A25+			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	17	26	251			296
TOT	393	5741	51138	45886	43176	43309	40751	38359	36195	37797	32325	28764	20595	17614	4825	152	447020
Overage			1432	2187	3191	5544	6297	5869	5174	5894	4994	4964	3236	3248			52030
2yrs%			3%	5%	7%	13%	15%	15%	14%	16%	15%	17%	16%	18%	0%	0%	12%
TOT	820	11591	98973	89820	85294	84894	80635	76560	73874	76636	67331	61672	45981	40896	7435	236	902648

SOURCE: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (EMIS) WCED, MARCH 1999

APPENDIX 1.8

WCED OVERAGE FEMALE LEARNERS 1998																	
AGE	PP	GR R	GR 1	GR 2	GR 3	GR 4	GR 5	GR 6	GR 7	GR 8	GR 9	GR 10	GR 11	GR 12	SPECIAL	OTHER	TOTAL
A03	43																43
A04	87	169	2														258
A05	254	4406	2701	21											12		7394
A06	43	1266	29562	2173	2										20		33066
A07		8	12123	23770	1777	16									39	2	37735
A08		1	2297	13139	21629	1523	21								119	7	38736
A09			667	3302	12884	18994	1381	35	1						258	12	37534
A10			233	996	3874	12971	17381	1395	53						332	15	37250
A11			95	314	1192	4780	12225	17046	1336	11					386	15	37400
A12			64	153	461	1982	5064	11306	17075	1523	89	12			452	6	38187
A13			33	55	210	835	2304	4822	11066	16213	1757	80			403	8	37786
A14			21	10	68	325	974	2186	4631	10887	14559	1787	69	15	300	4	35830
A15			24		18	122	343	830	2167	5629	9676	13402	1674	39	161	9	34094
A16			13		3	29	135	403	890	2730	4681	8559	10993	1302	86	4	29828
A17				1		5	39	108	294	1095	2288	4127	5931	9474	32	1	23395
A18						3	11	38	101	448	1042	2398	2697	4909	10		11567
A19							1	13	30	162	475	1193	1655	2242			5781
A20							5	18	33	92	274	662	974	1393		1	3452
A21								1	1	28	101	391	596	1164			2282
A22									1	11	43	187	356	911			1509
A23										8	10	101	252	606			977
A24										1	7	48	94	416			566
A25											4	23	41	332			400
A25+			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	34	44	476			558
TOT	427	5850	47835	43934	42118	41585	39884	38201	37679	38839	35006	32908	25382	23282	2610	84	455628
Overage			1150	1529	1952	3301	3812	3597	3517	4576	4244	4947	4022	5298			41945
2yrs%			2%	3%	5%	8%	10%	9%	9%	12%	12%	15%	16%	23%	0%	0%	9%

SOURCE: DOE: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (EMIS) WCED: MARCH 1999

APPENDIX 1.9

WCED OVERAGE LEARNERS FEMALE 1999																
AGE	PP	GR R	GR 1	GR 2	GR 3	GR 4	GR 5	GR 6	GR 7	GR 8	GR 9	GR 10	GR 11	GR 12	ISEN	TOTAL
3	23															23
4	186	58														244
5	347	3341	2440	25											2	6155
6	28	1698	27469	2719	11										6	31931
7	584	18	10417	24845	2090	13									38	37421
8			1867	13124	22502	1989	27	8							94	39611
9			446	3081	13256	20295	1595	46	10						150	38879
10			156	864	3846	13187	18561	1398	61						240	38316
11			46	246	1156	4688	12422	16868	1458	18	3				239	37147
12			23	88	476	1712	4988	12109	16441	1235	24				265	37431
13			4	39	184	786	2201	5046	11634	17000	1453	16			235	38598
14			4	11	64	298	938	2371	4587	11411	15105	1440	38		177	36444
15				1	21	107	325	862	2974	5628	10414	13802	1513	22	59	34828
16					7	38	120	294	885	2658	5020	9096	11449	1531	38	31143
17					1	12	34	124	289	1228	2736	4473	6960	9845	13	25215
18						5	10	29	96	440	950	2457	3177	4845	6	11865
19						1	2	7	29	160	429	1187	1565	2033	3	5416
20							1	2	8	75	188	637	979	1522		3418
21									2	57	91	403	611	951		2115
22									2	16	25	162	300	802		1307
23									1	6	12	70	196	506		791
24										2	7	33	65	372		479
25										3		21	57	334		415
26												21	33	230		284
TOT	584	5115	42872	45043	43620	43201	41224	39164	37577	39944	35957	33668	26943	22999	1565	459476
2yrs Overage			2546	1249	1909	7717	8619	8735	7973	10280	8958	9293	6950	6526		80755
2yrs %			6%	3%	4%	18%	21%	22%	21%	26%	25%	28%	26%	28%	0%	18%
3yrs Overage			233	385	753	1247	1430	1318	1312	1987	1702	2534	2241	3195		18337

SOURCE: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (EMIS)
WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, MARCH 1999

APPENDIX 1.10

WCED MALE OVERAGE LEARNERS 1999																GRAND
AGE	PP	GR R	GR 1	GR 2	GR 3	GR 4	GR 5	GR 6	GR 7	GR 8	GR 9	GR 10	GR 11	GR 12	SEN	TOTAL
3	36															36
4	168	66														234
5	289	3402	2269	13											3	5976
6	25	1619	27096	2420	15										17	31192
7		19	11834	23887	1623	7									66	37436
8		1	2272	15269	20087	1409	12	4							167	39221
9			721	4177	15342	17062	1045	55							293	38695
10			204	1291	4857	14973	15080	1001	20					1	426	37853
11			74	480	1677	6375	13141	13970	857	12					473	37059
12			41	172	779	2744	6505	12023	13137	910	18				481	36810
13			9	89	357	1310	3444	6411	12004	13289	945	11	1		476	38346
14			10	19	132	558	1534	3306	5883	11681	11934	917	8		304	36286
15			3	8	51	210	645	1534	2890	6651	10072	10123	929	14	130	33260
16				4	17	74	246	676	1309	3326	5454	8673	8454	891	47	29171
17					6	23	105	211	611	1452	2764	4555	6119	7002	18	22866
18				2	1	6	30	76	221	601	1131	2465	2996	4286	2	11757
19					1	3	12	20	90	291	521	1228	1512	1829	2	5509
20							2	5	20	147	233	697	812	1033		2949
21						1		1	7	55	127	333	430	658	2	1614
22									2	21	48	143	247	440		901
23								1	1	8	14	90	142	316		572
24								1			5	45	56	194		301
25										2	1	10	36	146		195
26											1	5	25	110		141
TOT	518	5107	44533	47831	44945	44755	41803	39294	37051	38446	33268	29235	21767	16920	2907	448380
Overage			1062	2065	3021	4929	6020	5830	5150	5903	4845	4956	3260	2897		49938
2yrs%			2%	4%	7%	11%	14%	15%	14%	15%	15%	17%	15%	17%	0%	11%
3yrs Overage			341	774	1344	2185	2576	2524	2260	2577	2081	2551	1748	1864		22825

SOURCE: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (EMIS) WCED: MARCH 1999

APPENDIX 3.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

LIST OF CATEGORIES AND QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

Hypothetical Question

- “Suppose that you are an over age learner... What would it be like?”
- “What if...

Devil’s Advocate Question

- “Some people would say.... What would you say to them?”

Ideal position Question

- “What would you think the ideal....would be like?”

Interpretative Question

- “Would you say..... is different from what you expected?”

QUESTIONS TO AVOID

- **Multiple Questions:** A series of single questions that does not allow the interviewee to answer one by one
- **Leading questions:** This type of question sets the interviewee up to accept the researcher’s point of view.
- **Yes-or-No questions:** Any question that can be answered by a simple “yes” or “no”.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC

- School name
- Class group
- Language of instruction
- Mother-tongue language
- Number of years teaching to over age learners

RESEARCH STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: OPEN QUESTION

“Can you comment on your experiences of over age learners”.

The following guidance to all selected teachers is offered: *“Create your own categories and respond in detail to each one as far as is possible”.*

Category examples:

- In the classroom
- In the school
- Peer relations
- At home,
- Grade retention, et cetera.

RESEARCH SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: OPEN QUESTIONS

- Tell me about your experience....
- How would you describe ...
- What do you think ...

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS: THEMES

1. MOBILE LEARNERS

- Migrant labour (parents move), which disrupts a child’s schooling.
- over age learner attends several schools
- over age learners are moved around a lot within the school to various classes
- Over age learner attends school infrequently.

2. OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

- Children are kept out of school to look after younger children.
- What do you do with older children who have been out of school for a year or two (but have been to school before) and who now want to return.

3. DROP-OUTS

- Children drop out of school and re-enter the same or another school later
- the child drops out of school at any time

4. REPEATERS

- Children make no progress in classes and repeat grades
- What do you think of grade retention as a strategy for the over age learner?

5. PROMOTIONS

- Children make no progress in class and are promoted because of age.

6. ADMISSION ISSUES

- Admit children irrespective of age? Why?
- What recommendation would you make to the Education Ministry or school clinics, about ADMISSION to schools

7. PLACEMENT ISSUES

- Refer learner to another school? Why?
- Insist on a report and place learner in the appropriate grade based on the report
- Place the learner in a lower standard so that he/she can “catch up” (whether there is a report or not)
- Older learners (e.g. 11 year olds) entering school for the first time, should be placed in the same class (e.g. Grade 1) as learners of the usual age (e.g. 7 year olds)?
- It does not matter whether overage learners are in separate classes or mixed with other children
- Overage learners should be in a “remedial” class, with a special remedial teacher.
- Overage learners should be in separate schools
- Overage learners should be integrated into usual classes irrespective of age
- What recommendations would you make to policymakers, based on your own experience, concerning the placement of over age learners in the school?
- What do you think about overage learners having a say in whether they should be moved from their present class or placed in “special” classes when they arrive?
- Name all the people you think should be consulted about whether over age learners should be moved to other classes

8. SCHOOL POLICY AGE-RELATED ISSUES

- What is your school’s policy towards older learners wanting to register (i.e. what do you actually do at the beginning of each year?).

- What is your understanding of the current policy of the Western Cape Education Department concerning admission of over age learners?

9. ATTITUDE TOWARDS OVER AGE LEARNERS

- What do you think is the attitude generally of teachers towards over age children.

10. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- Teachers aware of the different ways of organising and optimising learners in a classroom with over age learners e.g. subject staggering, subject grouping, common time table, and integrated day.
- Teachers aware of the variety ways of grouping learners for learning (e.g. whole class, subgroups, pairs, individuals) and of different criteria for subgroups (e.g. by achievement, interest, friendship)
- Teachers sensitive to alternative ways of using space and arranging resources inside and outside the classroom.

11. CURRICULUM

- Over age children should be in separate classes but follow the same curricula as other classes.
- Over age children should be in separate classes with separate curricula
- What recommendations would you make to policymakers, based on your own experience, about what to do about the curriculum of over age children in the school?
- Teachers given guidance on syllabus cover age across the day, week, term, school, year for a class with over age learners?
- Do teachers have access to an adequate supply of appropriate quality materials for self-study and peer learning or do they create their own materials for self-study and peer learning?

12. ASSESSMENT

- Assess the child before placing him/her (whether there is a report or not).
- Teachers have access to effective and practical means for assessing learning outcomes of over age learners?
- These assessments enable teachers to set learning tasks of an appropriate level for learners on an individual basis.

13. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

- From what kind of background do these over age learners come?
- Poverty
- Discontinued parenting
- Taught in second language
- Parents' education
- Combined intrinsic and extrinsic

14. TEACHING METHODOLOGY

- Basics academic skills
- What is it like to teach a class in which there is a big difference in age

15. GENERAL

- What do you think are the problems over age learners experience in your school.
- What do you think are the needs of over age learners in your school? (resilience: Joseph 1994: 23, Protective, Christiansin 1997:87)
- What do you think are the reasons for this number of over age children in your area?
- Approximately what percentage of over age children do you have in your school?
- Have you been fully informed by anyone about the purpose of this questionnaire?

APPENDIX 4.1 (Interview transcripts)

MFULENI PRIMARY

TRANSCRIPT – 19.09.2000

Interview: Respondent no. 1

1 Introduction

2 Respondent no. 1 had an informal meeting with foundation phase teachers
3 on the topic *Over age learners* in preparation for the interview.
4 Respondent has 23 years of primary school experience, has a secondary
5 education diploma (SED) and is currently teaching in the foundation
6 phase as well being one of the two deputy principals at the school.
7 Respondent prepared her own interview notes prior to interview based on
8 the introductory question:

9 **QUESTION: Can you comment on your experiences with over age**
10 **learners.**

11 RESPONDENT (R)

12 Okay, for all the years I have been in the senior phase, you know but I
13 have experience also in the foundation phase, especially with the age
14 group, you know. You find out, take for instance my class in grade two,
15 I've got a 13 year old and 8 year olds there. Then we find out that the
16 older groups sometimes bully the younger ones, that's what I've
17 experienced. And within most cases, those who are 13, 14 or 11 they feel
18 very shy. The same applies to the grade 1's, even the grade 3's. If you
19 duty them in front of the younger one, they feel very shy.

20 INTERVIEWER (I)

21 **I see you have prepared categories that you will respond to.**

22 RESPONDENT

23 Yes, I've just tabulated in class what I noticed, and then in school how
24 they behave, and then the **peer relationships**, and the reports from the
25 **parents.**

26 Now as I've said in class - in class they feel very shy to be with the young
27 ones, in such a way they become very sensitive and aggressive, and there
28 is a lack of self esteem with these age groups. In most cases they are
29 bullying the young ones and they always shift their responsibility to
30 someone else, you know. Now when I deal with them in the class I always

31 mix them with the younger ones and put the older group nearer to me to
32 see that they became well, very well.

33 INTERVIEWER

34 How many learners do you have in your class?

35 RESPONDENT

36 I have 52. In all the grade two's I have +50; there is only one where I
37 have 45 learners in the class.

38 I: And how many learners in your own class are over age.

39 R: Five, there are 5 of them. The oldest is 14 years, the youngest is 8; you
40 can see now the difference. Now, they have a tendency - the younger ones
41 have that tendency when I'm out of the class - I take the older ones to be
42 responsible over the the younger ones in my class. At the same time I use
43 also the young ones to be responsible. And at school as a whole, this old
44 ones has got mixed feelings, you know, they are not sure whether they are
45 accepted at the school or not. You find out there is a grade 3 learner who
46 will mix with a grade 7 learner, you know. That grade 7 learner will sort
47 of bully the younger ones. So they are not sure whether they are accepted
48 or not. When they are playing outside with their peers, they have that
49 peer pressure influencing from outside the school situation, and they end
50 up having a bad attendance.

51 I: They don't come to school regularly.

52 R: No, especially on a Monday and a Friday.

53

54 I: Why do you think this is so?

55 R: When you ask the parents "but why", the parent would say, "well I am
56 working. I leave home early in the morning, they are in uniform and I
57 think all the time they are going to school" and they are not. I don't know
58 really. There is that bad attendance from the older ones.

59 I: What do you think are some of the reasons these learners stay away
60 from school?

61 R: I don't know really. Mfuleni parents, I don't know, they've got that
62 attitude towards school, the parents you know. And you get reports from
63 the parents saying that, "no we are working too late, we leave home early
64 in the morning and when you come back, the child will pretend as if he
65 went to school whereas he didn't".

66 I: Suppose I'm these children what do you think I will be saying as to why
67 I'm staying out of school?

68 R: for one I think it's a pattern. I phone the parent, his mother come to
69 school and ask. But this is the third week being absent continuously.

70 I: Continuously?

71 R: Continuously, you know this boy is only 9 yrs old. Then the parent
72 said, "well I don't know, because in the morning he is in uniform" His
73 sister is at Mzomtombo High in the senior phase. And then the parents
74 says, "Well I don't know what is happening", and I said to them, "bring
75 him, bring him to school" You know what happened? The child was here
76 at school in my class, said to me, "teacher", and I ask "Why don't you
77 come to school? He says "well, I don't know, I just want to stay at home"
78 Who's there? There is no one, he's all by himself; I think there is
79 something going on you know. Then I reported it to the principal. It was
80 myself, the mother and the child, we went to the principal and the parent
81 reported this and I also talked to the parent. You know, thereafter I said
82 "let him go to the class. We must not escort him to the class, because
83 yesterday when he was there in my class he said "teacher , I thirsty , I
84 need water". I said "go". There...there was no one with him. He never
85 came back, it was just the 2nd period, he never came back. Then the
86 following day the mother was here. On that day he went to the class, the
87 mother went back to work. But when I arrived I ask the class, "Where is
88 M....?" The class said, "No, he never came back". The following day I
89 phoned the mother again. What was happening is that he's staying with
90 both parents; they always give him a hiding, you know. But there is no
91 tangible reasons why he's not coming to school. Even today he not at
92 school. This morning a teacher told me the mother was here, but I missed
93 to see her. I don't know. I ask if he's happy in the class or whether he
94 want to be in another class. He said "no"....that's the problem here at
95 Mfuleni-bad attendance.

96 I: How do you think does this bad attendance influence the learner in the
97 class?

98 R: You find that their schoolwork is far behind and even if you give them
99 homework and expect the parents to assist their child, the parents will say
100 "well I came late". You'll find the child did not do his homework, with
101 even no assistance from the parent.

102 I: Do you think the parents are able to assist?

103 R: They can assist, because every term we always call the parents and try
104 to educate them how we work at school with the OBE, you know. When
105 you give the homework - we do the example there.

106 I: The parents, can they read and write?

107 R: Some of them, they can read and write. But there was one parent who
108 said "well teacher, I can't read and write but there is one who is at home,
109 the sister who can give assistance". Generally, I don't think they can give
110 actual support until they are quite clear about the OBE. But we are trying.

111 I: Some people would say that parents had poor schooling, therefore they
112 find it maybe difficult to help their children in reading and writing. What
113 would you say to them?

114 R: I always tell them, at school, especially in the foundation phase, there
115 is those flexi-time for those learners whose parents are just ignorant, I'll
116 put it that way. In OBE to make use of, so, those who are far behind and
117 who don't understand will keep up with the other ones in what we do. **The**
118 **peer relationship**, the older ones have got a different experience. I think
119 they get this different experience from the peer group, you know. Some of
120 them, you find out, they've got that negative attitude. Maybe you are
121 teaching numeracy in class and then this child will say "teacher I don't
122 understand that, well teacher I do understand that". But some of them, the
123 older ones, in some cases, they are of good help in class if you manage
124 them correctly.

125 I: What do you mean by "manage them correctly"?

126 R: Well, they are working in groups, you know. You pick out a leader, the
127 one who understands. You don't group them according to their ability; I
128 just mix them. My belief is that if the ones that are sort of copying, they
129 sort of learning - but at the same time must not copy all the time - they
130 will learn from the brighter ones, you know.

131 I: Does this type of mixed grouping work for you?

132 R: Ja, it does work for me. It helps more especially for those who are
133 below average; this copying business helps me, you know. Maybe the
134 child - if I introduce a new lesson - he won't catch up very quickly, but
135 from a friend, when I use that flexi-time, he will catch up very
136 quickly...ahhhh. Peer group leads them to leave their families to seek
137 their own freedom. From this boy I've told you about - but what I've
138 noticed from this boy, his friends are far older according his age - he's 15
139 years old. Now he's moving away from the family, you know, and trying
140 to seek his own freedom. And we did have that case in grade 3, there is an
141 8 year old there and a 15 year old girl in grade 7. The mother still
142 reported that. What I've noticed with this 8 year old, he's always mixing
143 with the 16 year olds, 12 year olds, not his own age group, you know. And
144 the teacher reported that even in class he makes this petty mistakes even
145 though he's not so bad. but he not quite stable in class, you know.

146 I: Do you find that these over age learners change school a lot?

147 R: A few of them. Mfuleni some years ago had no crèches, there were no
148 preschools here; they were just from home. But most of our foundation

149 phase learners are coming from the Eastern Cape –Transkei and was not at
150 school for so many years. You'll find a 12 year old is still in grade one,
151 he was not at school, he was herding the cattle. So most of these over age
152 learners are from the Eastern Cape –Transkei. They started school very
153 late. That's the problem. Now we don't know whether to put that learner
154 in a night school or to correct to be in class or what. Because there was a
155 circular that says that the over age learners should be moved to the upper
156 classes, but academically you can see he's not ready to be in grade 4,
157 maybe, and even does not know grade 1 work.

158 I: How do you deal with that?

159 R: I had one learner last year in grade 2, a 12 year old. Than what I did
160 while I was teaching during the year - I decided this learner should not go
161 to grade 3 next year, and skip and go to grade 4. And than in the 3rd term
162 what I did, I tried to give them the work of grade 3 because I know that
163 they are going to skip. Then when I got the report from the grade 4
164 teacher this year, you know, we start our English in grade 2....

165 I: So you start English in grade 2 and switch over from grade 3 to
166 English?

167 R: No, instructional language in foundation phase is Xhosa (*mother*
168 *tongue*) but the intermediate phase is English. It's only in grade 2 we
169 introduce English in grade 2. And then I had that problem, because in the
170 intermediate phase, the medium of instruction is English then this learner
171 of mine, I introduce him in English in the 3rd term, the three of them.
172 Then I got the report from the teacher - than there is that profile of
173 learner. then I tell that teacher, I am here with this learner, "Can you
174 please start here". Then I said to the teacher, he must report to me this
175 year in March to give me feedback in March and in June. Then getting the
176 report from the teacher, he said to me they are doing so excellent, more
177 than those who pass grade 3. I think it's a ... he's learning according to
178 his age now because he was 12 last year, you know, and this year he's 13
179 and is in grade 4 and he is doing well ...moving from grade 2 to grade 4.

180 I: What do you do with over age learners at the end of the year who don't
181 perform scholastically? Do you promote them or do you sometimes keep
182 them back if they can't master the work.

183 R: We don't always promote them. We keep them back so that they can
184 catch up.

185 I: Mrs J. if you have a 14 year old in grade two would you still keep back
186 that learner, if that learner can academically not master the work, or
187 would you promote that learner with his age peers?

188 R: It all depends to the learner's attitude in classroom situation. You can
189 promote him or her if there is that hope that he can cope with grade 4
190 work, you know. But I think if he doesn't, you try to use some other

191 methods. But my belief ... sometimes a child of 9 years is suppose to be
192 in grade 3, sometime he's not ready to be in grade 3, you know; you try
193 and keep him or her back until he's ready for that grade 3 class.
194 Sometimes you promote him. Maybe when he's in grade 3 he'll catch up,
195 he'll fill in that gap given the age ability, you know. Maybe his brain has
196 matured for the grade because he is suppose to be in grade 3 according to
197 the age. My belief is that he can use his age ability.

198 I: These over age learners, when they come to school, would you say they
199 are learning ready?

200 R: They are different you know. Some learn, some don't. They are shy,
201 most of them are shy, you know. Then you get that difficulty.

202 I: How do you think are they different?

203 R: They are different in a way that one will cope with the work, one will
204 not cope with the work, one will just sit there, and even if you do give
205 them some work, they will not do anything. He'll try and tidy the class,
206 that's what he does, and clean the chalk board and all that you know.

207 I: Do you think that they don't have the ability to learn, generally
208 speaking?

209 R: They do have the ability to learn. If here at school we can get a
210 teacher, maybe somebody who has done remedial you know, to deal with
211 those learners - not to have those learners - to mix those learners with
212 others in the class.

213 I: Would you than advocate that these over age learners need to be
214 educated separately from the other learners?

215 R: I can recommend that, but not 100% you know, because as I've said
216 from the beginning, sometimes they are helpful in classroom situations,
217 when you are not there, sometimes they are not. They are bullies to the
218 younger ones. So you can group them, say, they must have a special
219 attendance.

220 I: What do you think should the ideal situation be like for over age
221 learners?

222 R: They should be placed separately from the younger ones because there
223 are a lot of cases here at school from the younger learners saying that they
224 are being bullied from the older ones when you are not there. Even if you
225 are there, you are busy with the other groups; these learners will bully
226 this ones. I think they must be separated from the younger ones; that's the
227 best.

228 I: You are aware of the POLP classes, also called Open Learning classes
229 in Khayelitsha?

230 R: No.

231 I: Suppose I am a teacher to over age learners, what would I be likely to
232 experience teaching these learners?

233 R: First of all, a child copy from the others, you know, and when you are
234 teaching the over age learners - as a teacher you can't deal with the older
235 ones the same as to the younger ones - give them advanced work, you
236 know, giving them some examples, making them some stories, telling
237 them how must they behave in the classroom, listen attentively in the
238 class and tell them they must not be afraid of you, they must be open...
239 then you'll get to understand why is this one behaving like this, why is
240 that one behaving like that, if you are really involved with them.

241 I: Do you find these over age learners can do reading and numeracy as
242 well as the other learners in the class?

243 R: They are mixed, some are good, some are bad, but when it comes to
244 lifeskills there is something I can get from this learner. But numeracy and
245 literacy you know, there is that unbalanced work, but you'll find that he
246 can read, but can't write - he omit some vowels and some other things,
247 you know, and then you've got to go back to grade 1 work. And that is the
248 thing that waste our time here, going back again to grade 1 work. But it's
249 the way I group them in literacy: I mix the mediocre one with the
250 advanced ones and then I concentrate on those who are far behind trying
251 to catch up, you know. Sometimes they are so surprising, learners in
252 foundation phase. At the beginning of the year this child was progressing
253 very slowly and then he will really surprise you in October and you'll see
254 that he reading so well, he writing so well.

255 I: What do you think happened there?

256 R: I don't know. I think all the time when you was doing this work,
257 teaching, he was sort of absorbing everything that didn't want to come up,
258 you know. And then all of a sudden in October he can read fluently. I
259 think he got that from the friend from meeting in the group. He's - was
260 listening what he's doing, how's this done, and then he get those results.

261 I: If I am an over age learner, from what background would I becoming
262 from?

263 R: Different backgrounds, really different backgrounds. Here at Mfuleni
264 is this untidiness, not wearing this uniform and when you will call the
265 parents and try to speak to the parents they say "Oh, I'm all by myself.
266 I've got seven kids, and out of work. I don't have time". Sometimes they
267 come to school, not having a breakfast and that is when the feeding
268 scheme helps them, you know, giving them bread and everything. They
269 come from different backgrounds, you know. Some of the parents, they
270 can afford but they don't have time to look after their kids, because there
271 are this gameshops here, a lot of gameshops in Mfuleni, lot of shops

272 selling this beer and all that. And you get some reports: this child came in
273 at home past 12 midnight, the parents are not there, the parents are drunk,
274 the parents are not looking after them, they've no time for the child, and
275 to clean the child, and the child coming to school untidy. I think parents
276 from Mfuleni need some involvement to look at school, to have a positive
277 attitude towards school.

278 I: It sounds like these parents come from poor backgrounds?

279 R: Even now there are those who haven't got books. And you see this
280 child can do well but he does not have books, does not have something to
281 write; coming to school without any pencils, crayons, without nothing.
282 The parents will say, "Hey, I don't know what must I do". But we are
283 trying to help them.

284 I: I wonder what these parents of over age learner educational background
285 is, whether they can read and write, whether there is any support at home
286 for these over age learner?

287 R: I can say totally there is no support. They only open their books when
288 they are in the classroom, that's all, and it ends there. Then I try to
289 motivate them to use the library even after school.

290 I: Can you describe any other problems, besides being over age, over age
291 learners might have that impacts on their learning?

292 R: The one parent came to me and gave me the picture of her child:
293 sometimes he understands very well in class, he'll do very well. But the
294 next day he'll be dumb. Then I ask why? Because he said there was this
295 rape business, he was being raped...and he's attending some psychologist.
296 But that child is so much disturbed of this child abuse thing.

297 I: Any other type of learning disabilities that over age learners might
298 have?

299 R: There are such learners. I've got a report from a grade 1 teacher:
300 teacher can't cope. I had also such a learner. I was teaching him
301 preprimary here in school, and from that preprimary he moved to grade 1.
302 But this child didn't pick up really, even his outside appearance. You can
303 see he's not being fed well and there is no moral support from the parents
304 because he does not know anything about schooling, that's the problem.

305 I: How many of the over age learner do come from the Eastern Cape?

306 R: There are a lot of them and parents at Mfuleni has got that tendency. In
307 January they register the child, then in June they say they are moving
308 now, there is no work, we are moving now to Transkei. Then we'll see
309 same year in September that the child is here.

310 I: How does the school deal with that kind of problem?

311 R: We don't have any alternative because this is the only primary school
312 and we admit them - and running away from this child abuse from the
313 "location". Maybe the parents are not there for the whole day and the
314 child will stay there all by herself or himself. So we do take them so they
315 can be in school environment.

316 I: What is the teachers' general attitude towards over age learners?

317 R: (Laughing) They are always complaining about these over age learners.
318 They say mixing them in one class does not work because most of these
319 over age learners are very slow. I don't know what is wrong, really. I
320 think they see themselves as they are not suppose to be there with those
321 little ones

322 I: What is the little ones' attitude towards these older ones?

323 R: (Laughing) I don't have any problem with the little ones but they do
324 have that attitude that this one is doing this thing wrong whereas he's
325 older than me, you know. They do see that you know but they don't have
326 any problem unless they are being bullied.

327 I: Mrs J... would you like to tell me something about yourself in terms of
328 your teaching experience, especially in the foundation phase?

329 R: I started teaching in the foundation phase - you know I like teaching in
330 the foundation phase - most of my years I've been teaching in senior
331 primary [*intermediate phase*]. When I came to foundation phase - I was so
332 worried - I was involved in foundation phase in 1991- 1992. 1993 I went
333 back to senior primary. Then having been a head of department I felt that
334 I not really, actually involved in the foundation phase. Let me go back to
335 foundation phase. Then I went back to foundation phase. I found that it
336 gave me experience, because I started teaching the pre-primary. I wanted
337 to see if I can make a foundation, a good foundation, to a child because
338 children here at Mfuleni, they are not coming from pre-primary, they are
339 not even coming from crèche. When I taught grade 1, I got a good result
340 that I was proud of, you know.

341 I: Tell me, did you teach pre-primary in a grade one class?

342 R: No, in 1990 I took 6 year olds, I was just preparing them for grade 1.
343 Then the following year they went to grade 1 and the teachers there, they
344 didn't have any problem. Then I decided, now I must move to grade 1 and
345 see how can I found a child just from the beginning. Then I didn't have
346 any problem, you know, because the little ones don't behave like the older
347 ones, you know. They listen to what you are saying.

348 I: Suppose somebody says to you, maybe the first six months of grade 1
349 should be spend with pre-primary education, what would you say to them?

350 R: I think about myself, I start - I use two months, January, February to
351 prepare them. But in April I can say, "I've got them now". So I must start
352 with the grade 1 work. So the first three months - That is enough. You'll

353 find that some are not school ready, now you've got to prepare the for the
354 first three months

355 I: Do you have any other issues that you have documented - I see you
356 have prepared quite well, actually - that you would like to talk about, on
357 over age learners.

358 R: I don't know what can be done. We've tried to involve the parents but
359 uhm - some of the parents are doubting to come to school and get the
360 report on how the child is doing. I always call them in the afternoon from
361 two to three so that the parents can come to school, ask how far is his or
362 her child, is he going to pass, is he going to stay behind, you know. Now
363 I've got that problem - the parents - they don't want to come to school.

364 I: Suppose that you are an over age learner in class what would it be like
365 for you?

366 R: (laughing) I would feel very shy at the first time but I will try and cope
367 you know. Feeling very shy being an over age learner is natural, you
368 know, because you see this is not your age group. And then I'll try to
369 work harder, that is, if I'm an over age learner.

370 I: mrs J... thank you very much.

MFULENI PRIMARY

TRANSCRIPT- 3RD October 2000

INTERVIEW: Respondent no. 2

INTRODUCTION

1 Respondent no 2 is a grade 3 teacher at Mfuleni Primary and has 9
2 years experience in the foundation phase.

3 Interviewer (I): **Can you comment on your experiences with over**
4 **age learners?**

5 Respondent (R): Over age students sometimes they are problematic.
6 They usually, not all of them, some of them abuse in the class. You
7 can feel that they are isolated; this children are not their age group,
8 others are good, they can cope with the work but they are too old for
9 the classes. If I can make an example of an over age child in the
10 class: he was trying to rape someone in the class after school. They
11 are developed although the others are too young to understand
12 what's going on. Most of them are 12 and 13 in grade 3. I think
13 even others, 13 years old, can't even cope with what is taught in the
14 class. For example, this child whom I'm talking about, although they
15 are old enough, it is difficult for them.

16 I: Can you describe the background of over age learners to me?

17 R: I can try. Others, maybe their homes are poor, their parents are
18 drinking, others, they have been staying with foster parents, others,
19 they are abused in their homes. These learners are mostly from the
20 Eastern Cape from another school to Mfuleni. Even throughout the
21 school, most of the children are from the Eastern Cape without
22 reports, and we place them in these classes. [foundation phase]
23 That's why they getting difficulties. Also in Eastern Cape these
24 children are not learning enough; maybe they looking after cattle,
25 and there parents are moving up and down, you see. They are
26 working here, then when they take them back to Eastern Cape, they
27 stay another year without schooling. They come back again to us,
28 here. It's that gap in between, you see. Parents move up and down
29 after work. So it that thing that is happening here. They sometimes
30 skip a grade and place in grade 3 because of the age.

31 I: What happen to these over age learners at the end of the year if
32 they can't cope with the work.

33 R: According to their age and how many times the child fail, you can
34 pass a child through to the next teacher. Then you explain to the
35 teacher where the child is. We don't just keep them back because
36 of the age.

37 I: How do teachers cope with these learners in the class?

38 R: I try to make them as same as the others: I mix them, I don't put
39 all the old ones together, I just mingle them. Then I see sometimes
40 is not right, then I change the groups. The groups are always
41 rotating in the class so that they are not always in one group, so
42 that they can mix with others, you see. Educationally, as I said,
43 other kids cope. Although they are old, they cope, and they are
44 helpful to others in the class. There are those again who are
45 problematic, but not all of them.

46 I: Those who are problematic, what kind of problems do they present
47 in the class?

48 R: If I turn my back, then one is beating another one, something like
49 that. Like this child when mentioned earlier on. If I turn my back,
50 writing on the board, he is doing something on the other side.
51 Others they have learning problems, for instance, reading problems
52 - this old ones, but others are coping, really, with the other kids.
53 Some of them can't even write, write properly. He's mixing the
54 words, some can't even copy something which is on the board. I
55 take them sometimes after 1:30 when the others leave and try to do
56 grade 1 work with them.

57 I: So you actually doing grade 3 work in the class with all the
58 learners, but grade 1 work after hours with the over age kids?

59 R: Ja, with all the learners, I do grade 3 work, but I notice it
60 frustrate those I keep after school for grade 1 work. Then I decide
61 in class maybe when I'm doing this groups, then I'll give them lighter
62 job/activity and work with them in the class. [Knock on the door,
63 learner enters and speaks to teacher.]

64 I: Ideally speaking, where do you think these learners should be
65 placed?

66 R: I think they should have a special class, maybe a remedial class,
67 you see, so that they could work in their pace, you see, and at their

68 level, maybe. Although I know inclusive education is coming, I'm
69 aware of it, but as I think they should have a special time, although
70 they are in with the other kids.

71 I: Do I understand you right, are you saying that they should be
72 removed from the other learners in the class and have their own
73 class of over age learners/

74 R: Not actually over age, only the problematic ones, the ones who
75 are having problems, learning problems. With the older one, there
76 are no problem with them because others are coping. Like other
77 children. As I'm saying the others are helpful. They are helpful
78 when they are in a group, helping others. I don't want to say they
79 are teaching aids (Laughing heartily). They helping others in the
80 group while you are moving with other groups. They are helpful in
81 that sense.

82 I; Suppose that you are an over age learner. What would it be like
83 for you?

84 R: (Long silence) Maybe I want to be with my peer group you see,
85 because I feel too old to be among the young ones, where I could
86 feel free, communicate with each other. We are at the same level,
87 you see.

88 I: What is the attitude generally towards over age learners?

89 R: Generally, they took it that the child knew everything, should
90 cope with the activities of this class, as being older than the others
91 in the class. So that child must know everything.

92 I: What do you think is the attitude of the younger learners in the
93 class toward these over age learners?

94 R: They are looking to them, as I notice, since they are old, you see.
95 They see everything which they are doing and see it as right, that is
96 my opinion, because they are older than them.

97 I: Some people say it is difficult to teach to over age learners. How
98 would you respond to them?

99 R: Sometimes, not always, most of the time I use this group method
100 and discussion. They must brainstorm so that I could see what they
101 know first. Because they are old, I think they have something in

102 them, before I can put in something, or correct what has been given.
103 But most of the time I use brainstorming, for all of them and group
104 work. I also give them homework to do and notice that some of the
105 parents are doing the writing for them, and then I write some notes
106 back: "don't write on children's book". So I now don't give them too
107 much homework. Most of the time I want them to do things here
108 with me, so I give little homework.

109 I: Some people would say – Parents don't support their children.
110 How would you respond to that?

111 R: Well, some parents are supporting even if I call them, some are
112 coming to discuss about the child. Then I give the parents some
113 books to read for the children who are not able to read. The parents
114 are trying, because I see some improvement in other kids.
115 Educationally, generally these parents they not educated. Some of
116 them, especially those who are moving around a lot and other are
117 very poor, they don't have money to buy all these things. I can see
118 the children when they are borrowing something from the others and
119 I can allow that in my class, because I can see they don't have it.

120 I: How do you assess your over age learners in your class?

121 R: (Long silence) My assessment is more or less the same with the
122 others in the class. I assess them on the work which they do and
123 even in the abilities, maybe others - they can't even - those who are
124 not writing. Sometimes I can see the child can pack some books for
125 the others in the cupboards, so I allow that, to pack it, so I can see
126 the child can feel comfortable in what he's doing. Furthermore we
127 are not writing tests, it's this continuous assessment that we are
128 doing because I'm looking whatever they are doing then I give some
129 points.

130 I: In your opinion what are some of the common problems
131 experienced by over age learners?

132 R: (Long silence) In the class, they can feel they don't fit in. You
133 see, if maybe the one child is old in the class he doesn't have
134 someone to communicate at their level; they reaching puberty and
135 are in grade 3, the other one are then too young, you see, and they
136 feel lonely.

137 I: If you are a parent of an over age learner, what kind of difficulties
138 might you experience as a parent from your child who is over age in
139 the class?

140 R: It depends on the learner, depends how the child grow up at
141 home first. Maybe older children, say they are in adolescence

142 already, they don't want to listen to their parents. Most of the older
143 kids are like that, not all of them. They do what they want to do.
144 Some of these children come late home. They are cheeky.

145 I: After looking at the various problems of older learners, what do
146 you think would be the needs of these children.

147 R: I think at school they also need care. Since they are older we
148 take for granted they don't need that care but they need it. They
149 need that caring and also assistance in their work. They need also
150 to be with their peers. At home they feel neglected, therefore they
151 need their parents to help them with their school work also. They
152 must not think they old enough, they can do things themselves.
153 They also need that care, like at school. They need to be heard too.

154 I: If you have to compare the ability levels of over age learners to
155 that of the younger one, what would your comment be?

156 R: There are those over age learners who are not doing well. I think
157 they might have learning problems: for example, there are those
158 who can't read and write clear and you can't do anything without
159 being able to read and write. You know I don't want to blame the
160 learner. Even in my class I'm trying to change some methods to see
161 whether I'm doing wrongly, maybe the child doesn't understand me.
162 Because I wouldn't say it's the learner; maybe the learner doesn't
163 understand me clearly, that's why I'm changing the approaches; so
164 that the child maybe could grasp, you see. That's why I use
165 brainstorming, I want to get it from them first, then I correct what
166 needed to be corrected.

167 I: Some people would say that one of the reasons why over age
168 learners becomes over age, is that they are held back for 2 to 3
169 years in a grade. What would you say to people like that.

170 R: I agree with what those people were saying because they being
171 kept for several years in a class and they are old now. In others it's
172 not the only reason, since they're from Eastern Cape, this moving
173 up and down, and this "bunking" from school is some of the other
174 reasons that causes them to be old in the classes. Others starting
175 grade 1 at older age.

176 I: What do you think are some of the strategies school can employ
177 to help this kind of learner.

178 R: Since these children are moving up and down and are coming
179 without a report, I think the school must try to have information from
180 Eastern Cape, but it is far, Eastern Cape. I also think that we must
181 - I don't want to say Bridging class because it's also delaying them -

182 but they need to Bridge to the mainstream, before you bring them
183 back to mainstream when they are ready of a certain class.

184 I: In conclusion, where do you see these over age learners going
185 when they finish here with their schooling?

186 R: Truly speaking, the future is not clear for them if they are too old.
187 Some try to go to high school, and the others drop out, you see. In
188 the high school they don't have the problem of younger kids - much
189 older kids there. You know, I think for those learners technology
190 could be the answer, in my opinion. You must teach them
191 something they can do with their hands. Even if they drop out, they
192 can do something with their hands, for that something lead them
193 somewhere, especially because they follow all the same curriculum,
194 there is no differentiation?

195 I: Do you have any other issue pertaining to over age learners you
196 want to discuss?

197 R: No, I don't think so!

198 I: Thank you very much, Mrs P.

MFULENI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Transcript: 17/10/2000

Interview Respondent no. 3

1 Introduction:

2 The respondent has been teaching for 3 years in the foundation
3 phase and is currently a grade 2 teacher, and has 40 learners in her
4 class.

5 **Question: Can you comment on your experiences with over age**
6 **learners?**

7 **Respondent(R):** Well in my class, you see, I don't have a problem.
8 I've got two learners who are over age, they not experiencing any
9 problem. They are much friendly to me and to other learners, So I'm
10 coping with them. I don't feel that they are over age.

11 Over the years there were big problems, especially those who are
12 coming from the Eastern Cape. We find out they lack something.
13 They lack a foundation. So they were brought from the upper
14 classes down to grade 2 or down to grade 1. So now you must now
15 just try by all means so that the child can fit in with the standard
16 that he has been placed in. This becomes a problem to that
17 particular child, to be removed from the upper classes or from the
18 age group from his or her peers and placed in a class with 7-year-
19 olds. You see, there are much difference between the older learner
20 and the younger ones.

21 The main problem is during the 1st quarter, it becomes difficult for
22 them to associate with the young ones. If he or she does not cope
23 with the work and yet the others are coping - are much faster - so it
24 becomes a problem, then you find out she's got the bad attitude
25 towards you and the other learners. But during the 2nd and the 3rd
26 quarter, then the problems are much lesser according to their
27 learning. So the problem lies in the first quarter; she doesn't
28 understand me, does not understand the learners, she does not
29 understand what was being said, but as the time goes on, she
30 becomes okay.

31 **Interviewer (I):** What do you think are the kind of learning problems
32 you battle with in class with regard to over age learners?

33 R: I don't do them separately, I'm just doing one thing for them. I
34 don't separate them, I don't want them to feel that they are the older
35 learners than the other ones - so all doing one thing at the same
36 time. Some of them do struggle especially if they lack something
37 from grade 1 and they are now in grade 2. They feel frustrated
38 because she is old and the younger one is coping. [It's now break
39 time.]

40 So, I try by all means to encourage the older learner to see what is
41 his/her mistake. Then, as the time goes by, she copes, so I put her
42 next to the one who is much faster, who understands better than her
43 so she can see and cope. But she can see what is being done by the
44 other learners.

45 Even now: it's break time at school, they are coping with the others
46 because you find out at break time they [over age learners] from
47 various classes play with each other. So you find there is no
48 problem during lunch times.

49 I: How would you describe the background of over age learners here
50 at your school.

51 R: The problem lies with the parents. For instance, the one which
52 I've got, she was in the other school in the neighbouring location,
53 which is called the Driftsands, so she has to travel a long distance.
54 So what I've read from her report was that she doesn't come
55 regularly to school and she stayed in grade 2 and then she removed
56 from that school to me. So I asked her So I found out the problem
57 was she's not a good person at all. Number one, it is academically
58 and number two she doesn't want to come to school. what was the
59 problem, but nothing come from the parents. So I told her to come
60 regularly everyday to school. That is the problem. The parents
61 doesn't put much pressure, the parents doesn't work together with
62 her child, that is after school and during weekends and holidays.

63 The other one is coming from the Eastern Cape. I called her mother,
64 I saw the mother. Number one, the mother is not educated so she
65 doesn't see a need for sitting together with her child and ask what
66 was happening and give her help where it is necessary. Parent
67 doesn't know anything about school, so she relies on the teacher.
68 When I asked her what was her problem of removal of your child
69 from Eastern Cape down to Cape Town. "But on the other side we
70 were staying with the grandparents, so I now here in Cape Town.
71 But my problem is that I cannot read and write." This is why she
72 does not know what is really, really happening at school. Even
73 those who are in the Eastern Cape, they were not putting much

74 pressure on the child to attend school, to see what happening. So
75 the parents are also playing a role on this child, because she drops
76 from Transkei before the year-end, then she come back to Cape
77 Town. Then I told the parents, well she cannot go into the upper
78 classes, she must repeat the grade, cannot say she was in grade 2,
79 so let her go to grade 3 because she's old - doesn't work like that.
80 We must be satisfied. So I think the main problem is the parent.

81 I: And how does the school deal with this?

82 R: Generally, write some letters, inviting the parents to come and
83 discuss the importance of education. And they do come and respond
84 and you can see that the learner has improved.

85 I: Tell me something about the truancy of over age learners from
86 school.

87 R: It's a big problem, especially if she doesn't cope with what is
88 being taught in the classroom. And here in Mfuleni what I've also
89 noticed is that this school is situated on the furthest corner, which is
90 very far. During winter, out of 40 learners you've got 21-27, the rest
91 doesn't come. Then if you ask the following day or week, "where
92 were you, why didn't you come?" she will tell you, "it was raining. I
93 don't have a rainsuit, raincoat. I stay far".

94 One day I took a ride with my car then I find out, hey, this school is
95 right at the far end of the corner, the rest of the location is far ...
96 far... far... far. They have to travel by foot. I think a second school is
97 highly needed in this location. And this distance is a real problem
98 for the entire school, not just for the foundation phase only in
99 winter. And you cannot blame them, you cannot, it's very far.

100 I: Some people say that, these learners appear to come from very
101 poor families.

102 R: Yes, the unemployment rate is very high here. If you can go
103 around in these classes you find out there are some learners who
104 still owe the school fund which is R30,00 per year. Then you'll both
105 find out, both parents are not working. So what can you do? Just
106 accept the child as he comes everyday, just go next door and
107 borrow a book for the learner to write in. So the unemployment rate
108 is very high.

109 I: Some people say that it is quite stressful to work with learners in
110 the class with such limited resources, what are your comments.

111 R: Ja, it is so. The first thing one find out is that the learners got no
112 books, no pencils, although the school provide some relief to buy
113 pencils for the learners. When you ask what is the problem, they say
114 parents are not working.

115 I: What do you think are some of the reasons why learners might
116 become over age.

117 R: It's due to the parents who do not bring there children to school,
118 or this travelling business, taking the child to Transkei. Then in
119 Transkei nothing is being done, than back to Cape Town. When
120 being back we find out - oh this is the same child who left there two
121 years ago. What happened? Long story - please, please take her
122 back.

123 I: What's your opinion of keeping a learner back or promoting a
124 learner who is over age?

125 R: I'm not sure because these kids differ. You can't promote a child
126 according to her age, especially if that particular child has repeated
127 a class and is not coping at all with what is being taught. But you
128 can promote, but promoting without a reason is not right because by
129 promoting a child you are skipping something from his life; so who's
130 going to fill that gap that you are skipping especially in the
131 foundation phase? You cannot skip the three R's without a reason. If
132 you skip you are killing that child. But if a child comes here for the
133 very first time you cannot just say "you are 13 years old, you must
134 go to grade 7" You are "killing" the child because there is a lot that
135 he has missed. You have to give that child some work to test where
136 he or she fit.

137 I: In an ideal situation, where do you think this child should be
138 placed?

139 R: This learner has a certain problem. If you mix them, like a 13
140 year old, 9 and 10 years old, there won't be a problem, there will be
141 a competition between them. Then the older learner will see from
142 the 9 and 10 year old learner that they are coping. Then he or she
143 will tell you, "Let me do like those", so the child is building his self-
144 esteem. If you separate them, there will be no competition, there will
145 be no sharing of ideas because they have already detected they are
146 old. So we have already labelled them, so they have that label in
147 their mind, "we don't belong to the same group". Because of the
148 labeling we mix them with the young ones so that they cannot feel
149 that.

150 I: In your opinion, what is the attitude generally toward over age
151 learners from teachers?

152 R: They see the child as older, she might be good, she might be
153 bad. So you as a teacher, you are also not sure of this child
154 because you are not sure about his attitude. She may come with
155 bad ideas to influence the young ones, she might come with good
156 ideas, she might be a good help to a teacher. So they are a bit
157 worried in the first quarter. In the first quarter it's not right; they do
158 not accept the older ones but as the time goes on they will just cope
159 with one another, play, learn.

160 I: What happens to these learners when they don't cope in school?

161 R: They drop out, or they bully, or they go to another school
162 especially if the parent is also siding with the child. If the parent
163 doesn't have a good motivation towards the learner, the parent will
164 start to blame the teacher, the school, the principal, everybody.
165 They change the learner to another school and that is a big problem,
166 changing a learner from one school to another school. In that school
167 that child is treated as a new person coming from wherever. There
168 they have to study the child and that take 4-6 months to study an
169 older learner coming from another school. It's better to stay in that
170 one school where everything has been written down: the teacher
171 know, the next teacher know, the principal, everybody knows about
172 that child, so it becomes better. This is a common problem of
173 parents coming and taking their children out and says that school
174 doesn't teach. The parent doesn't come in and intervene and ask,
175 "where can we help you? What is the problem? What can I do?" So
176 there is that break between the parent and the school -
177 communication breakdown. Then you find out - if calling a meeting -
178 they do not attend, especially those parents whose children have
179 problems, where those whose kids have no problem attend.

180 I: What's it like to teach a class with big differences?

181 R: It's my first time to have a class with older learners. It's difficult
182 because you have to teach two grades in one class: it's like grade 1
183 work and grade 2 work. So its difficult, especially for those learners
184 being promoted because of the age. In grade 2 you have to do grade
185 1 and 2 work.

186 I: Suppose that you are an over age learner at this school, what
187 would school be like for you?

188 R: I wouldn't have a problem, if the teacher doesn't have a problem
189 towards me. But in the first quarter teachers have a problem
190 because they do not know how I am going to cope in school.

191 I: How do you assess your over age learners?

192 R: I assess them all the same. I don't want to feel that - because
193 some of the learners do say sometimes - but I don't entertain some
194 learners to pick on older learners, saying so and so is old. But I do
195 not entertain that, I punish that child, I treat each one the same.

196 I: If this school have the opportunity to send away all the over age
197 learners to a special school, what would your response be to an
198 opportunity like that?

199 R: I would not like them to be taken away because they are old, you
200 know. What would the purpose be of moving them if they do not
201 have a problem. The problem doesn't lie with the child, it lies in
202 their background.

203 I: Some people suggest that over age learners' life opportunities are
204 very limited, what would your response be to that?

205 R: I don't know. I say - because if you've got a goal for yourself,
206 you've got a goal. It depends on that particular child. If you want to
207 reach his/her goals and the parent is forcing that child to go to
208 school and learn and forget about what is said according to her age.

209 I: What is your experience in the class as far as learning problems
210 are concerned pertaining over age learners?

211 R: I never has learners with physical problems. I had those who
212 didn't cope with anything in class so I reported the issue to the HOD
213 and to the previous teacher. I was told that she is like that; she
214 doesn't cope with anything, she still just come with books, with
215 everything, she cannot write her name. So I discussed the issue
216 with other teachers, "what can I do?" Then I was told, "it is a family
217 problem, all the learners from that particular family are like that.
218 They do not cope with school work ". So I took her to the next class
219 the following year. So she doesn't repeat any class, until the child
220 feels she doesn't want to come anymore to school. And her brother
221 has drop out in grade 5.

222 I: Do over age learners have the capacity to catch up with the work
223 they've lost?

224 R: Yes, they do, because they are old. Especially the one I've got
225 right now. She is coping, she is at the right level for her age – she's
226 old. She must learn to cope with the young one. She's got that
227 competition although they cannot see, but you can see there is a
228 competition between these learners.

229 I: Is there anything else that you would like to talk about in terms of
230 over age learners?

231 R: All the ones I've got now - they are so good and so kind to me.
232 Maybe it's the treatment I'm given them; they are helpful to me, they
233 are not bullying, they are helping me with everything in the class.

234 I: Many people are saying that there is lots of problems when you
235 have very young and very old learners in the same class: How do
236 you respond to that?

237 R: It depends how you treat them. If you yourself start to label them,
238 you promote that. In the very first quarter you just discipline them,
239 it wouldn't be like that.

240 I: What recommendation would you make with regard to over age
241 learners at your school.

242 R: You can just give them extra work if you think they are
243 problematic to your class. Give them extra work, which they could
244 be able to finish it. If he bully give him extra work, something that
245 keep him down. But labelling him by taking him out of one class and
246 putting him into another class or school - it wouldn't work. Just give
247 him something that would take much of his time or give him extra
248 work outside like cutting some trees or doing something heavy to
249 take out that ANGER.

250 I: I thank you very much.

MFULENI PRIMARY**Transcript 5.10.2000****Interview: Respondent no. 4****1 Introduction**

2 Respondent no. 4 is the principal of Mfuleni Primary. He was formerly
3 from a high school in East London.

4 **Question: Can you comment on your experiences with over age**
5 **learners?**

6 Respondent (R): As regards this issues of over age learners in schools, I
7 think, first of all one has got to provide an holistic approach on this issue.
8 My point of departure would be that the provision of the National
9 Education Ministry, as regards compulsory education is known as a
10 constitutional right for the learners, that is, those between the ages of 7-
11 15 years, to be provided with schooling. Now it stands to reason that the
12 provincial education department has got to toe the line. Hence, we are
13 being compelled in a way that we should stick to those required age limits
14 of 7-15 years.

15 Now, coming to this issue of over age, one finds it so difficult as to how
16 you can define it. I'll try to give it a compatible definition with the
17 provincial ministry as regards to what they refer to as over age learners.
18 Now what I can say about this issue of over age learners: *I think it refers*
19 *to the appropriate placing of the learners in a particular grade,*
20 *corresponding with age as prescribe by the National Education Ministry.*
21 For instance, it suppose that a learner who turns 7 years on his first year
22 of schooling - that learner should be placed in grade 1 that is any learner
23 who is above the age of seven is not suppose to be in grade 1 because
24 that learner according to the stipulations of the Department - that learner
25 would be regarded as an over age learner.

26 Now coming to this issue of over age in our schools, as regards our
27 cultural background - that is the Black people - we did not attach so much
28 attention on the age of the pupil [break time], that is to which grade that
29 pupil should be placed because in the past we had some instances whereby
30 you had a learner of 10 years starting schooling, that is, being placed in
31 grade 1. But one has got to be broadly minded because one cannot put the
32 blame on the parents because you'll find now if there is a parent working
33 far away from where the kids is schooling - and as we understand the
34 issue of truancy, absenteeism on the part of the kid - the parent cannot
35 properly monitor attendance of the learner and he [parent] would be under

36 the intention that the learner is attending school, which in fact would just
37 be the opposite and you find out that, that learner - it would be so
38 difficult now for the school to try to promote that learner to the next
39 standard because for most of the time - lets say for 3-6 months - he has
40 been absent from school. That learner now would be forced to repeat that
41 same standard the next year. Now he repeats that standard the same year
42 and now we would refer to that learner as an over age learner. Hence I'm
43 saying now, it's really so difficult for us to try to be - to put the blame on
44 parents because of some historical background etc. But its from where we
45 are coming from, that is from our past, but being the case we cannot in a
46 way regard that as an excuse; we've got to toe the line.

47 I: I hear you speak about cultural factors

48 R: Yes, there was no difference, no difficulty because, once I refer to
49 cultural practices, we know how to deal with the learner in that particular
50 standard. Maybe one can regard that as being how we dealt with that
51 issue, as being as somewhat suppressing the feelings of the learner, that is
52 in terms of inflicting corporal punishment that is the learner has got to toe
53 the line, etc. So that was the role you see. Perhaps I say we did not
54 experience so much difficulties to adapt that learner to that particular
55 standard but, being the case, we were doing a tremendous damage to that
56 learner.

57 I: For example ...

58 R: Ok, let's take for instance a learner who is 16 years old and then this
59 learner is placed in grade 1, okay. Now in grade 1 the learners who are
60 suppose to be there are learners of more or less seven years of age. So the
61 first handicap that that learner has got to experience is the age difference
62 because in that now he's going to sit with learners who are somewhat
63 younger than himself and being the case now, even his thinking, mentally
64 is going to drop because there wouldn't be any challenge to that older
65 learner to perform to his maximum potential because even the teacher in
66 front of the class would try more or less to accommodate the learners who
67 are of the same age, that is the 7 year olds, to such and that the second
68 point now is: that learner would feel in a way alienated in that class and
69 alienation automatically is going to cause some withdrawal. The learner
70 would withdraw, he wouldn't participate in schooling and learning
71 activities, okay. And then - now the most important part - if now that is
72 not the case, what you find now about that learner, there would be some
73 behavioural problems, that is, this learner would try to impact on the
74 entire class, because he's old and he has got classmates that is too much
75 smaller, you see, This would be elements like bullying, etc. The learners
76 whom he mixes with would be in the very same class. It might happen
77 now that he's friends are in, let's say, grade 7, okay. During break times

78 he associates with learners of his age but now after breaktime he's got to
79 go back to the class and to interact now with his classmates who are much
80 younger than himself. And automatically now there would be this group
81 pressure, that is the peer pressure that he has experienced with his own
82 peer group and would try by all means to influence the young ones. And
83 even the behaviour of the younger ones, that wouldn't be acceptable
84 behaviour.

85 I: What do you think should be the ideal situation for over age learners?

86 R: For this learners I think some special schools have got to be created.
87 They've got to be separated from other learners. Let's suppose, maybe
88 that here at school I've got approximately 200 over age learners, I feel
89 what is the proper mechanism for them, it is not to try to - taking them
90 out of the school but, we trying to deny them education but they should be
91 placed in a proper school environment that fit with their age, like for
92 instance, maybe a school where they can expose their other talents that
93 they've got, like they should not follow the mainstream. In other words
94 they should not be in the same environment as the kids who are too much
95 younger than them.

96 I: What is your opinion of promoting over age learners with there age
97 peers?

98 R: Ja, this is another issue of how we are trying to solve this issue of
99 promoting. In fact, by this promotion I feel that there is an element of
100 disservice that we are doing to this kids because there is the age factor
101 that say they should move to the next grade. But due to the fact that they
102 are too much old for their previous grade and then we take them to the
103 next grade - okay, that's fine. But personally I really feel they've done a
104 little bit of disserve to those kids. They've got a kid, if maybe - for
105 instance in grade 1 a kid has got to be taken from point 1 to point 6, even
106 that old boy that is an over age learner, he's got to go through the same
107 process and one has got to gauge his performance. That is, promotion to
108 me should be by performance and not by the age factor because it seems
109 to me we are not fair in a way to these kids because through my
110 experience, what wouldn't be okay - in these classes that's what are
111 usually done - we keep on promoting them, promoting these kids maybe
112 up to grade 11, okay. And then I want to come to grade 12 - now they
113 experience some learning difficulties because most of the work that is
114 required for the grade 12 external examination is being covered in the
115 preceding grades. But in this issue of promotion, you find out that those
116 learners who cannot really cope. Hence, now we got even this issue of
117 drop-outs, particularly in the higher grades, due to this promotion. Now,
118 how this promotion should be done I feel - if maybe - it ought to be done,
119 one way or another, because by retaining these students, lets say for 2-3

120 years in that same grade, you are denying another kid the right to an
121 education. For instance, you take grade 1, you retain that kid for more
122 than 3 years in the same grade. There are those who are coming from the
123 pre-primary school who are ready for formal schooling [end of break] and
124 by retaining that kid in grade 1 you are denying one or two kids of school
125 going age the opportunity of coming into the stream of formal education.

126 I: A catch 22 hey: You got difficulty in promoting them as well as
127 retaining them?

128 R: Ja, in fact the point I was trying to put across is that promotion can be
129 done so long as all stakeholders are involved in education, particularly the
130 parents. Now, what is happening with this OBE, there's continuous
131 assessment that demands total involvement and total participation of
132 parents in the education of their kids in the sense that now and again they
133 have to come and visit the school to come and check on the progress of
134 their kids. Now, if that parent have been coming to the school and
135 gauging the performance of their child receiving it from the educator, the
136 class teacher etc., now there won't be any problems because that parent
137 would know: my kid is overall performing and I feel now my kid should
138 not be placed in that standard.

139 I: What do you think are some of the reasons for parents not engaging
140 with school?

141 R: I think the main one is this issue of ignorance. Ja, some of our parents
142 are ignorant really, they don't attach that much importance to education.
143 You find in some instances they regard school as a dumping ground for
144 kids, let's say, what I mean by dumping ground: you find the parents
145 bring in 7 year old to school, that is on registration. You register that kid.
146 Grade 1 teacher will call a meeting with grade 1 parents and that parent
147 wouldn't turn up. The only time you'll see that parents at school is the
148 following year, demanding, or at the end of the year, demanding the
149 reason, "why have my kid failed?" So, hence I'm saying that some of the
150 parents really - they regard school as a dumping ground; it is minus one
151 problem, I know now that for the rest of the day my kid is not around
152 (Parent) Somebody is taking care of my kid and they know now if
153 anything happens to that kid during the day the only blame they would put
154 - they would put it to the school, that is, "why did my kid" let's say - "in
155 such a thing...".

156 I: How would you describe a typical over age learner?

157 R: For me, a typical over age learner (laughing) that's a tough question ...
158 (long silence)

159 I: Suppose that you are an over age learner, what would it be like for you.

160 R: (Huge sigh) It might have some, negative and positive elements.
161 Positive elements in the sense that, automatically the teacher would place
162 too much of a responsibility on me. Let's say they have a staff meeting
163 etc., they would say to me, "look after the young ones". It's too much of a
164 responsibility, that is, it's going to create too much closeness between
165 yourself and the teacher because whatever is happening in the class you
166 are always delegated that you should do it. But now the part is if you
167 don't perform well academically, you would feel so embarrassed to be
168 overtaken by a kid who is far too young than your age. And I think that are
169 some problems for over age learners: that is, things like dropping out of
170 school. You feel so embarrassed and even those learners in that particular
171 class, okay, they might have a respect for you but that respect would
172 somewhat - they challenged it - if you don't perform well academically
173 (laughing).

174 I: Some people think it is best to retain these learners because they have
175 difficulty in mastering the school work at the level they are in. What
176 would you say to these people?

177 R: Ja, you keep them back. I got even a problem on that score, that is to
178 retain them within the school. I'll be glad if maybe there is a place or an
179 educational institution that only caters for all over age learners because
180 there are so many of them. Some have never been to school at the age of
181 15 years and how do you expect that learner to feel if now you admit him
182 to your school? Really, it's going to cause some problems. And another
183 thing about these over age - you see our kids today - they are so
184 advanced. You'll get some teachers who are almost of the same age of the
185 learners and you can see that the type of relationship is sometimes so
186 destructive to the development of the learner because you'll find in some
187 instances, particularly in the high schools, that a young teacher being
188 attracted to a learner and that leads to a relationship and it becomes well-
189 known to the school and it's really an embarrassment to the school.
190 Hence, really I feel now that these old learners, they should be provided
191 with a formal education but not in the same environment as learners of
192 school going age. They have to be placed somewhere, that is a special
193 place that have got to be established for them, really.

194 I: Even if that learner is 9 years old at school entry, you suggest that they
195 should be separated from the mainstream?

196 R: Nine years old - I think there should be a compromise in some sense,
197 there are those in fact who are not so much older. A nine year old who
198 come for the school for the first time, I think they should just be given a
199 chance because there is not so much difference in age. And it might

200 happen that that one who is 9 years old had never been, for instance, to a
201 crèche, coming straight from home to school. Now that one who is 7 years
202 old coming from a crèche - you find once you'll put these two together,
203 there's not so much difference. In fact that one who's coming from a
204 creche, he knows the culture of schooling and he'll be much better than
205 the one who is 9 years old, you see. And that one who is 9 years old, I
206 feel, he should not be separated from the mainstream. What I mean by this
207 separation is only on extreme cases where you find now, let's for instance
208 say, that 15 years old starting formal education in grade one, you see.
209 Know, I feel strongly that one who is 15 years old, really he should not be
210 placed in the same school as a kid of seven years old. One way or another
211 he's got to be provided with some sort of education.

212 I: What are some of the problems these over age learners experience when
213 not in school, for example, being truant from school?

214 R: I'm of the opinion that you wouldn't find them attending school
215 regularly because I mean - schooling for them - I really doubt that is
216 something that is enticing to them. Because in some instances you find
217 out that, let's say you are a parent, you are a strict parent and the boy is
218 16 years old and now he's supposed to do grade 3, you see. Now
219 automatically the strict parent, believing in the value of education, put
220 some pressure on that boy to attend school. Okay, that boy would only
221 show to you what I can call outward conformity, that is, "I know if my
222 father says I do this and if I don't do it I get the sweep [cane]" but inside
223 himself there going to be a personality clash because some of his age
224 group are outside, probably they are members of gangs, they are working
225 and those are the people whom he associates with that is after school. So I
226 don't think that over age kid can really attend school on a regular basis.
227 He would prefer to be outside the school to involve himself - in most
228 cases he would involve himself in unacceptable social behaviour, things
229 like gangsterism, drugs, liquor, crime, etc.

230 I: Some people say that learners changing schools to often, is one of the
231 reasons why they as learners experience so many problems. What's your
232 comment on that view?

233 R: Its really one of the frustrating problems because what you'll find is:
234 that kid left his previous school, there is a problem, he's running away
235 from the problems. This is particularly a problem with older learners
236 especially when it comes to a new school in the first few years of its
237 opening; most of its learners are over age, you see, and all the social
238 delinquents - that is of the previous schools would flock to this new
239 school. Hence, you'll find it so difficult, in fact it's so rife, you find a
240 new school that with all the learners from various areas coming now and
241 try to make a name for themselves, you see. If you take a new area, that is

242 a new township, you'll find that in that new township all the social misfits
243 from the various townships would come to that area and they would just
244 cause havoc in that new area. So I think the same applies to these kids
245 hopping from one school to another; they are not in a way - it's a strong
246 word - serious about education. You'll find some are pressurized by
247 parents but personally they feel they are not of the school-going age.

248 Furthermore, it's also so unfortunate, that is, of the unacceptable
249 migration from rural areas to the townships, particularly of learners, that
250 is this year he's in Cape Town, the next year he's in Transkei, just
251 moving up and down, up and down. Why I say unfortunate; it's caused by
252 factors which is beyond the control of the education system, like the
253 socio-economic factors, the working opportunities of parents, and so on.
254 We cannot run away, we've got to accept those kids. You'll find now that
255 most of these kids are coming from the rural areas; they come to school in
256 the cities, most of them are over age. They come to your school, you ask
257 for a birth certificate. Okay maybe if you are fortunate enough you'll get
258 a birth certificate. Then this kid is over age but, being yourself as a
259 parent, you've got that sympathy in yourself, you see, and you feel now
260 that you've got to squeeze this kid into your school although you know it
261 is really morally wrong, that is, particularly to the small kids to have the
262 bullying ones.

263 I: How do you think over age learners should be assessed?

264 R: We assess them according to their intellectual potential, that is, how
265 they perform in class, that is, academic performance. And I think one
266 should not end there, that is, with academic performance. There should be
267 really some other factors that one has got to look at, like the relationship
268 this kid has with other kids, that is, how does he interact with other kids.
269 And also, assuming that this kid is not performing academically well, we
270 should not try to condemn that kid; it might happen that that kid has got
271 some other talents that need to be developed. In fact, that's what I like
272 about this whole OBE business, it does not only focus on how much you
273 know but it also develops some of your latent potentials that an educator
274 can discover in you. And then once you assess that kid you should take
275 into consideration all these factors mentioned.

276 I: What other kinds of problems do over age learners experience beside
277 being over age?

278 R: What comes to my mind is an issue of discipline, classroom discipline;
279 it's so hard for them to fit into the schooling system, that is, the culture
280 of the school. Some of them have problems like being slow mentally, for
281 instance, if a kid is not nurtured properly from the onset, automatically,
282 even if he is like myself - I regard myself as normal - that might develop

283 some disabilities like reading, writing, he might take a long time to get
284 accustomed to those because he has not been trained properly from the
285 age.

286 I: How do you think should over age learners be provided for in
287 mainstream schools?

288 R: Besides academic teaching, I think they have to be taught some skills
289 like woodwork, gardening, metalwork, things like music - trying to
290 develop these kids, because really, I think they will be having some
291 difficulties in adjusting to the formal teaching situation. And another
292 thing that I think would greatly help those kids is if the [education]
293 department provide, let's say a remedial education to schools because of
294 the problem I experience. You'll find now that parents send their kids to
295 school despite being fully aware that my kid has got this problem etc., and
296 the parent, he wouldn't tell you that my kid has got this learning problems
297 yourself. And the main problem is that even with teachers who have not
298 been fully trained to identify those problems at an early stage.

299 You know, what we usually do: now this kid is badly performing, and
300 during break I'll go to the staffroom to socialize with my colleagues, and
301 in our talk we like to refer to the kids - maybe you don't know this kid,
302 you'll call him and you might say "No Clive, don't call him, he's a stupid
303 kid". This kid hears that. What have you done as a teacher? Because by
304 uttering those words you have really destroyed that kid. Because it might
305 happen that there is a problem with that kid, but if he had been assisted
306 early on that problem could have been solved, but by labeling him now,
307 really, you are destroying him and that is how we as teachers also
308 contribute to this high drop-out rate - through our own utterances to the
309 kids that is here at school. We are saying terrible things to kids in front of
310 the kids, demoralizing them; than automatically that kid would feel not
311 part of the school.

312 Just an example Clive I was as principal at a high school, there was
313 one HOD there, a lady and this lady - even now I don't know what was
314 really wrong with her - she had a closeness with learners. I don't know,
315 maybe it was a shortcoming of this lady, because there was one learner - I
316 think he failed std 8 twice, okay. This HOD, what she did was - she said
317 this boy must go to the next standard the following year. Okay, that was
318 fine. And this thing was discovered round about March. To our
319 understanding he is suppose to be repeating the previous standard, okay.
320 Now we had to confront the HOD, now the learner had to be taken out of
321 the class to a lower class, You see the damage in morale that the very
322 same teacher, who thought she was helping was doing to this learner.
323 Okay ... the learner moved down to std 8 but he did not stay long and
324 dropped out. He became a social misfit in the community a drunkard. But

325 the time he was at school he was a good boy. Hence, I'm saying some of
326 the things that we as teachers are doing is destroying the futures of
327 learners.

328 I: Your comments about English as a language of instruction?

329 R: In grade 2 we introduce English as a subject and in the senior phase it
330 becomes a language of instruction.

331 I: Why?

332 R: (Laughing. Long silence) I think why it's a language of instruction is
333 to give the kids the foundation for the outside world and thus since they
334 having finished the intermediate phase, they go to senior phase up to
335 grade 12 - from grade 12 they've got to face the world and it is so
336 unfortunate that it would really be so painful for that kid to face the real
337 world without having been fully equipped with the previously so-called
338 official languages. I mean, for instance, let's just be practical, we take
339 maybe, my kids, some, they get their instructions in Xhosa in the
340 foundation phase. Okay, it's fine in the foundation phase because the kid
341 has got to identify with his mother tongue but as he grows older
342 automatically that kid is going to mix with other kids from different racial
343 groups. Just as a matter of interest Clive, what is happening here at
344 Mfuleni: in grade 1 we do have some kids ... they promote those kids to
345 grade 2, grade 2 to grade 3 but the majority of them grade 2, grade 3. The
346 parents feel the schooling system is not okay for their kids, they would
347 rather take their kids across the street (a Coloured neighbourhood),
348 Malibu etc. I think it reinforces what I'm trying to say, that is, we are
349 trying to equip this kids what they should expect in later life because it's
350 really - it wouldn't make sense to educate this kids in Xhosa as the
351 medium of instruction. Okay, now once this kid gets to grade 12, the
352 language that is used to write their external examination - it wouldn't be
353 their home language, it will be a foreign language. So really, I feel,
354 although it is really painful to these little ones, but some of them really,
355 they do cope, that is, in grade 2, grade 3. They will get some words in
356 English, their vocabulary will develop.

357 I: Are there any issues that you would like to talk about?

358 R: (Laughing) In fact, as a comment Clive, I think its only properly that
359 proper mechanisms be put in place by the [education] Department as
360 regard the issue of over age learners because, as I said, really to put them
361 in the mainstream mixing them with kids that are much smaller than they
362 are, really, ja it does have some positives, but on the whole I think its not
363 to their advantage. Something else has got to be done; they should not be

364 removed from mainstream, but a special physical set-up has got to be set
365 up for those kids; let's say, one school that caters for this kids.

366 I: In concluding what do you think are the attitudes here at your school
367 generally speaking toward over age learners.

368 R: To be honest with you, it's not encouraging, its negative because some
369 teachers, once a learner is to old they feel being threatened. Now not in a
370 manner where the learner knows too much but as a person, that is, if
371 maybe I want to implement such behaviour patterns, this kid might rebel
372 againgt me and, by rebelling in front of the class, I mean that boy or girl
373 would be degrading you to other learners and you might even lose some
374 respect. I've got some case here, where you think there is no teacher in
375 the class, but the teacher is there, the class is so chaotic, too much noise
376 and once you enter being the principal the kids behave, so all in all Clive
377 here are teachers who feel threatened by over age learners and most them,
378 they feel this kid should not be accommodated. I usually negotiate with
379 the teachers to accommodate them, although you'll find a quiet resistance.
380 (Laughing heartily)

381 I: Mr R. I thank you very much.

Mfuleni Primary

Transcript: 11 October 2000

Interview: Respondent no. 5

1 Introduction:

2 Respondent no. 5 is one of two Deputy Principals. He is the deputy
3 principal for the intermediate phase.

4 Open structured question:

5 Can you comment on your experiences with over age learners?

6 Respondent (R): Out of my experience in Khayelitsha, which was one of
7 the places meant for squatter camps with a lot of learners coming from
8 rural areas like Transkei, there was no control over admission to schools.
9 Now we had a mixture of kids, different ages, different areas where they
10 come from. Now, when they inside the school, then you experience
11 problems like behaviour. But we discovered that these children are too old
12 to be there, but academically, they belong there. Now with the class these
13 older learners start to bully others, whatever. Now there was no problem
14 how we should treat the overcrowdedness in the classroom, we just admit
15 them all, otherwise they are at home alone, and the rape rate is so much
16 high and crime was so much high; now that's why we admit 5 yrs to 5½ to
17 bridging class. Now you find as the years go by, the child will try to catch
18 up everything and you allow the child to go to another level. You know
19 Clive, we might say we are facing a difficult situation now whereby
20 parents - they are not aware when they push kids into school like that -
21 for the parent, once a child is tall, parent says the child must go to school.
22 Now these learners comes from different areas, Transkei, Ciskei, whereby
23 kids are kept at home to look after cattle; parent do not take school as
24 important whatsoever. And even in rural areas the school are far away
25 from each other and children must travel long distances to school by foot.

26 Now here at Mfuleni, when children come here from Eastern Cape,
27 Transkei, different rural areas - let's say one parent is working here and
28 decide to bring their child along - immediately when that child arrives
29 here that child has no report. That put us in a predicament because this
30 child must be placed somewhere and this child is already over age at a
31 certain grade. Parents are crying to have their kids admit to school. Now
32 where to put these over age learners is a problem and as soon as they are
33 placed they causes problems in the class.

34 Interviewer (I): How do you deal with learners presenting without any
35 documentation like reports, birth certificates?

36 R: Now the department insist on learners having documentation. But even
37 there, the problem is from where they come from: a child come here and
38 say, "I staying with my sister and there is nobody at home" I have to take
39 that child - Mfuleni being the only primary school here - without her
40 having any documentation. Parents come with reason like "my home is on
41 fire, everything was burnt" - no documentation. But in the long run
42 parent get to know that it will be difficult to admit their child without any
43 documentation.

44 I: What kinds of problems do these learners experience once they are
45 in school.

46 R: Physically the atmosphere.... Let's start with morning devotion when
47 they are in their lines from grade 1 to grade 7, standing in the queue. You
48 see yourself as a big boy/girl together with the young one. No matter what
49 your age, at the end of the day they will know what your age is, they will
50 say, "you are older than us, you suppose to be std 10". These over age
51 children who stand in that queue are always late to avoid standing in
52 queue, because he's treated like a child. You wouldn't be able to perform,
53 to be active in the class. When teacher pose questions he tries to always
54 bully or to show that he is the oldest; he is aware that he is old for them.

55 I: What's your impression of the scholastic performance of these over age
56 learners in class?

57 R: Some of them cope. But you know the overcrowded classrooms make it
58 difficult to pay attention to each one. Some of them love the
59 responsibility being given to them, when you ask them to do a job, some
60 of them like to be monitors, prefects. Most of the over age who enjoy the
61 task is the girls; the boy, instead of taking responsibility, come to bully
62 others and you find now they bully others. But when you come to
63 academic work, they don't perform well. But if you ask them, "please
64 collect this [non-school task], they very helpful; but when it comes to
65 school work they not performing.

66 I: What happens to the over age learners at the end of the year?

67 R: They start to worry when it comes to exam times. They become quiet,
68 start to slow down because they worried that they never performed well.

69 Now that they have changed this assessment, a learner can't repeat a
70 standard twice. Than according to the age, we promote this child; we

71 condone this child, conditionally. Now OBE will help here because the
72 child will work according to his age.

73 Now, if we had remedial teachers it would help us, you see, especially
74 where the child keeps on failing and his report is so reddish. The child is
75 down, goes home and he has no special attention from the parent,
76 whatsoever.

77 These learners are now promoted, they go to high school. Now they can't
78 read; the learner now give up or they got promoted in high school until he
79 got tired or simply fail grade 12.

80 I: What do you think is the teachers attitude towards these learners?

81 R: It a problem. Our teachers has never specialised in paying special
82 attention to kids; we don't have that special attention - there's no time. I
83 don't have that skills of special education teacher. That's why we are
84 everything: we are a guidance teacher, special teacher. That's why these
85 kids need to go to special school, they are far behind as far as age and
86 school work is concerned.

87 These learners also are discriminated against when it come to sport; they
88 are too old for primary school sport.

89 I: What do you think is the younger learners' attitude towards the over
90 age learners?

91 R: These younger learners have difficulty to accept the older learners
92 because the older learners start to dominate the class, and you always hear
93 the young ones complaining, "one is beating us there". Now if it is a girl
94 who is over age, you'll find that girl won't be participating in, she always
95 keep quiet; in the class she's too shy, she's aware she's over age.

96 I: What do you think should the ideal situation be for over age learners?

97 R: I think a special school, because they would be treated at the same
98 level with other also over age, whereas in primary school we expect lots
99 from them because at their age in class we expect them to understand. But
100 the feedback wouldn't be what is expected of their age.

101 I: If you were an over age learner in this school, what do you think your
102 experiences would be like?

103 R: It wouldn't be a good experience to me because I'm aware that I'm
104 older and I'll be treated in a young manner - it will differ.

105 I: Do you have any other issues that you would like to talk about
106 concerning over age learners?

107 R: The other thing, when it come to misconduct of over age learners: over
108 age learners are very reluctant to report misconduct by the young ones,
109 for example, teasing by the young ones. They deal with it themselves.

110 I: In conclusion, some people say that over age learners have many kinds
111 of learning disabilities. How would you respond to that?

112 R: You know, it's more about attitude and background of these learners:
113 for why should I go to school, parents are uneducated. It really depends
114 on their background. When parents are not interested in child's schooling,
115 even the peer group negatively influence child not to attend school. But
116 make no mistake, parents want their child to be educated but parents are
117 very poor, can't afford even basics like mealie meal, maize. How can a
118 child who starve learn in school?

119 End of interview.

120 Mr. B thank you very much.

INJONGO PRIMARY

PILOT INTERVIEW – NOV, 1999

Interview: Respondent no. 6

1 Introduction

2 Respondent no. 6 is an open learning teacher in the foundation phase,
3 participating in a research project under the auspices of POLP relating to
4 the curriculum needs of over age learners.

5 Respondent no. 6 was identified as a potential interview candidate by one
6 of Kuils River School Clinic's learning support facilitators. Respondent
7 no. 6 intends to do her master's degree on the over age learner
8 phenomenon.

9 The purpose of the interview was explained to the respondent. The
10 purpose was to test some of the questions I had developed and to check
11 whether the respondent found the question to be easily understandable.
12 The respondent was also asked to assist the researcher in refining by
13 deleting or adding any question that might highlight the phenomenon.

14 The teacher teaches to multi-age/multi-grade learners (at grade 1 and
15 grade 2 level) in an ungraded environment.

16 I: What is your understanding of over age learners?

17 R: They are children who have been delayed, due to social problems and
18 sometimes emotional problems. But most of the parents would say she was
19 delayed because all the time the child was sick, for instance, the child had
20 severe seizures.

21 I: What do you think are some of the reasons for the many over age
22 learners you had at your school?

23 R: Some reasons as I say earlier is due to social problems, like the
24 children who has never been at school. But for some reason they are
25 coming to us whereby the child will stay in one class for 3 years and when
26 you look at that particular child, you see that the child has got the ability
27 but she was never taken care of. And in terms of numbers you can't blame
28 the teachers so much. You find they are concentrating on the clever ones
29 because they are saying, "due to pressure from the principal" who want
30 good results. So teachers tend to concentrate on those learners who can do
31 the work and over age learners are sort of left behind.

32 Another thing is that the parents would not participate in their children's
33 education, for example, they don't even know that the child have been
34 absent for 4 days of the week. Sometimes teachers are aware the child
35 has a problem but they do not know how to diagnose the problem; so they
36 tend to ignore the child saying, "I don't know what to do with the child".

37 I: What is the school policy towards older children

38 R: The policy is that those who are beginners - they are over age but they
39 have been in grade 2 - they are taken into one special class, whereby all
40 over age learners are going to stay for 2 years, and we monitor the
41 progress of the child and they go to std 2. But there are those who come
42 into school - older than grade 3, they are over age - we don't
43 accommodate them in the sense of their age, like grade 1 up to grade 7,
44 we put them into the normal classes. When I talk about normal classes -
45 they stay with younger children, in other words, we are catering only for
46 grade 1 and 2 only; grade 3+, over age learners is part of the mainstream.

47 Another thing ... teachers got that negative attitude towards over age
48 learners - who don't want to work with over age learners. I don't find the
49 education department's approach to over age learners supportive, for
50 instance, we are being help by a certain project (POLP) providing books
51 etc. I don't see the education department supporting this initiative
52 whatsoever ... I think the education dept really doesn't know what to do
53 about over age learners.

54 I: What is your opinion about putting over age learners into one class.

55 R: I think it's a good thing to put them in special - that class because they
56 can share their problems, they know each other and they understand each
57 other. Because when you place them in mainstream class they always feel
58 intimidated, because they are stigmatized, they are so old - remarks
59 coming from the teachers and the learners in the class... If he repeat, he
60 is stigmatized because of his age. So when they are in one class they don't
61 feel stimatized by age. Their age ranges are between 10 - 15 years old in
62 these class, which basically is a special class because most of these
63 learners are having problems to learning. In this special over age class
64 learners have the opportunity to accelerate their learning progress so that
65 they can join their age-grade peers. Now for some this is working, for
66 others it don't because they are so slow, very slow in learning. So only a
67 very few manage to join their age-grade peers, the majority doesn't get
68 through. But there is an advantage to be in the class and it for those who
69 are old and be able to accelerate themselves.

70 I: What kind of problems prevents these slow learners from making
71 progress

72 R: When you look at those kids a lot of them are street kids, you know.
73 These children tend to drop out because teachers don't believe in them or
74 are too strict. For example, when these kids come late - not tolerated by
75 teachers. A lot of these children are not used to routine.

76 Some of these learners must be given a skill they can use especially for
77 those who dropout; skills like computers, woodwork, skills that will
78 enable learners to start own business.

79 I: What does the parent think of these special classes?

80 R: Most parents like the acceleration part. But you'll find parent is not
81 involve in education of child. But when the report says that the child must
82 repeat, suddenly parents come to school. So I don't take a child into this
83 over age class if the parent doesn't commit to be involved in the child's
84 education. Sometimes parents say, "I'm working, I can't make it". You'll
85 find parents register and promise to participate in school but after that
86 first day of registration you don't see the parents again.

87 Now some parents becomes very frustrated, saying this child's suppose to
88 be in standard seven and he is still in primary school. I think these parents
89 become desperate because he can see their neighbours child are
90 progressing.

91 I: What do you think is the teacher's attitude to over age learners?

92 R: They are different. Some teachers, they see this class as a class of
93 "malkop" - seriously - but other teacher have changed, they see now this
94 learner coming from the over age class, cope with the work in grade 4+.
95 Some teachers feel over age learners is not for them, they've got that
96 attitude. They approach them as problematic children.

97 I: What are some of the problems over age learners' experience.

98 R: Some are so demoralised. Because especially for those who have been
99 at school for 3 or 4 years? They come to see themselves as knowing
100 nothing. Some of them are worried of their age. They say "My age is of
101 Joe Slovo High". So they become ashamed. They start not to wear the
102 uniform of this school, they start to wear the uniform of Joe Slovo,
103 pretending to be a member of that school. I don't confront them about
104 wearing that uniform; I can see their pain.

105 These learners need the basic skills like writing, reading, but more skill is
106 needed in something they can use. Because I'm worried of the children

107 that stay in grade 1 for 3 years and she drop out of school saying "It's to
108 much and she already 18 years old and she have nothing.

109 I: In your opinion how should these learners be taught.

110 R: It differs. Sometimes I start with numeracy, sometimes with literacy,
111 than coming to their groups according to what they know. I teach
112 differently depending on what that groups knows. But generally I
113 approach them as children who can learn and who wants to be something
114 even if there's circumstances that has delayed them like: social problems,
115 coming to school doesn't have food, pressure of paying school fees, wear
116 of uniform, some having boyfriend.

117 I: What's your opinion about retaining or promoting over age learners.

118 R: If you don't promote them it becomes a problem because that child
119 know that work as such and when he's promoted its because of his age. If
120 I promote them I must move with them so that I know their problems. But
121 if you are taking them to another teacher - child makes small mistake,
122 teacher not sensitive enough - you sort of frustrating that child. But still
123 if you retain that particular child, she maybe gains something because she
124 gets another chance to know the stuff that she didn't. But still, whoever is
125 teaching them, she should be made aware this child got a problem with
126 this and this but have a problem with that and that. So it is sometimes
127 necessary to retain them.

128 I: In concluding what are your thoughts about over age learners? What
129 would you like to see happening?

130 R: I would like to see those children at the end of the day to be something
131 in life, like to see them having those skill whereby they can move on with
132 life, not being dependant on others..

133 Se**** thank you very much.

APPENDIX 4.2: Over age learner statistics at Mfuleni primary – Grade 1-5**TOTAL LEARNER POPULATION: 1322****TOTAL TEACHING STAFF: 31**

MFULENI PRIMARY			
OVER AGE LEARNERS : SEPTEMBER 2000			
GRADE 1 A			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
1. Maseti Babhuti	Male	88.09.25	12 years
2. Vodwazana Khumbalani	M	90.11.17	10
3. Mahlangu Lucky	M	91.09.01	9
4. Mlanda Vuyani	M	91.10.18	9
5. Tokwana Olwethu	M	91.12.23	9
6. Tshaka Bonginkosi	M	91.11.10	9
7. Gomomo Veliswa	Female	87.05.03	13
8. Bbengo Bongiswe	F	91.06.02	9
9. Msolo Neliswa	F	91.09.14	9
10. Sedumedi Princess	F	91.09.01	9
11. Molosi Xoli	F	91. 04. 19	9yrs
GRADE 1 B			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
12. Bhasholo Avuyile	M	91.07.12	9 years
13. Gedesi Sinethemba	M	89.08.05	11
14. Thabalaza Sibusiso	M	90.06.27	10
15. Msitshana Siphokazi	F	91.07.21	9
GRADE 1 C			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
16. Bush Luvo		91.02.21	9 years
17. Mapatalala Odwa		91.05.12	9
18. Tshabalala Thulani		91.03.23	9
GRADE 1 D			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
19. Tsekoa Ntsilenseng	F	91.09.17	9 years
20. Molosi Abongile	M	91.06.22	9
21. Dulaze Nosibusiso	F	91. 06. 05	9yrs
GRADE 1 E			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
22. Tsilite Bulelwa	F	91.11.14	9 years
23. Mabusela Sandiso	M	91.08.31	9

24. Kom Sive	M	91.12.27	9
25. Ndongeni Papama	M	91.05.26	9
GRADE 1F			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
26. Namdi Mafumdityala		91.12.06	9 Years
27. Malotana Asamda		91.05.10	9
28. Nxedlana Montombi		89.09.16	11
29. Makhetha Mzuvukile		91.11.01	9
30. Mamfenguza Philakathi		91.08.16	9
GRADE 2 J (Interview & Observations)			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
31. Lukhonyo Thimla		90.02.01	10 years
32. Luvolwethu Smile		90.03.15	10
33. Welile Zumani		90.06.05	10
34. Xola Tofu		90.01.04	10
35. Thanduxolo Mlungwona		90.07.07	10
36. Bonga Duma		90.04.19	10
37. Thobeka Nkomo		90.05.15	10
38. Zoleka Mbetha		90.08.07	10
39. Nomgcobo Msolo		89.04.15	11
40. Sibusiso Pama		87.12.29	13
41. Thandi Maswili		90.03.21	10
GRADE 2 B			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
42. Cholioiza Asanoa	M	89.07.07	11 years
43. Hoboshe Ricardo	M	90.09.22	10
44. Limba Thembelam	M	90.05.08	10
45. Ndebendkana Vuyolwethu	M	90.01.01	10
46. Nxedlana Nosiphibo	F	90.12.08	10
GRADE 2			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
47. Dabula Vuyisani	M	90.03.23	10 years
48. Fente Sebenzile	M	90.07.21	10
49. Mangcunyana Masikhumbule	M	90.08.04	10
50. Mbuthuma Nkosiphendula	M	89.06.09	11
51. Sontlaba Nwabisa	F	90.11.21	10
52. Mkoyi Avumile		89. 04. 08	11
53. Dyantyi Xolani		90. 04. 29	10
54. Gwadiso Numisa		90. 09. 04	10

55. Nxedlana Nosipwiso	F	90. 12. 08	10
GRADE 2 D (Interview & Observations)			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
56. Bhali Thandokuhle		90.06.18	10 years
57. Numazonke Nkosinathi		90.06.06	10
58. Mandla Kholeka		90.11.20	10
59. Sinose Pelisa		90.09.10	10
GRADE 3 A			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
60. Fayo Themba	M	89.10.06	11 years
61. Mfakele Yongani	M	89.12.13	11
62. Nbulu Yanga	M	89.07.23	11
63. Gwegwana Andile	M	89.12.26	11
64. Hlathi Thembisile	M	88.11.21	12
65. Manzi Simlindile	M	88.09.10	12
66. Mbuthuma Sibusiso	M	88.07.02	12
67. Mngqibisa Zukisani	M	88.09.08	12
68. Namathelana Khaya	M	88.07.01	12
69. Mazwi Mzwandile	M	86.06.26	14
70. Maxhanti Nontombi	G	89.06.15	11
71. Nofeliti Thembisa	G	88.09.06	12
72. Namathelana Nolubabalo	G	85.11.01	15
GRADE 3 B (Interview & Observations)			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
73. Jadezweni Siphe	M	90.05.03	10 years
74. Lindi Mzwakhe	M	90.11.11	10
75. Lukhuni Thembani	M	90.12.01	10
76. Lusawana Lungisa	M	90.09.04	10
77. Mpambani Siyabuleta	M	90.12.04	10
78. Mpanbani Khaya	M	90.05.17	10
79. Sihlahle Anele	M	90.07.10	10
80. Ntisa Ncedo	M	90.07.10	10
81. Rasi Manaliso	M	90.04.10	10
82. Juwela Odwa	M	89.05.26	11
83. Jaya Ayanda	M	89.06.10	11
84. Boesman Luvo	M	88.07.07	12
85. Dywili Fungile	M	88.06.11	12
86. Nolokoza Mkhoseleni	M	88.07.14	12
87. Bobotyane Siphamandla	M	87.07.07	13
88. Dyani Anelani	G	90.12.29	10
89. Dyonase Lusanda	G	90.06.22	10

90. Kondile Sive	G	90.05.20	10
91. Langusa Bolelwa	G	90.03.05	10
92. Ndabeni Lindiwe	G	90.08.25	10
93. Ndzutha Wendy	G	90.10.17	10
94. Ngota Yandiswa	G	90.10.15	10
95. Vukuza Nozizwe	G	90.12.21	10
96. Dlambulo Zintle	G	89.12.24	11
97. Mxhegwana Zimknitha	G	89.11.25	11
98. Mosloeshoe Mthabiseng	G	87.04.02	
GRADE 3 C			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
99. Dlangamandla Akhona	M	90.03.02	10 years
100. Fayo Anele	M	89.10.06	11
101. Goci Odwa	M	89.09.19	11
102. Malgas Lizo	M	89.08.26	11
103. Mbutane Mzwandile	M	89.11.24	11
104. Ndlebe Abongile	M	89.09.10	11
105. Ndlusu Thembaletu	M	89.05.21	11
106. Tyeku Msimelelo	M	89.10.22	11
107. Williams Luyanda	M	89.08.19	11
108. Gomba Nomathamsanqa	G	89.01.01	11
109. Louw Nombulelo	G	89.09.15	11
110. Mvane Nontembiso	G	89.06.24	11
111. Nokama Lizeka	G	89.09.20	11
112. Lengish Thembaletu	M	88.08.27	12
113. Kom Portia	G	99.08.24	12
GRADE 4 A			
NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
114. Neliswa Sakathi	G	88.03.29	12 years
115. Bongeko Songca	G	88.07.28	12
116. Nontombi Madonile	G	85.11.07	15
117. Xolisa Mandla	M	88.02.19	12
118. Ayanda Mpinda	M	88.08.10	12
119. Ayanda Ntsomi	M	88.01.02	12
120. Lukanyo Mahashe	M	88.06.15	12
121. Elethu Mepheni	M	88.12.29	12
122. Nkosana Ntsangani	M	88.03.04	12
123. Vizicolo Fente	M	88.07.24	12
124. Mphumzi Cekiso	M	88.08.16	12
125. Luthando Ntsizakalo	M	87.11.19	13
126. Mawethu Mguli	M	87.12.09	13
127. Mzoxolo Mbele	M	87.07.14	13

128.	Sikhulile Elefu	M	87.03.14	13
129.	Ndumiso Dlokwana	M	87.07.06	13
130.	Asanda Ngalman	M	87.08.11	13
131.	Mbuyiseli Limbo	M	86.02.12	14
132.	Makholwane Hlahatsi	M	85.01.28	15
133.	Andile Diwili	M	84.11.15	16
GRADE 4 B				
	NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
134.	Hinana Abongile		88.09.06	12 years
135.	Tofu Sonwabile		88.	12
136.	Sigagayi Lumkile		86.07.08	14
137.	Ntozini Mbulelo		87.08.04	13
138.	Thabo Soyisile		86.11.20	14
139.	Thyilana Gkiziwa		88.09.29	12
140.	Mkhawulezi Thumeka		88.04.16	12
141.	Johnson Nomaphelo		85.05.10	15
142.	Zanele Mangele		87.06.06	13
143.	Nkosazona Elefu		86.03.01	14
144.	Nolokozo Olwethu		86.04.05	14
145.	Bokveld Sandile		85.12.25	15
146.	Ndzutha Sandile		87.09.09	13
GRADE 4 C				
	NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
147.	Ntaka Luyanda		87.11.20	14 years
148.	Soyiba Unathi		88.10.17	15
149.	Desemela Thandikhaya		88.08.28	12
150.	Gade Sixolile		88.06.15	12
151.	Jam-Jam Kanyiso		88.01.09	12
152.	Magopheni Siyabulela		88.04.03	12
153.	Dyantysi Noluthando		88.07.12	12
154.	Ntolosi Gcinumzi		88.12.23	13
155.	Bush Nontombi		88.10.20	13
156.	Mfazwe Fikiswa		88.09.18	13
157.	Mbalula Nontombi		87.08.26	14
158.	Bhabha Thabisa		88.10.22	14
159.	Mthamo Mzwanele		84.03.22	16
160.	Mtuyeowa Siyakudumsa		88.04.19	12
161.	Joya Sivuyile		90.01.08	10
162.	Matitshwa Toto		87.12.06	13
163.	Qampa Maphelo		88.08.24	12
164.	Phathani Luvu		88.06.26	12
165.	Plaatjie Tusang		84.09.29	16

GRADE 5 A				
	NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
166.	Sikhundlo Umathi	G	87.09.26	13 years
167.	Mbauna	G	87.01.07	13
168.	Nolusu Nosipho	G	87.12.19	13
169.	Mafikifelo Nomzomo	G	87.01.13	13
170.	Mthimkhulu Nokulunga	G	86.10.02	14
171.	Mvotyong Bongeeka	G	86.09.26	14
172.	Ncwaba Bongise	G	86.10.22	14
173.	Mzaco Mpokisong	G	86.06.30	14
174.	Makeleni Nomozotsho	G	85.11.30	15
175.	Mathintelo Siyabonga	M	87.01.01	13
176.	Roba Buchule	M	87.10.26	13
177.	Tofu Mkhululi	M	87.03.15	13
178.	Limba Bulelani	M	87.05.11	13
179.	Fikizolo Mosonwabe	M	87.03.28	13
180.	Ntsebenzo Thulani	M	87.05.27	13
181.	Deanster Sivethemba	M	86.01.01	14
182.	Ziselo Thobile	M	86.12.01	14
183.	Bholani Sakhumzi	M	86.09.11	14
184.	Cekiso Simphiwe	M	86.03.10	14
185.	Maliza Siyabonga	M	86.09.25	14
186.	Kwakha Valashiyo	M	86.03.18	14
187.	Ndeyisibe Lungo	M	86.04.05	14
188.	Mofodina Mlamli	M	86.11.07	14
189.	Tokwana Mzukisi	M	86.09.21	14
190.	Jehvane Thembisile	M	85.02.08	15
GRADE 5 B				
	NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
191.	Tyali Lwazi	M	87.10.10	13
192.	Mdliva Zigcine	M	87.11.20	13
193.	Nksanyane Tisetso	M	87.05.30	13
194.	Nakani Themba	M	87.03.13	13
195.	Babase Phatho	M	87.05.14	13
196.	Cekiso Besuthu	M	86.05.12	14
197.	Mbombo Siphamandla	M	86.08.09	14
198.	Lamla Xolile	M	86.10.10	14
199.	Mthamo Nkosinathi	M	86.07.07	14
200.	Mxhegwana Wadisile	M	86.02.09	15
201.	Gomomo Siyabonga	M	86.05.12	15
202.	Mdlankomo Vuyisile	M	86.09.01	15
203.	Bonke Sebenzile	M	85.06.05	15

204.	Ngcephe Xolani	M	85.10.17	15
205.	Thofu Abongile	M	85.09.18	15
206.	Hoko Veliswa	G	87.10.18	13
207.	Siphamla Buyiswa	G	87.08.27	13
208.	Nopasika Khoboka	G	87.05.18	13
209.	Skade Nomaxesibe	G	87.11.30	13
210.	Nobishe Nolinda	G	86.10.09	14

GRADE 5 C

	NAME	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	AGE
211.	Gonqongqo Zanyiwe	G	87.05.21	13
212.	Khuza Nolumanyano	G	87.05.05	13
213.	Ntshintshi Khuthala	G	87.02.02	13
214.	Gomomo Busisiwe	G	87.07.04	13
215.	Solanti Ayandiswa	G	86.06.26	14
216.	Msitshana Nosisi	G	86.12.26	14
217.	Masawe Nomfusi	G	86.07.27	14
218.	Mbulawa Lungelwa	G	86.07.05	14
219.	Malothana Khuselwa	G	85.02.28	15
220.	Sondlo Sixolisile	M	87.11.30	13
221.	Dupana Lunyanda	M	87.01.22	13
222.	Bartman Sikhulule	M	87.12.06	13
223.	Mangamyana Caciso	M	87.09.13	13
224.	Manqina Masithembe	M	86.10.14	14
225.	Kondile Thembelani	M	86.01.12	14
226.	Seyile Bongani	M	86.07.15	14
227.	Ntshokoma Thamsanqa	M	86.01.14	14
228.	Hlathi Zukisa	M	86.05.17	14
229.	Likhetha Kutlang	M	86.03.26	14
230.	Msolo Luvuyo	M	86.05.23	14
231.	Bokveld Phumlani	M	86.12.02	14
232.	Bambiso Sandise	M	85.09.06	15
233.	Bhobhotyane Masixole	M	85.11.13	15
234.	Mcukulwa Lunga	M	84.07.05	16
235.	Hlathi Melikhanya	M	84.12.25	16
236.	Dela Mcebisi	M	83.12.24	17
TOTAL : 236				

APPENDIX 4.3: OBSERVATIONAL CHECKLIST

Time: _____ **Place:** _____

Purpose of observation.....

Classroom organisation

- Classroom layout
- Class climate
- Teacher attentiveness to learners
- Help and support to learners
- Time management
- Time on task
- Flexible instructional strategies
- Entry into classroom
- Exit from classroom

Teacher

- Treatment of learners
- Teaching methods
- Developmentally appropriate support/teaching
- Classroom management practices

Learners

- Ability to deal with learner differences
- Allows learners to evaluate own competence
- Draws on prior experiences of learners
- Utilises learner interest as learning priorities
- Active/passive involvement
- Discussions between learner and learner and teacher
- Time on task

Classroom support

- Multi-sensory teaching methods
- Group work
- Individual attention
- Learner-to-learner support
- Whole language teaching methods
- Multi-age teaching methods
- Lifeskills
- Developmentally appropriate support

APPENDIX 4.4 DATA COLLECTION PROFILE OF RESEARCH RESPONDENTS

OBSERVATIONS

Class Observation #	Themes Identified	Respondent #	Date	45 min. Periods
1	Yes	2	3. 10. 2000	2
2	Yes	1	19. 09. 2000	2
3	Yes	3	9. 10. 2000	2
4	No	1	10. 10. 2000	1
5	No	2	11. 10. 2000	1
6	No	3	12. 10. 2000	1
Playground Observation				
1	Yes	*	3. 10. 2000	20 min
2	Yes	*	11. 10. 2000	20 min

APPENDIX 4.5 THEME TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEWS

This appendix aims at demonstrating how the raw data was coded according the identified themes and subsequently clustered into the main clustered themes and patterns (Tables 4.3 and 4.4)

Codes and Semantic units	THEMES
<p>A list of themes that emerged during the data analysis</p>	
<p>1. Phase 2: Pilot study interviews with Open learning class teachers (grades 1-3): themes</p>	
<p>2. <i>Some of them are worried of their age. They say "My age is of Joe Slovo High". So they become ashamed. They start not to wear the uniform of this school, they start to wear the uniform of Joe Slovo, pretending to be a member of that school. I don't confront them about wearing that uniform; I can see their pain. (respondent 6: lines 100-104)</i></p>	<p>Socio-emotional issues</p>
<p>3. <i>...if you retain that particular child, she maybe gains something because she gets another chance to know the stuff that she didn't. (Respondent 6, lines 12-124)</i></p>	<p>Placement issues, grade retention</p>
<p>4. <i>Besides academic teaching, I think they have to be taught some skills like woodwork, gardening, metalwork, things like music - trying to develop these kids ... (Respondent 4, lines 288-290; see also Respondent 6, lines 106)</i></p>	<p>Academic versus vocational curriculum</p>

<p>5. <i>Sometimes teachers are aware the child has a problem but they do not know how to diagnose the problem; so they tend to ignore the child saying, "I don't know what to do with the child". (Respondent 6, lines 34-36)</i></p>	<p>Assessment Unwelcome school environment</p>
<p><i>And in terms of numbers you can't blame the teachers so much. You find they are concentrating on the clever ones because they are saying, "due to pressure from the principal" who want good results. So teachers tend to concentrate on those learners who can do the work and over age learners are sort of left behind.. (Respondent 6, lines 27-31; see also Respondent 5, lines 62-63)</i></p>	<p>Unwelcome school environment</p>
<p>6. <i>These learners need the basic skills in reading and writing... (Respondent 6, line: 105)</i></p>	<p>Basic skills</p>
<p>7. <i>Now some parents becomes very frustrated, saying this child is suppose to be in standard seven and he is still in primary school. I think these parents becomes desperate, because they can see that their neighbours child is progressing. (Respondent 6, lines: 87-90).</i></p>	<p>Parental expectations</p>
<p>8. <i>...because when you place them in a mainstream class...they always feels intimidated...because they are stigmatised - they are so old - remarks coming from their teachers and the learners in the class and if he repeats, he is stigmatise because of his age... (Respondent 6, lines: 57-60)</i></p>	<p>Age as learning barrier Non-age appropriate classroom</p>
<p>9. <i>we are being help by a certain project (POLP) providing books etc. I don't see the education department supporting this initiative whatsoever (Respondent 6, lines 57-60)</i></p>	<p>NGO support in the absence of government support</p>
<p>10. <i>Furthermore, it's also so unfortunate, that is, of the unacceptable migration from rural areas to the townships, particularly of learners, that is this year he's in Cape Town, the next year he's in Transkei, just moving up and down, up and down. Why I say</i></p>	<p>Migration, mobility due to work related issues</p>

<p><i>unfortunate; it's caused by factors which is beyond the control of the education system, like the socio-economic factors, the working opportunities of parents, and so on. We cannot run away, we've got to accept those kids. (Respondent 4, lines 248-254)</i></p>	
<p><i>11. If you don't promote them it becomes a problem because that child know that work as such and when he's promoted its because of his age. (Respondent 6, lines 118-119)</i></p>	Placement issue, promotion
<p><i>12. I think they should have a special class, maybe a remedial class, you see, so that they could work in their pace, you see, and at their level, (Respondent 2, lines 66-68; see also Respondent 6, lines 55-58)</i></p>	Placement issue, Lsen
<p><i>13. So when they are in one class they don't feel stigmatized by age. Their age ranges are between 10 – 15 years old in these class, which basically is a special class because most of these learners are having problems to learning. (Respondent 6, lines: 60-63)</i></p>	Placement issue, Lsen
<p><i>14. ...than coming to their groups according to what they know. I teach differently depending on what that groups knows. (Respondent 6, lines 111-112)</i></p>	Grouping practices
<p><i>15. But most of the parents would say she was delayed because all the time the child was sick, for instance, the child had severe seizures. (Respondent 6, lines: 18-20)</i></p>	Physical, Lsen
<p><i>when you look at that particular child, you see that the child has got the ability but she was never taken care of. And in terms of numbers you can't blame the teachers so much. You find they are concentrating on the clever ones because they are saying, "due to pressure from the principal" who want good results. So teachers tend to concentrate on those learners who can do the work and over age learners are sort of left behind. (Respondent 6,</i></p>	Safety issues, parental negligence, didactical neglect

<p><i>lines: 25-31)</i></p> <p>16. PHASE 3: Second interview with deputy principal for the foundation phase and also being a grade 1 teacher: themes</p> <p>17. <i>telling them how must they behave in the classroom, listen attentively in the class and tell them they must not be afraid of you... (Respondent 1, lines 236-238)</i></p> <p>18. <i>But there was one parent who said "well teacher, I can't read and write but there is one who is at home, the sister who can give assistance". (Respondent 1, line 107-109)</i></p> <p>19. <i>I take the older ones to be responsible over the younger ones in my class... (Respondent 1, lines 41-42)</i></p> <p>20. <i>...but some of them, the older ones are of good help in the class... (Respondent 1, lines 122-123)</i></p> <p>21. <i>...because the little ones don't behave like the older ones...they listen to what you are saying... (Respondent 1, lines 346-347)</i></p> <p>22. <i>I think he's learning according to his age now...because he was 12 last year, you know and this year he's 13 and is in grade 4 and he's doing well... (Respondent 1, lines: 177-179).</i></p> <p>23. <i>We find out that the older groups sometimes bully the younger ones... (Respondent 1, line 15-16)</i></p> <p>24. <i>In most cases they are bullying the younger ones... (Respondent 1, line 28-30)</i></p> <p>25. <i>There are a lot of cases here at school from the young ones...saying that they are being bullied by the older ones... (Respondent 1, lines 222-224)</i></p>	<p>Discipline, punitive relationship</p> <p>Basic skills, Abet Learner-learner support</p> <p>Pseudo-adult expectancies from learners</p> <p>Learner assistance</p> <p>Discipline issues</p> <p>Age-ability</p> <p>Safety issues, bullying</p> <p>Safety issues, bullying</p> <p>Safety issues, bullying</p>
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<p>26. ...some of the parents are doubting to come to school and to get the report on how the child is doing... (Respondent 1, lines: 259-360)</p>	<p>Unwelcome school environment Lack of parental involvement</p>
<p>27. I think parents from Mfuleni need some involvement at school... (Respondent 1, lines: 275-276).</p>	<p>Lack of parental involvement</p>
<p>28. I can say totally there is no support (from parents)....they (the learners) only open their books when they are in the classroom, that's all...and it ends there... (Respondent 1, lines: 287-288).</p>	<p>Lack of parental involvement</p>
<p>29. The older ones have a different experience...I think they get this different experience from the peer group... (Respondent 1, lines 118-119)</p>	<p>Safety issues, peer pressure role modelling</p>
<p>30. My belief is that if the ones (overage learners) that are sort of copying...but at the same time must not copy all the time...they will than learn from the brighter ones (usually the younger learners (Respondent 1, lines: 128-130)</p>	<p>Learner-learner support</p>
<p>31. We don't always promote them...we keep them back...so that they can catch up... (Respondent 1, lines: 183-184).</p>	<p>Placement issues, promotion and grade retention</p>
<p>32. When you are teaching overage learners...as teacher you can't deal with the older ones the same way as the younger ones...you must give them advanced work... (Respondent 1, lines: 233-235)</p>	<p>Recognising the maturity differences of overage learner but inappropriate educational response</p>
<p>33. ... not to have those learners - to mix those learners with others in the class. (Respondent 1, lines: 211-212)</p>	<p>Placement, grouping issues</p>
<p>34. then you've got to go back to grade 1 work. And that is the thing that waste our time here, going back again to grade 1 (Respondent 1, lines: 247-</p>	<p>Basic skills viewed as waste of time</p>

<p>248)</p> <p>35. <i>Maybe when he's in grade 3 he'll catch-up...he will fill in that gap...given his age ability...maybe his brain has matured for the grade...my belief is that he can use his age ability...(Respondent 1, lines: 194-197).</i></p> <p>36. <i>they become very sensitive and aggressive, and there is a lack of self esteem with these age groups. In most cases they are bullying the young ones (Respondent 1, lines: 27-29)</i></p> <p>37. <i>...most of these over age learners are very slow. I don't know what is wrong, really. (Respondent 1, lines: 318-319)</i></p> <p>38. <i>They are different you know. Some learn, some don't. They are shy, most of them are shy, you know. They are different you know. Some learn, some don't. They are shy, most of them are shy, you know. (Respondent 1, lines: 200-201)</i></p> <p>39. <i>But numeracy and literacy you know, there is that unbalanced work, but you'll find that he can read, but can't write - he omit some vowels and some other things, you know, and then you've got to go back to grade 1 work. And that is the thing that waste our time here, going back again to grade 1 work. (Respondent 1, lines: 244-248)</i></p> <p>40. <i>I can say totally there is no support. They only open their books when they are in the classroom, that's all and it ends there. (Respondent 1, lines 285-286)</i></p> <p>41. <i>...and you get reports from the parents saying that, no we are working to late... we leave home early in the morning... (Respondent 1, lines 62-64)</i></p>	<p>Notion of age-ability</p> <p>Socio-emotional Safety, bullying</p> <p>Assessment Cognitive issues</p> <p>Cognitive issues Going back to Basic skills viewed as waste of time</p> <p>Lack of parental support</p> <p>Lack of parental support due to work related issues</p> <p>Lack of parental support due to work related issues</p>
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<p><i>You find that their schoolwork is far behind and even if you give them homework and expect the parents to assist their child, the parents will say "well I came late". You'll find the child did not do his homework, with even no assistance from the parent. Respondent 1 lines 98-101</i></p>	<p>Lack of parental support due to work related issues</p>
<p>42. <i>they always give him a hiding you know...but their was no tangible reasons why he is not coming to school... (Respondent 1, lines 90-91)</i></p>	<p>Safety issues, discipline, truancy</p>
<p>43. <i>...but when it comes to lifeskills...there is something I can get from this learner... (Respondent 1, lines 243-244)</i></p>	<p>Mature socio-emotional skills</p>
<p>44. <i>Sometimes they come to school, not having a breakfast and that is when the feeding scheme help them... (Respondent 1, lines 266-267)</i></p>	<p>Poverty Hunger, feeding scheme at school that assist</p>
<p>45. <i>...but this child didn't pick up really...even his outside appearance...you can see he's not being fed well... (Respondent 1, line: 302-303)</i></p>	<p>Hunger , poverty</p>
<p>46. <i>the parents are drunk, the parents are not looking after them, they've no time for the child, and to clean the child, and the child coming to school untidy. (Respondent 1, lines 273-275)</i></p>	<p>Safety, parental negligence</p>
<p>47. <i>...and running away from this child abuse from the "location"...maybe the parents are not there for the whole day and the child will stay there all by him or herself... (Respondent 1, lines 312-314)</i></p>	<p>Safety, child abuse, discontinued parenting</p>
<p>48. PHASE 3: Third interview with a grade 3 class teacher: themes</p>	
<p>49. <i>...so that I can see what they know first...because they are old, I think they have something in them, therefore I can put in something or correct what has been given... (Respondent 2, lines: 10103)</i></p>	<p>Age-ability Teacher centredness versus learners centredness</p>

<p>50. <i>If I can make an example of an over age child in the class: he was trying to rape someone in the class after school. They are developed although the others are too young to understand what's going on. Most of them are 12 and 13 in grade (Respondent 2, lines 9-12)</i></p>	<p>Safety issues Physical maturity, puberty to adolescence</p>
<p>51. <i>If I turn my back than one is beating another one... (Respondent 2, line 48)</i></p>	<p>Safety issues, bullying</p>
<p>52. <i>...and even in their abilities, maybe others, they cannot even write, and sometimes I can see the child can pack some books for the others in the cupboards, so I allow them to pack it... so I can see the child feels comfortable in what he is doing. (Respondent 2, lines: 123-126)</i></p>	<p>Socio-emotional issues Basic skills Unidentified Learning problems</p>
<p>53. <i>they (young ones) are looking up to them, as I notice, since they are old you see...they say everything that they (overage learners) are doing, and see it as right...that is my opinion...because they are older... (Respondent 2, lines 94-96)</i></p>	<p>Relationships Safety issues, peer pressure</p>
<p>54. <i>their parents are drinking, others, they have been staying with foster parents, others, they are abused in their homes. (Respondent 2, lines 17-19)</i></p>	<p>Safety issues, parental negligence</p>
<p>55. <i>most of them are 12 to 13 years old in grade three...and can't even cope with what is taught in class... (Respondent 2, lines 12-14)</i></p>	<p>Basic skills</p>
<p>56. <i>I think at school they also need care. Since they are older we take for granted they don't need that care but they need it. They need that caring and also assistance in their work. (Respondent 2, lines 147-149)</i></p>	<p>Socio-emotional Relationships</p>

<p>57. <i>I don't want to say they are teacher aids (laughing heartily)...they are helping others in the group while you are moving with other groups. They are helpful in that sense... (Respondent 2, lines 78-81)</i></p>	<p>Learners as teacher aid, Learner-to-learner Pseudo-adult responsibilities</p>
<p>58. <i>Generally...teachers took it that the child knows everything, should cope with the activities of his class...because of being older than the other learners in the class...so that child must know everything... (Respondent 2, lines: 89-91).</i></p>	<p>Age-ability Teacher centredness versus learner centredness</p>
<p><i>(Long silence) In the class, they can feel they don't fit in. You see, if maybe the one child is old in the class he doesn't have someone to communicate at their level; they reaching puberty and are in grade 3, the other one are then too young, you see, and they feel lonely. .(Respondent 2, line: 132-136)</i></p>	<p>Unwelcome school environment Physical Socio-emotional</p>
<p>59. <i>Others, they have learning problems...for instance, reading problems.....some of them can't even write, write properly....he's mixing words.....some can't even copy something from the board... (Respondent 2, lines: 51-54)</i></p>	<p>Learning problems Basic skills</p>
<p>60. PHASE 3: Fourth interview with the principal</p>	
<p>61. <i>But now the part is if you don't perform well academically, you would feel so embarrassed to be overtaken by a kid who is far to young than your age. (Respondent 4, lines: 166-168).</i></p>	<p>Socio-emotional Non-age appropriate classroom</p>
<p>62. <i>there would be some behavioural problems, that is, this learner would try to impact on the entire class, because he's old and he has got classmates that is too much smaller, you see, This would be elements like bullying, etc. (Respondent 4, lines: 72-75)</i></p>	<p>Discipline Safety, bullying, peer pressure</p>

<p>63. <i>...some of them have problems like being mentally slow....some have disabilities in reading and writing... (Respondent 4, lines: 280-283)</i></p>	<p>Cognitive Learning problems</p>
<p>64. <i>To be honest with you, it's not encouraging, its negative because some teachers, once a learner is to old they feel being threatened. Now not in a manner where the learner knows too much but as a person, that is, if maybe I want to implement such behaviour patterns, this kid might rebel againgst me and, by rebelling in front of the class, I mean that boy or girl would be degrading you to other learners and you might even lose some respect. I've got some case here, where you think there is no teacher in the class, but the teacher is there, the class is so chaotic, too much noise Respondent 4, lines: 362-366).</i></p>	<p>Teacher attitudes - negative Safety issues Discipline</p>
<p>65. <i>...what comes to mind is an issue of discipline...classroom discipline...its so hard for them to fit into the schooling system... (Respondent 4, lines 278-279)</i></p>	<p>Unwelcome school environment Discipline</p>
<p>66. <i>One has got to be broadminded...because one cannot put the blame on the parents...because the parents are working far away from where the kids are schooling... (Respondent 4, lines 31-33)</i></p>	<p>Lack of parental involvement due to distance, and work times</p>
<p>67. <i>to put them in the mainstream mixing them with kids that are much smaller than they are, really, ja it does have some positives, but on the whole I think its not to their advantage. (Respondent 4, lines 360-363)</i></p>	<p>Placement, mainstream</p>
<p>68. <i>I think a special school, because they would be treated at the same level with other also over age... (Respondent 5, lines 98-99; see also Respondent 4, lines 363-365)</i></p>	<p>Placement, Lsen</p>

<p>69. <i>They (overage learners) come to your school...you ask for a birth certificate...if you are fortunate you'll get a birth certificate... (Respondent 4, lines 256-258)</i></p>	documentation
<p>70. <i>In fact, by this promotion I feel that there is an element of disservice that we are doing to this kids because there is the age factor that say they should move to the next grade. But due to the fact that they are too much old for their previous grade and then we take them to the next grade - okay, that's fine. But personally I really feel they've done a little bit of disserve to those kids. They've got a kid, if maybe - for instance in grade 1 a kid has got to be taken from point 1 to point 6, even that old boy that is an over age learner, he's got to go through the same process and one has got to gauge his performance. That is, promotion to me should be by performance and not by the age factor... (Respondent 4, lines 99-108)</i></p>	Placement, promotion Basic skills
<p>71. <i>... I think he failed std 8 twice, okay. This HOD, what she did was - she said this boy must go to the next standard the following year. Okay, that was fine. And this thing was discovered round about March. To our understanding he is suppose to be repeating the previous standard, okay. Now we had to confront the HOD, now the learner had to be taken out of the class to a lower class, You see the damage in morale that the very same teacher, who thought she was helping was doing to this learner. Okay ... the learner moved down to std 8 but he did not stay long and dropped out. (Respondent 4, lines 315-324)</i></p>	Placement, depromotion Mobility, dropout
<p>72. <i>through my experience, what wouldn't be okay - in these classes that's what are usually done - we keep on promoting them, promoting these kids maybe up to grade 11, okay. And then I want to come to grade 12 - now they experience some learning difficulties because most of the work that is required for the grade 12 external examination is being covered in the preceding grades. But in</i></p>	Placement, via promotion until they dropout

<p><i>this issue of promotion, you find out that those learners who cannot really cope. Hence, now we got even this issue of drop-outs, particularly in the higher grades, due to this promotion. (Respondent 4, lines 109-117)</i></p>	
<p>73. <i>by retaining that kid in grade 1 you are denying one or two kids of school going age the opportunity of coming into the stream of formal education (Respondent 4, lines 124-125)</i></p>	<p>Placement, grade retention</p>
<p>74. <i>Now, coming to this issue of over age, one finds it so difficult as to how you can define it. I'll try to give it a compatible definition with the provincial ministry as regards to what they refer to as over age learners. Now what I can say about this issue of over age learners: I think it refers to the appropriate placing of the learners in a particular grade, corresponding with age as prescribe by the National Education Ministry. For instance, it suppose that a learner who turns 7 years on his first year of schooling - that learner should be placed in grade 1 that is any learner who is above the age of seven is not suppose to be in grade 1 because that learner according to the stipulations of the Department - that learner would be regarded as an over age learner. (Respondent 4, lines 15-25)</i></p>	<p>Definition of overage learners linked to placement</p> <p>Definition of overage learners</p>
<p>75. <i>...this issue of overage in our schools...as regards our cultural background...that is the black people...we did not attach so much attention on the age of the learners...that is to which grade the pupil should be placed... (Respondent 4, lines 26-29)</i></p>	<p>Placement, age of learners was not important</p>
<p>76. <i>in the past we had some instances...of a learner of 10 years old starting school...being placed in grade 1... (Respondent 4, lines 29-31)</i></p>	<p>Placement, late school starters</p>

<p>77. <i>For this learners I think some special schools have got to be created. They've got to be separated from other learners. Let's suppose, maybe that here at school I've got approximately 200 over age learners, I feel what is the proper mechanism for them, it is not to try to - taking them out of the school but, we trying to deny them education but they should be placed in a proper school environment that fit with their age, like for instance, maybe a school where they can expose their other talents that they've got, like they should not follow the mainstream. In other words they should not be in the same environment as the kids who are too much younger then them. (Respondent 4, lines 86-95)</i></p>	<p>Placement, Lsen Placement, mainstream versus Lsen Placement, school for overage learners</p>
<p>78. <i>You'll get some teachers, who are almost of the same age of the learners and you can see that, that type of relationship is sometimes so destructive to the development of the learner...particularly in high school...you'll find a young teacher being attracted to a learner... (Respondent 4, lines 184-188)</i></p> <p><i>...you know it is really morally wrong, that is, particularly to the small kids to have the bullying ones. (Respondent 4, lines 260-262)</i></p>	<p>Relationships, safety issues Safety, bullying Placement, ethics</p>
<p>79. <i>...issue of classroom discipline...its so hard for them (overage learners) to fit into the schooling system...that is the culture of the school... (Respondent 4, lines 278-280)</i></p>	<p>Unwelcome school environment Discipline</p>
<p>80. <i>...we did not experience so much difficulties to adapt that learner to that particular standard... (Respondent 4, lines 53-55)</i></p>	<p>Non-age appropriate class</p>
<p>81. <i>Once I refer to cultural practices...we know how to deal with the learner in that particular standard...maybe one can regard that as being how we dealt with that issue...as being as somewhat suppressing the feelings of the</i></p>	<p>Socio-emotional Discipline Safety issues</p>

<p><i>learners...that is in terms of inflicting corporal punishment...that is the learner has got to toe the line... (Respondent 4, lines 48-53)</i></p>	
<p>82. <i>I think English as language of instruction...in the intermediate phase...is to give the kids the foundation for the outside world. It is so unfortunate that it would really be so painful for that kid to face the real world without having been fully equipped with the previously so-called official languages. It would make sense to educate this kid in Xhosa as the medium of instruction...however, in grade 12 the language that is used to write their external exams...it would not be their home language...it will be a foreign language...(Respondent 4, lines 332-353)</i></p>	<p>Language as barrier to learning Unwelcome school environment</p>
<p>83. <i>it would be so difficult now for the school to try to promote that learner to the next standard because for most of the time - lets say for 3-6 months - he has been absent from school. (Respondent 4, lines 37-40)</i></p>	<p>Placement, promotion Mobility, absenteeism</p>
<p>84. <i>The first handicap that, that learner has got to experience is the age difference...because he is going to sit with learners who are somewhat younger than himself... (Respondent 4, lines 60-63)</i></p>	<p>Age as handicap... learning barrier Non-age appropriate classroom</p>
<p>85. <i>You'll find now...that parents send their kids to school...despite being fully aware that my kid has this problem...and the parent wouldn't tell you that my kid has got this learning problem...and teachers have not been fully trained to identify those problems at an early stage... (Respondent 4, lines 294-298)</i></p>	<p>Assessment, Lsen Parents lack of involvement Teacher training inadequate for meeting</p>
<p>86. <i>We assess them according to their intellectual potential...that is how they perform in class...that is academic performance... (Respondent 4, lines 264-265)</i></p>	<p>Assessment, basic skills Cognitive</p>

<p>87. <i>During break times he associates with learners of his age but now after breaktime he's got to go back to the class and to interact now with his classmates who are much younger than himself. And automatically now there would be this group pressure, that is the peer pressure that he has experienced with his own peer group and would try by all means to influence the young ones. And even the behaviour of the younger ones, that wouldn't be acceptable behaviour. (Respondent 4, lines 77-84)</i></p>	<p>Safety issues, peer pressure Age appropriate relationships</p>
<p>88. <i>...because some of his age group are outside...probably they are members of gangs, they are working and those are the people whom he associate with...that is after school... (Respondent 4, lines 223-225)</i></p>	<p>Safety issues, peer pressure: gangs, working adults or children</p>
<p>89. <i>... there would be some behavioural problems, that is, this learner would try to impact on the entire class, because he's old and he has got classmates that is too much smaller, you see, This would be elements like bullying, etc. The learners whom he mixes with would be in the very same class. It might happen now that he's friends are in, let's say, grade 7, okay. (Respondent 4, lines: 72-77)</i></p>	<p>Safety issues, bullying, peer pressure</p>
<p>90. PHASE 3: Fifth interview with an intermediate phase deputy principal as well as being a teacher.</p>	
<p>91. <i>now here at Mfuleni...when children come here from the Eastern Cape, Transkei, different rural areas...immediately when that child arrives here...that child has no report...that puts us in a predicament because this child must be placed somewhere...and this child is already overage at a certain grade... (Respondent 5, lines 26-31)</i></p>	<p>Documentation Placement</p>

<p>92. ... and you always hear the young ones complaining, "one is beating us there"(Respondent 5, line 92-93)</p>	<p>Safety issues, bullying</p>
<p>93.but parents are very poor...can't even afford basics like mealie meal (maize) ...so how can a child who starve learn in school...(Respondent 5, lines 117-119).</p>	<p>Poverty Hunger as barrier to learning Physical</p>
<p>94. Lets start with the morning devotion when they are in their lines from grade 1 to grade 7...standing in the queue...you see yourself as a big boy or girl together with the young...no matter what your age...at the end of the day they will know what your age is...they will say you older than us...you suppose to be in standard 10...these overage children who stand in that queue are always late to avoid standing in that queue...because they feel being treated like a child.... (Respondent 5: lines 46-52)</p>	<p>Unwelcome school environment Socio-emotional</p>
<p>95. [to be an overage learner] ...not a good experience to me because I'm aware that I'm older...and I'll be treated in a young manner...(Respondent 5, lines: 104-105)</p>	<p>Socio-emotional Unwelcome school environment</p>
<p>96. You know, it's more about attitude and background of these learners: for why should I go to school, parents are uneducated. It really depends on their background. When parents are not interested in child's schooling, (Respondent 5, lines: 113-115)</p>	<p>Learner attitudes negative towards schooling Lack of parental involvement Abet issues</p>
<p>97. the other thing...when it comes to misconduct by overage learners, they are very reluctant to report misconduct by the young ones...they deal with it themselves... (Respondent 5, lines 108-110)</p>	<p>Safety issues discipline</p>
<p>These learners are now promoted, they go to high school. Now they can't read; the learner now give up or they got promoted in high school until he got</p>	<p>placement, promotion drop out basic academic skills</p>

<p><i>tired or simply fail grade 12. (Respondent 5, lines 77-79)</i></p>	
<p><i>98. Our teachers has never specialised in paying special attention to kids; we don't have that special attention - there's no time. I don't have that skills of special education teacher. That's why we are everything: we are a guidance teacher, special teacher. That's why these kids need to go to special school, they are far behind as far as age and school work is concerned. (Respondent 5, lines 82-84)</i></p>	<p>placement, Lsen</p>
<p><i>99. Lots of learners coming from rural areas like Transkei...there was no control over admission to school... (Respondent 5, lines 7-8)</i></p>	<p>mobility</p>
<p><i>100. According to age we promote child... (Respondent 5, line 68)</i></p>	<p>Placement, promotion</p>
<p><i>101. Now, when they inside the school, then you experience problems like behaviour. But we discovered that these children are too old to be there (Respondent 5, lines 10-12)</i></p>	<p>discipline over age for grade</p>
<p><i>102. Now here at Mfuleni, when children come here from Eastern Cape, Transkei, different rural areas – let's say one parent is working here and decide to bring their child along - immediately when that child arrives here that child has no report. That put us in a predicament because this child must be placed somewhere and this child is already over age at a certain grade. (Respondent 5, lines 26-31)</i></p>	<p>mobility, migrating after work - nomadic documentation placement issues</p>
<p><i>103. In rural areas the schools are far away from each other and children must travel long distances by foot... (Respondent 5, lines 24-25)</i></p>	<p>distance</p>
<p><i>104. ...and the rape rate is so much high... and the crime was so much high... (Respondent 5, lines 15-16)</i></p>	<p>safety issues, crime, rape</p>

<p>105. <i>...now these learners comes from different areas, Transkei, Ciskei.... (Respondent 5, lines 22)</i></p>	mobility
<p>106. <i>Kids kept at home to look after cattle... (Respondent 5, line 23)</i></p>	late school starters, working children
<p>107. <i>Now...if we had remedial teachers...it would help us you see...especially where the child keeps on failing...and his report is so reddish... (Respondent 5, lines 73-74)</i></p>	placement, Lsen
<p>108. <i>Parents say...home was on fire...everything was burnt...no documentation... (Respondent 5, lines 40-41)</i></p>	documentation
<p>109. <i>a child come here and say, "I staying with my sister and there is nobody at home" I have to take that child - Mfuleni being the only primary school here - without her having any documentation. (Respondent 5, lines 37-40)</i></p>	documentation pseudo-adult responsibilities
<p>110. <i>...in primary school we expect a lot from overage learners...because at their age in class we expect them to understand...but the feedback wouldn't be what is expected at their age... (Respondent 5, lines 97-100)</i></p>	age-ability expectations basic skills
<p>111. <i>We discovered that these children are to old to be there...but academically they belong there... (Respondent 5, lines 11-120)</i></p>	non-age appropriate classroom
<p>112. <i>There was no problem how we should treat the overcrowded classrooms...we just admit them all...otherwise they are at home alone... (Respondent 5, lines 13-15)</i></p>	uncontrolled admission of learners
<p>113. <i>Our teachers have never specialise in paying special attention to kids... (Respondent 5, lines 81-82)</i></p>	Lack of Lsen training for teachers

<p>114. <i>[Overage learners] are discriminated when it comes to school sport...are to old for primary school sport... (Respondent 5, lines 87-88)</i></p>	Unwelcome school environment
<p>115. <i>...even the peer group negatively influence the child not to attend school... (Respondent 5, line 115)</i></p>	Safety issues, peer pressure
<p>116. <i>...but when you come to academic work...they don't perform well... (Respondent 5, lines 62-63)</i></p>	Basic skills
<p>117. PHASE 3: Sixth interview with a grade 2-foundation phase teacher.</p>	
<p>118. <i>If he or she does not cope with the work and yet others are coping...are much faster...so it becomes a problem...then you find out she's got that bad attitude towards you and other learners....(Respondent 3, lines: 22-25)</i></p>	Discipline, due to weak basic skills
<p>119. <i>The first thing one find out is that the learners got no books...no pencils, although the school provide some relief to buy pencils for the learners... (Respondent 3, lines 111-113)</i></p>	Lack of educational basic tools,
<p>120. <i>They do not cope with school work ". So I took her to the next class the following year. So she doesn't repeat any class, until the child feels she doesn't want to come anymore to school. (Respondent 3, lines 218-220)</i></p>	Placement, promotion...until learner dropout
<p>121. <i>than as time goes on, she copes...so I put her next to one who is much faster, who understands better than her so she can see and cope... (Respondent 3, lines 41-43)</i></p>	Learner- to-learner support
<p>122. <i>They don't have money to buy all these things...I can see the children when they are</i></p>	

<p><i>borrowing something from the others and I can allow that in my class, because I can see they don't have it... (Respondent 3, lines 102-107)</i></p>	Lack basic educational tools
<p>123. <i>One day I took a ride with my car...than I find out...hey, this school is right at the far end of the corner, the rest of the location is Far...far...far... and they have to travel by foot....and this distance is a real problem for the entire school... (Respondent 3, lines 94-98)</i></p>	Distance
<p>124. <i>...because she drops out from Transkei before the year end, than she comes back to Cape Town, then I told the parents, well she cannot go into the upper classes, she must repeat the grade...cannot say she was in grade two...so let her go to grade three because she's old...doesn't work like that... (Respondent 3, lines 75-79)</i></p>	Mobility, mobile learners
<p>125. <i>Especially those who are coming from the Eastern Cape...we found out they lack something... they lack a foundation...so they were brought from the upper classes down to grade 2 or grade 1 ...this becomes a problem to that particular child...to be removed from the upper classes...or from his age peers and place in class with 7 year olds... (Respondent 3, lines 11-19)</i></p>	Basic skill Mobility depromotion
<p>126. <i>Parent doesn't know anything about school, so she relies on the teacher. When I asked her what was her problem of removal of your child from Eastern Cape down to Cape Town. "But on the other side we were staying with the grandparents, so I now here in Cape Town. But my problem is that I cannot read and write." This is why she does not know what is really, really happening at school. (Respondent 3, lines 66-72)</i></p>	Basic skills, Abet Lack of parental involvement Changing school frequently
<p>127. <i>The problem does not lie with the child...it lies with their background... (Respondent 3, lines 201-202)</i></p>	Deprived environment
<p>128. <i>...or this travelling business...taking the child</i></p>	

<p><i>to Transkei...than in Transkei nothing is being done...than back to Cape Town...when being back, we find out...oh this is the same child who left here two years ago...what happened...long story...please, please take her back... (Respondent 3, lines 118-122)</i></p>	<p>Mobility, rural to urban</p>
<p>129. <i>changing a learner from one school to another school ...in that school that child is treated as a new person coming from wherever... (Respondent 3, lines 166-167)</i></p>	<p>Mobility, changing schools</p>
<p>130. <i>...you can't promote a child according to her age...especially if that particular child has repeated a class and is not coping at all with what is being taught than ...you cannot skip the three R's without a reason...if you skip, you are killing that child...because there is a lot that he has missed... (Respondent 3, lines 125-135)</i></p>	<p>Grade retention, for three R's</p>
<p>131. <i>Unemployment rate very high in Mfuleni... (Respondent 3, line 102)</i></p>	<p>Poverty, unemployment</p>
<p>132. <i>Some learners still owe school fund, which is R30.00 per annum... (Respondent 3, lines 103-104)</i></p>	<p>Poverty, unemployment</p>
<p>133. <i>During winter, out of 40 learners you've got 21-27, the rest doesn't come. Then if you ask the following day or week, "where were you, why didn't you come?" she will tell you, "it was raining. I don't have a rainsuit, raincoat. I stay far". (Respondent 3, lines 90-93)</i></p>	<p>Mobility, truancy...drop-in and dropout cycle</p>
<p>134. <i>...big problems from those coming from the Eastern Cape...they lack something...they lack a foundation... (Respondent 3, lines 11-13)</i></p>	<p>Basic skills Mobility, rural to urban areas</p>
<p>135. <i>Generally, write some letters, inviting the parents to come and discuss the importance of education... (Respondent 3, lines 82-83)</i></p>	<p>Mode of communication to functionally illiterate parents</p>

<p><i>You can just give them extra work if you think they are problematic to your class. Give them extra work, which they could be able to finish it. If he bully give him extra work, something that keep him down. (Respondent 3, lines 242-245)</i></p>	<p>discipline unwelcome school environment</p>
<p>136. <i>But if a child comes here for the first time...you cannot just say you are 13 years old...you must go to grade seven...you are killing that child...because there is a lot that he has missed. You have to give that child some work to test where he or she fit... (Respondent 3, lines 132-136)</i></p>	<p>late school starters assessment, for placement</p>
<p>137. <i>The main problem is during the first quarter...it becomes difficult for them to associate with the young ones...if he or she does not cope with the work and yet the others are coping...are much faster...so it becomes a problem...then you find out she's got that bad attitude towards you and the other learners... (Respondent 3, lines 21-25)</i></p>	<p>Socio-emotional Discipline Basic skills</p>
<p>138. <i>So I found out she is not a good person at all...number one it is academically and number two she doesn't want to come to school... (Respondent 3, lines 57-59)</i></p>	<p>Basic skills Mobility, truancy</p>
<p><i>They see the child as older, she might be good, she might be bad. So you as a teacher, you are also not sure of this child because you are not sure about his attitude. She may come with bad ideas to influence the young ones, she might come with good ideas, she might be a good help to a teacher. So they are a bit worried in the first quarter. In the first quarter it's not right; they do not accept the older ones but as the time goes on they will just cope with one another, play, learn. (Respondent 3, lines 152-159)</i></p>	<p>Teacher attitude, one of quiet resistance</p>
<p>139. <i>I don't do them separately, I'm just doing one</i></p>	

<p><i>thing for them. I don't separate them, I don't want them to feel that they are the older learners than the other ones - so all doing one thing at the same time. Some of them do struggle especially if they lack something from grade 1 and they are now in grade 2. They feel frustrated because she is old and the younger one is coping. (Respondent 3, lines 30-31)</i></p>	<p>Grouping for teaching purposes undifferentiated teaching socio-emotional</p>
<p>140. <i>If you mix them like a 13 year olds...9 year olds there won't be a problem...there will be competition...if you separate them...there will be no competition...there will be no sharing of ideas...because they have already detected that they are old... (Respondent 3, lines 139-146)</i></p>	<p>Grouping for teaching purposes</p>
<p><i>So we have already labelled them, so they have that label in their mind, "we don't belong to the same group". Because of the labeling we mix them with the young ones so that they cannot feel that. (Respondent 3, lines 146-149)</i></p>	<p>Grouping for relational purposes Socio-emotional</p>
<p>141. <i>There will be a competition between them...then the older learner will see from the 9 and 10 year old learner that they are coping.... Then he or she will tell you...let me do like those.... so the child is building his self-esteem (Respondent 3, lines: 139-1441)</i></p>	<p>Socio-emotional Learner-to-learner support</p>
<p>142. Observations</p>	
<p>143. <i>There is no structured or disciplined entry or exit to classroom at breaktimes...everyone just go for the door when entering or exiting classroom...1st Class observation, lines 8-9; 2nd Class observation, line 63-64</i></p>	<p>Discipline, lack of structure</p>
<p>144. <i>Teacher entered class 5 minutes later after bell has gone...2nd Class observation, line 64</i></p>	<p>Discipline, lack of structure</p>

<p>145. <i>Lots of knocking sounds against the back of the classroom wall coming from next door classroom... 2nd Class observation, line 56, 3rd Class observation, line 137</i></p>	Discipline, lack of structure
<p>146. <i>Learners grouped into 4-6 per two tables...1st Class observation, line 7</i></p>	grouping
<p>147. <i>Groupings of learners are mix-age...1st Class observation, line 10</i></p>	grouping
<p>148. <i>Learners divided into three big groups: strugglers, bright ones, and mix group 2nd Class observation, lines 55-57</i></p>	grouping
<p>149. <i>Learners given group assignment...followed by discussion...1st Class observation, line 38</i></p>	grouping
<p>150. <i>After entering class after breaktime...some learners were still eating in class while teacher continued with class work...1st Class observation, line 25-26</i></p>	Discipline
<p>151. <i>Learner doesn't knock when entering classroom...1st Class observation, line 27</i></p>	Discipline
<p>152. <i>During report-back time some learners had their own conversation while group in front of class report back...1st Class observation, line 29-30, 35-36</i></p>	Discipline
<p>153. <i>Some learners through papers around in the class...3rd Class observation, line 1194</i></p>	Discipline
<p>154. <i>Some overage learner struggle to write...2nd Class observation, line 77</i></p>	Basic skills
<p>155. <i>Most of the learners write with very tiny pencils that is very difficult to grip...2nd Class</i></p>	Basic skills

<i>observation, line 76</i>	
156. <i>One side of the school playground has got a huge hill with lots of bush...and is completely unsupervised during breaktime...2nd Class observation, line 92-97</i>	Safety issues
157. <i>Classrooms are in a disorganised state after breaktime...2nd Class observation, line 95, 3rd Class observation, line 136</i>	Discipline
158. <i>All the classroom doors are left open during breaktime...and unsupervised...while learners are playing with classroom tools like chalk, desks, books...during breaktime...2nd Class observation, line 90-92</i>	Discipline
159. <i>A number of learners were crying on the playground due to fighting...there is no playground supervision...2nd Class observation, line 91-92</i>	Safety issues
160. <i>Printed material on classroom walls very small to read...3rd Class observation, line 133</i>	Basic skills
161. <i>Some Learners sitting with their backs to the blackboard try to copy from black blackboard...2nd Class observation, line 84-85</i>	Basic skills
162. <i>Walls sparsely decorated with teaching aids...2nd Class observation, line 39</i>	lack of educational printed aids Education support material, basic skills obstructed
163. <i>Some of the learners work was pinned-up on the classroom walls...1st Class observation, line 42</i>	Socio-emotional
164. <i>Teacher not sure how many learners are</i>	documentation

<p><i>absent...1st Class observation, line 45</i></p> <p><i>165. Teacher mainly use question and answer format of teaching to large group...as well as chalk and talk...1st Class observation, line 13-16</i></p> <p><i>166. Teacher almost exclusively use paper and pencil exercises...1st Class observation, line 17</i></p>	<p>teaching methods</p> <p>teaching methods</p>
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Appendix 4.6 TRANSCRIPT OF OBSERVATIONS

Observations in Classroom

Respondent no 2, Class observation 1

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 **Respondent no 2** – Interviewer asked teacher to put round coloured stickers on
2 table where O.L. were sitting in class to aid my observation. Observation in
3 grade 2; no of learners 59; 26 are overage.
4 [2 hrs of observation x 2]
5 Lesson: Uses of water

6 CLASSROOM MEETING

- 7 • Grouped into 4-6 learners per 2 tables.
8 • There's no structure / disciplined entry or exit to classroom at breaktimes
9 • Everyone just go for the door when exiting on entering class.
10 • Groupings of learners are mix-aged
11 • Ample space to move around in class.

12 TEACHER:

- 13 • Use mainly a question – answer format for engaging learners
14 • During report back from learners – teacher frequently interrupt report back –
15 several times.
16 • Teacher chalk and talk during report back.
17 • Teacher used mainly paper and pencil exercises.
18 • Teacher let learner read – sing as a whole class.
19 • Teacher gave learners test to do individually, but some learners were walking
20 around for pencil rubber etc. – teacher indifferent to walking around.
21 • Teacher left class briefly to take registration schedule to office

22 LEARNERS:

- 23 • Learners reported back in groups in front of class with the leader of the group
24 doing all the talking
25 • After entering class after break – some learners were still eating in class while
26 teacher continued with class work
27 • Learner doesn't knock when entering classroom – just walked straight in to
28 where teacher is.
29 • During report back some learners in class had there own conversation while
30 group in front of class report back.
31 • All the learners had uniform or part uniform on.

- 32 • Although there were big chairs in the class some of the bigger older learners
33 were sitting on small chairs while some of the small overage learners,
34 younger ones were sitting on the bigger chair at bigger and higher tables.
35 • Learners at back of class gave little attention to teacher – were having there
36 own conversation.

37 **CLASSROOM SUPPORT**

- 38 • Learners given group assignment and then discussion.
39 • Walls was sparsely decorated with teaching aids and those teaching aids that
40 was available were almost in fine print rendering them virtually useless as an
41 education tool.
42 • Some of the learners work was pinned up
43 • Learners put up hand – teacher don't respond
44 • Teacher going around marking tests of learners
45 • Teacher not sure of how many absent ... thinks its two learners.

46 **OTHER**

- 47 • Some classes next to and across to were making extreme noise. Appeared
48 not to be a teacher in the class. Principal eventually looked in ... children still
49 continued with noise the moment principal steps out.

Respondent no 1, Class observation 2

50 Observation in class grade 2 (Twice)

51 Lesson : sounds and names

52 [2hrs of observation x 2]

53 CLASSROOM MEETING:

54 • Learners divided into three big groups

55 (a) Strugglers

56 (b) Bright ones

57 (c) Mix group

58 • Lots of knocking sound against wall of class next door.

59 • Exit class orderly

60 • Most learners throughout the school play inside the classroom during
61 breaktime

62 • Almost all the classrooms are dirty

63 • After break: Learners enter class uninstructed - lot of noise in drips and
64 draps. Teacher entered class 5 min later after bell has gone.

65 TEACHER

66 • Teacher marks learners work as they finished in front of the class

67 • Some teachers congregate in classroom during break times while some
68 learners play in class.

69 • Teacher issue class with worksheets after breaktime

70 • Teacher next shouting at the top of her voice to quieten class

71 LEARNERS

72 • Learners at blackboard taking class through sound pointing at each sound

73 • Learners jumps up to answer questions put from teacher to them often with
74 lots of excitement

75 • Learners work pinned up in classroom

76 • Most of the learners write with very tiny pencils that is very difficult to grip

77 • Some overage learners struggle to write

78 • Learner walk up to teacher in class wherever she is, to have there books
79 marked

80 CLASSROOM SUPPORT

81 • Learner work individually and very quite

82 • Teacher explains continually when learners struggle

83 • Blackboard is well used, ordered.

- 84 • Learners copy work from blackboard but some learners sat with their backs to
- 85 the blackboard while trying to copy work.
- 86 • Very few teaching aids on pin-up board at back of class.
- 87 • Now calm/ settling in time/activity after a break for learners to prepare for
- 88 current class activity.

89 **OTHER:**

- 90 • All the classroom doors are left open and unsupervised during breaktime
- 91 • A number of learners were crying on playground due to fighting : there is no
- 92 playground supervision during breaktime
- 93 • Learners are playing with classroom tools like chalk, desks, books during
- 94 breaktime
- 95 • Classroom in a disorganised state after breaktime
- 96 • One side of the school playground has got a huge hill with lots of bush ...
- 97 and is completely unsupervised during breaktime
- 98 • Lots of noise of class next door after breaktime

Respondent no 3, Class observation 3

- 99 Lesson: Reading activity
100 Observation: entered class after breaktime
- 101 **CLASSROOM**
- 102 • Multiple-activities : marking learners work, writing on board, reading in
103 groups, reading in pairs, completing activity in book to be marked.
- 104 **TEACHER:**
- 105 • Teacher marking books in front in class. Learners stand in a queue to have
106 their books marked.
- 107 • Teams-Teaching: Learners switch between classes.
- 108 • Teacher stop marking to guide paired reading learners.
- 109 • Teacher use "look" to quieten class down.
- 110 • Teacher now stood up walk around to those learners who did not present
111 their books.
- 112 • Teacher now engaged in comprehension exercise of the reader in question
113 and answers format.
- 114 **LEARNERS:**
- 115 • While teacher marking, a group of learners are all reading aloud in class:
116 synchronised reading
- 117 • Other learners are doing another activity at their table
- 118 • Other learners are walking around in class
- 119 • Some learners throw papers around
- 120 • Most learners have a uniform /part uniform on
- 121 • Some learners now writing on board
- 122 • Learners now read very softly while two at a time read to teacher and go to
123 there seats
- 124 • One learner got very agitated when someone took her reading book ... went
125 around in class look for her book while mumbling ... find the learner who took
126 her book ... took it back and settled down at her table.
- 127 Some learners at team teacher next door came to Mrs Ncobo's class while other
128 leave nor for Mrs Jack's class.
- 129 Learners collect reading books and pack away in cupboard.
- 130 All learners now went to front of class in a unorganised manner and engaged in
131 flexi-time game activity of singing.

132 **CLASSROOM SUPPORT**

133 • Printed material very small to read on walls

134 • Some learners now at tables are doing nothing

135 **OTHER**

136 • Classroom dirty : papers and dirt laying around in class

137 • Lots of noise from neighbouring class. Knocking sound against wall at back
138 of class.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The observations took place in the classroom and on the school playground. Xhosa was the instructional language in the classroom and the communicative language on the playground. The researcher has no understanding of Xhosa. The focus of observation was therefore on process rather than content. Lesson plans were discussed beforehand with the teachers in whose classes observation was done. The desks of overage learners were marked with colour stickers to aid my observation in the classroom.

The observation categories were the following:

- Classroom organisation
- Teachers (teaching practices)
- Learners (activities)
- Classroom support

CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

Learners were grouped into various grouping formations. Generally there were the strugglers grouping, the bright ones grouping, and the mix grouping. Overage learners were always mixed with other learners in the three mentioned groupings. Overage learners was never a grouping on its own but was always in a mix-age grouping.

The visual aids in the classroom were few and inadequate as an educational tool. It was very difficult to read the visual aids since it was almost in fine print. The classrooms had all the basic educational infrastructure like a blackboard, tables, chairs, packing space, a pin-up board at the back of the classroom, and electricity.

TEACHERS

The main focus was the teaching practices used in the classroom. Brainstorming and the question and answer format was the dominant teaching approach. Chalk and talk and paper and pencil exercises (worksheets) were the main forms of teacher and learner activity. Synchronised reading appeared to be a favourite learner activity.

It appears that the teacher don't know how the current activity links with the level of the learners in terms of literacy and numeracy. Lessons appear to be generic for all the groupings in the class and not set for the various needs of the groupings in the class.

When the various groupings are busy with their activities, the teacher mark learners books.

LEARNERS

The learners work is pinned up in the classroom. Learners' display very little structure in classroom activities, for example, everyone will jump up to answer a question put from the teacher to them. During activities in the class some learners walk around the class without any teacher intervention. Some were throwing papers around. Others were doing their own activities. At times learner groupings were engaged in different activities with some writing on the blackboard, others were reading, and others writing in their books.

Learners do not knock before entering classroom. They walk straight in to where the teacher is in the classroom.

CLASSROOM SUPPORT

Learner-to-learner support appeared to be the dominant form of support. Learners would copy from each other, share their pencils with each other, and work together in their group. The level of noise in and around the classroom (knocking on the walls from learners in next door classes) makes its difficult for learners to concentrate and are continually distracted in this way from completing teacher assigned tasks.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

During break time there was no supervision of learners. The learners were playing in the classes, running around and fighting inside the classes. All the classrooms were left open during break time. There was only a single instance where a teacher was present with learners in the class sitting and having their meals. In some of the classes where teachers were congregating during playtime for learners, learners was found even there to be playing in the classes with the teachers unperturbed by it.

After break time quite a few classes were busy cleaning their classrooms. Others continued in the dirty classrooms.

APPENDIX 4.7

SAMPLE OF METHOD OF ANALYSIS EMPLOYED IN THIS STUDY

This appendix aims to demonstrate how the raw data was coded, using the initial themes identified during discovery. (An extract, taken from the raw transcription of Respondent 1, is given to demonstrate this process.)

(This extract is taken from line 39-50 page 193 of the original transcription of the above-mentioned individual interview.)

NON-AGE APPROPRIATE [Classroom factors]
 R: Five, there are 5 of them. The oldest is 14 years, the youngest is 8; you can see now
 the difference. Now, they have a tendency - the younger ones have that tendency when
 LEARNERS AS TEACHER-ASSISTANTS [Classroom factors]
 I'm out of the class - I take the older ones to be responsible over the the younger ones in
 my class. At the same time I use also the young ones to be responsible. And at school as a
 [Intrapersonal] ← SOCIO-EMOTIONAL [School factors] ← UNWELCOME SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
whole, this old ones has got mixed feelings, you know, they are not sure whether they are
accepted at the school or not. You find out there is a grade 3 learner who will mix with a
 SAFETY ISSUES: ABUSE [Interpersonal factors]
 grade 7 learner, you know. That grade 7 learner will sort of bully the younger ones. So
 [Intrapersonal] ← SOCIO-EMOTIONAL; UNWELCOME SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT → [School factors]
they are not sure whether they are accepted or not. When they are playing outside with
 PEER PRESSURE [Interpersonal]
their peers, they have that peer pressure influencing from outside the school situation, and
 ABSENTEEISM, TRUANCY [Community factors]
they end up having a bad attendance.