

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE**

Healthy schools are essential cornerstones for healthy communities, because what happens in the community manifests itself in school environments and vice versa. The Department of Education (2002a: 31) indicates that many young South Africans are exposed to learning environments that are potentially damaging to their physical, mental, social and emotional well-being. As learners spend so much time at school, it is crucial that schools are transformed into places that not only promote intellectual development but also physical and emotional health and well-being.

A healthy school cares for and looks after the well-being of its occupants. Wargo (2003:1) defines the school environment as encompassing the site on which a school is located; and the surrounding environment including water, as well as materials with which children may come into contact with.

Maintaining a healthy school environment is critical to the success of learners in schools, especially in the era of HIV/AIDS. Wargo (2003: 3) states that a healthy school environment can directly improve children's health and effective learning. Furthermore, schools serve as examples for the community. Learners, school employees, families and community members should all learn to recognize and reduce environmental health threats that may be present in schools and homes. As members of the school community become aware of environmental risks at school they will also recognize ways to make home and community environments safer. It is therefore the responsibility of the School Management Team (SMT) to ensure that issues relating to hygiene, physical activity, nutrition and health education are addressed for the creation of a healthy environment (Jones & Furner, 1998: 6) that is conducive to learning. Attention should obviously be to eliminate all health hazards completely from the school surroundings. Jones and Furner (1998: 8) indicate that the quest for attaining a healthy

school environment is a multipronged initiative that looks at a number of contentious areas namely: an effective health advisory committee; an implementation of a school health policy; healthy nutrition that benefits vulnerable learners; and learner involvement in physical activity. These focus areas are regarded as determinants of healthy schools in this research and they are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 (*cf.* 2.4).

The creation of healthy school environments in South Africa as elsewhere in the world, is supported by a legislative framework (*cf.* 2.4.1). The policies that promote the focus on health in schools include: the Constitution (SA, 1996a) which indicates a right to a clean environment as fundamental and connected to health and well-being of learners; the National Policy on HIV/AIDS, Act 27 (SA, 1996b) which focuses on the prevention of communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS; the School Health Policy (SA, 2003) which focuses on the creation of health promoting schools and the provision of health services at schools; and the Policy Guidelines for Youth and Adolescent Health (SA, 2001) which focuses on preventing and responding to specific health problems in adolescents and youth and promoting the healthy development of all adolescents and youth.

A survey of related literature, indicated that studies which have been conducted regarding healthy schools and healthy school environments internationally (Inchley, Muldoon & Currie, 2006; Deschesnes, 2003; World Health Organization, 2000a; St Leger & Nutbean, 1999), and nationally (Public Service Commission, 2008; Mūkoma & Flisher, 2004; Swart & Reddy, 1999) focused on evaluation of the determinants, problems and consequences rather than the responsibility of the school managers in ensuring healthy environments. Thus, there is a need to conduct such a research.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

This background, seeks to lay the foundation for the study as undertaken, to give a synopsis of where the study was done.

This study was undertaken in the Gert Sibande District of Education in the Mpumalanga Province. Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) (2002: 1) says that Mpumalanga means the place where the sun rises, and is the second smallest province in South Africa. According to Provincial Decision Making Enabling Project (2009: 19), Mpumalanga is mainly an agricultural sector, where agricultural workforce has predominantly a permanent workforce, with the temporary workforce second highest.

The Mpumalanga Province is made out of four Districts, which are Nkangala, Ehlanzeni, Bohtabela and Gert Sibande. The Gert Sibande District is further divided into three sub-districts of Eerstehoek, Ermelo and Evander. The Evander sub-district was initially based in Standerton. It was later moved to Evander, that is why in some quarters it is still referred to as Standerton sub-district, even though it is no longer based at Standerton, but at Evander. This is where the study took place. The Gert Sibande district plays an important economic role in Mpumalanga, because of numerous mining activities going on in the area. Gold and coal mining, especially the coal has become a major source of keeping Eskom power stations running in this part of the province. Major industries like SASOL are also situated in this part of the province.

The presence of these industries in this area, do not only come with benefits but there are also some downsides they are coupled with. Some of the major negative environmental impacts caused by these industries are disturbed land due to mining, water pollution and damaged roads because of big loaded trucks. CSIR (2002: 11) indicates that South African coal produces smoke when burned, and most of this coal is concentrated in areas like South Highveld coal fields in areas like Secunda, and Eastern Highveld coal fields, in areas like Ermelo and Volksrust. These are the exact areas where this study has taken place. This presupposes that as a result these areas will be highly polluted, because of the gas emissions and smoke from industries and mines, taking into account that due to their operations, SASOL and Eskom release smoke.

CSIR (2002: 39) says that worldwide an estimated three million people in developing countries die every year from water-related diseases caused by exposure to microbiological pathogens resulting from inadequate sanitation and waste disposal. Another problem is that of poverty. CSIR (2002: 38) explains poverty as generally being characterized by the inability of individuals, households, or entire communities, to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living. Poor families create poor communities, and it is these poor communities that ultimately produce children and learners who are vulnerable. Statistics South Africa (2010: 40) indicates that the provincial poverty rate of Mpumalanga is 57%, making Mpumalanga the fifth poorest province in the country. The other challenge that this economic activity is posing is the scourge of HIV/AIDS, this because of migrant labour and tenant life that labourers find themselves in. Department of Health (2009: 42) says that it is estimated that between 320 000 and 352 000 people are infected with HIV/AIDS in Mpumalanga, this could indicate that there are a lot of learners affected and infected with HIV/AIDS in schools in this area. .

What should be noted in this regard is that there are a number of primary and secondary schools in this area that enroll thousands of learners, who can be directly affected by water and air pollution if the situation is not properly managed. This is what prompted this study, and in this area in particular, to determine how schools, through their management teams, are managing the situation, and to find out how local stakeholders are coming to the party in dealing with the situation.

### **1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The intent and objective of this study was to explore the effectiveness of SMTs in the management of healthy school environments. The study also investigated the legislative framework that guide the creation of healthy school environments.

The primary research question was how effective SMTs were in the management of healthy school environments in the Gert Sibande District, in the Mpumalanga Province?

The following secondary questions were also addressed:

- What constitutes a healthy school environment?
- What legislative principles and policies guide the creation of a healthy school environment?
- How effective are SMT members in managing programmes intended to promote healthy school environments?
- What guidelines can be formulated regarding the management of healthy school environments?

#### **1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

The main aim of this research was to determine the effectiveness of the SMTs in managing healthy school environments in schools in the Gert Sibande district.

The objectives were:

- to determine what constitutes healthy school environments;
- to determine the legislative principles and policies guiding the creation of healthy school environments;
- to investigate how effective SMT members are in managing programmes intended to promote healthy school environments ; and
- make recommendations regarding the management of healthy school environments.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research in this study was done in two phases, in the first phase a literature review was conducted. The literature enabled me to develop an interview schedule which led to the second phase which was the empirical research. The procedure used in each of the phases is indicated below:

### **1.5.1 Research paradigm**

The interpretive paradigm is characterized by a concern for the individual. The central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. To retain the integrity of the phenomena being studied, which in this research is the effectiveness of SMT members in the management of healthy school environments, efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007: 21). I wanted to choose a paradigm to enable me to understand the participants' interpretation of the world around them. My intention was to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation (management of healthy school environments) being studied.

### **1.5.2 Literature review**

A literature review was conducted in this study with the aim to contribute towards a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem that has been identified (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2005: 123), which in this research is the management of healthy school environments. The library of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle) was used as a data source in order to check for books relevant to my topic. I made use of books with recent copyright dates. The online data bases that were used included EBSCO host, Academic search Premier and Educational resources information centre (ERIC). The primary sources included electronic journals, articles and papers presented at conferences. The secondary sources were dissertations and theses conducted by students on healthy school environments.

The key words used for the search were:

Health, Healthy environments, creation of healthy environments, health promotion at schools, management of healthy environments, community involvement in health promotion at schools, physical activity, school nutrition programme, vulnerable learners, health policies, learner involvement in health promotion, teacher involvement in health

promotion, school gardens, prevention of communicable diseases at schools, health policy implementation and problems in health policy implementation.

### 1.5.2.1 Conceptual framework

The central themes that guided this study are indicated in the table below:

**Table 1.1** Summary of literature

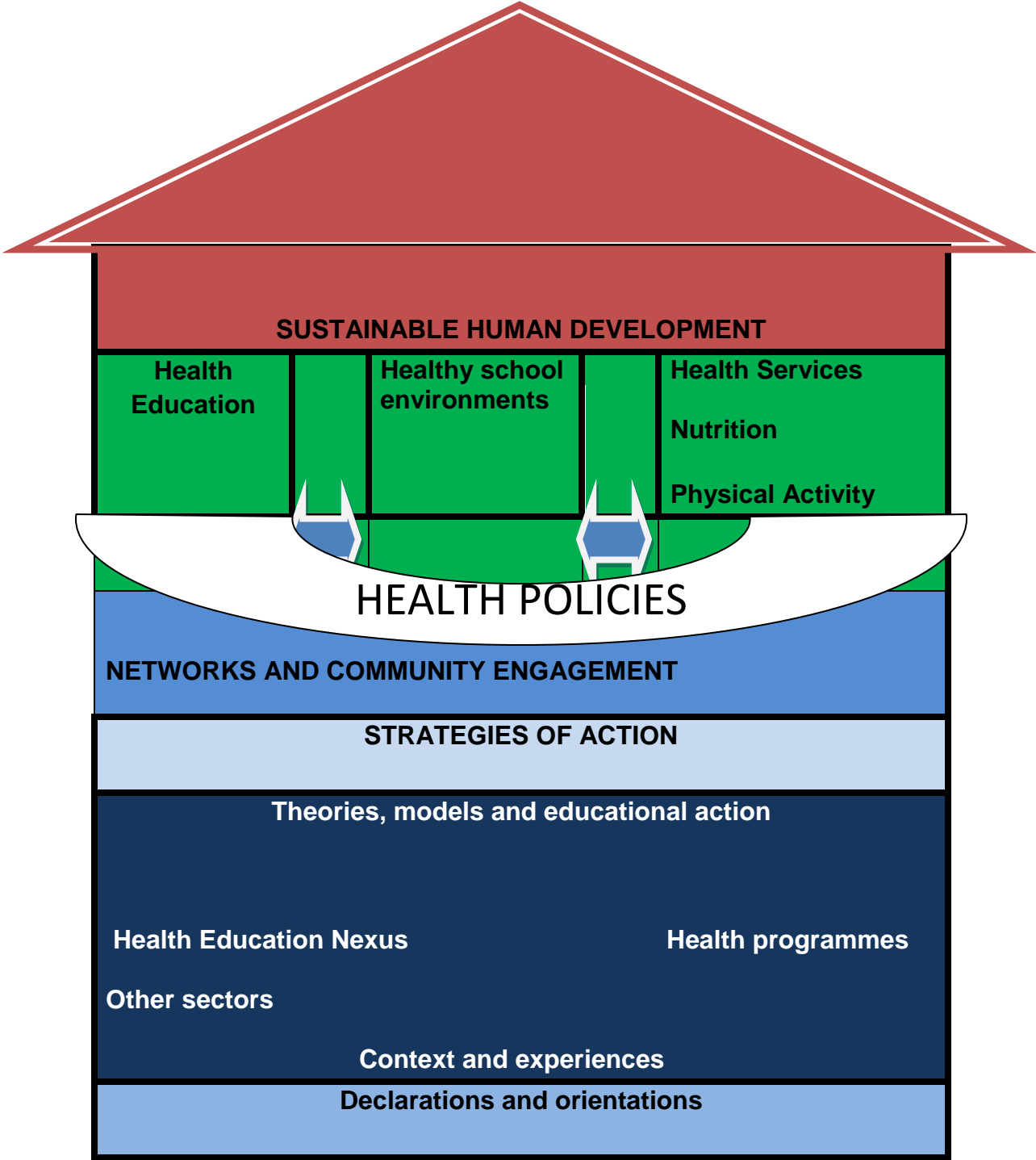
Theme	Sub themes	Sources
<b>Legislation pertaining to the creation of healthy school environments</b>	<p>The Constitution</p> <p>The National Policy on HIV/AIDS</p> <p>The National Health Policy</p> <p>The Youth and Adolescent Policy</p>	<p>The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996a); The National Policy on HIV/AIDS (RSA, 1996b); The National Health Policy (RSA, 2003); The Youth and Adolescent Policy (RSA, 2001)</p>
<b>Determinants of healthy school environments</b>	<p>Health committees</p> <p>Nutrition</p> <p>Physical activity</p> <p>Health Education</p> <p>Community involvement</p> <p>The role of educators and learners</p> <p>Management of programmes</p>	<p>California Department of Education (2003); Hampshire Country Council, (2009); Denman, Moon, Parsons and Stears (2002); The United Nations Children’s Fund (2009); Grevatt, (2011); Barnekow, <i>et al.</i>, (2006); Mokhobo (2007); The National Health Schools Programme (2007); American Academy of Pediatrics (2000); Lightfoot &amp; Bines (2000); Tinsely, (2003); Department of Education (2008); Garrett (2001); Valleau <i>et al</i> (2004); Van der Westhuizen (2010); Mokhobo (2007); Hoy, <i>et al.</i>, (1991); Missouri Coordinated School Health Coalition (2008); Ministry of Health Promotion (2010); Marx <i>et al.</i>, (1998);</p>

		Guthrie and Schuermann (2010); Denman et al (2002); Kingdon & Monk (2010); Nduku (2007); WHO (1997); Dobbins-Harper <i>et al.</i> , (2006); Wildeman & Mbebetho (2005); Public Service Commission (2008); Department of Health (2010); Statistics South Africa (2010); Jourdan <i>et al.</i> , (2010); Han and Weiss (2005); Lee et al., (2007); Ministry of Health Promotion (2010); Heppell (2005); Dobbins-Harper <i>et al.</i> , (2006); Mashoko (2007); Marx <i>et al.</i> , (1998); Gewertz (2003); Mogonediwa (2008);
<b>National programmes</b>	Soul Buddies  Provision of Health Services to schools  National School Nutrition Programme  Food Garden Projects	Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa (2012); Department of Education (2010); Food for Agriculture Organization (2010); Department of Health (2010); Mokhobo (2007)
<b>Prevention of communicable diseases</b>	First Aid Kit	HIV/AIDS Policy (1999); McNamara <i>et al.</i> , (2010); Han and Weiss (2005); Lee, St Leger & Cheng (2007); Denman et al (2002); Marx et al (1998); National Education Policy Act (1996); The Republic of South Africa Government Gazette (2005); Occupational Health and Safety Act (1993); California Department Education (2003).

The figure below illustrates the principal elements of a school initiative which were articulated in Chapter 2.



**Figure 1.1:** Conceptual Model



**Source:** Adapted from WHO (1997)

All concepts indicated in the diagram above are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.



## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The qualitative research approach was used in this study. The practical impact of the topic necessitates the use of this approach. I intended studying people in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings these people bring to them. According to Drew, Hardman and Hosp (2008: 185), qualitative methods provide an answer to the challenge and to learn more about how people behave in their typical surroundings or their natural setting.

Drew *et al.* (2008: 186) state that, because the research is conducted in the natural setting with events unfolding as they naturally do, the research often cannot rely on one (or just a few) aspects of the setting because it would mean a loss of data. In order to get the most appropriate description of the focus of the research, it was vital to allow for the inclusion of any and all data that may come up in the data collection. I took cognizance of all events and behaviours within the school context leading to revelation of data.

## **1.7 STRATEGY OF INQUIRY**

It was necessary to choose a naturalistic approach as one of the variations of qualitative research. The strategy of inquiry chosen was phenomenology. Cohen *et al.* (2007: 22) define phenomenology as a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value. According to Creswell (2009: 13), the process of a phenomenological research involves studying a small number of people through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning.

### **1.7.1 Participant selection**

Maree (2007: 79) indicates that sampling refers to the process used to select the portion of the population for study purposes. Purposive sampling was used in this research. De Vos *et al.* (2005: 328) indicate that, in qualitative studies non-probability sampling methods are utilized and, in particular, theoretical or purposive sampling techniques are used rather than random sampling. Participants were simply selected because of some

defining characteristics that made them the holders of the data needed for the study. The data needed in this study was how school managers manage healthy school environments. Sampling decisions were made for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible sources of information to answer the research questions. Sampling in qualitative research is flexible and often continues until no new themes emerge from the data collection process – called data saturation (Maree, 2007: 79; Gray, 2005: 324).

Three Primary schools and one Secondary school were targeted, making the total number of schools for the study to be four. School Management Team members (n=4), Committee members (n= 13), Life Orientation educators (n=4) participated in this research. The total number of participants was twenty one (n=21). Schools were selected on the basis of their relevance in providing rich data in the quest to respond to the topic. In Chapter 3 reasons for the selection of schools were discussed.

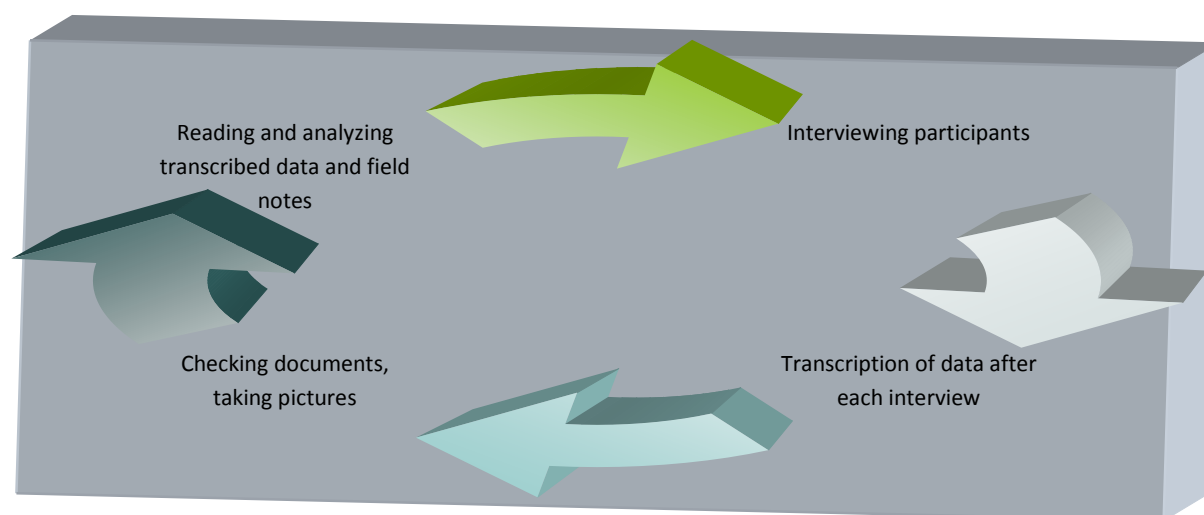
## **1.8 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES**

**Face-to-face interviews** – Face-to-face interviews were used as one of the data collection strategies. The aim of conducting qualitative interviews was to see the world through the eyes of the participants and this was a valuable source of information (Maree, 2007: 87). Face-to-face interviews were preferably conducted in settings where participants' full attention was devoted to the interview. The face-to-face interviews in this research took place at participants' schools. Time allocation for the interview was no longer than an hour.

The questions for the interview were carefully planned and as accurately worded as possible. A face-to-face interview involved: personal interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee; a dynamic process in which the interviewer asked questions guided by an interview schedule (*cf.* Appendix 5); and an electronic process through which the interviewer recorded the responses (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998: 167). Creswell (2009: 179) highlights the advantages of this data collection strategy as being useful when participants cannot be directly observed, allowing the researcher control over the line of

questioning and participants being able to provide historical information. This process is illustrated in the figure below:

**Figure 1.2:** Data collection process



This process enabled me to analyse the data while I was collecting it, go back to the field for more data and clarification until I was satisfied that no new information was coming up.

**Audio-Visual materials** – Visual methods of data collection are regarded as a valuable source (Pink, 2004). Photographs are regarded as supplementary techniques by McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 359). Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 359) argue that photographs are especially useful for validation, as they document non-verbal behavior and communication and can provide a permanent record. Photographs that were taken in this research were of the school surroundings, toilets, buildings, food gardens, needy learners receiving food packages and the first aid kits. The reasons for making use of this data collection technique and how data was collected by means of photographs were discussed in Chapter 3 (*cf.* 3.5.3.2).

### 1.8.1 Role of the researcher

My role in this study was to collect data through examining documents, photographing and interviewing participants. I established trust between myself and the participants by

taking into consideration the ethical standards. Data collection and data interpretation formed the critical role to play in this study. I played the five crucial roles identified by Creswell (2009: 177) which were to: take steps to gain entry to the research setting and to secure permission to study the phenomena which in this research is the management of healthy school environments; identify research sites and the participants; build relationship between myself and the participants; explain the reasons for investigation to participants; interview participants and photographs from the participants; and transcribe, analyse and interpret data. Chapter 3 elaborates on how these roles were played.

## **1.9 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

According to Creswell (2009: 183), the process of data analysis involves making sense out of the text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data - like peeling back the layers of an onion, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. The data consisted of the detailed description of the setting (schools) and participants. In this research interview data were transcribed and coded into themes and categories of information and the meaning of these themes were interpreted (*cf.* 4.3).

It was necessary to triangulate the data collected by means of interviews, documents and photographs. Flick (2009: 445) contends that triangulation refers to combining different sorts of data on the background of theoretical perspectives, which are applied to the data. In this research this meant collecting data from different sources, participants, documents and photographs. According to Denscombe (2007: 134), triangulation involves the practice of viewing things from more than one perspective. The rationale behind this was to get a better understanding of what was investigated by viewing it from different positions. How data obtained from the face-to-face interviews and photographic evidence was triangulated in this research is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

## 1.10 QUALITY CRITERIA

Trustworthiness was of the utmost importance in this research. Assessing trustworthiness is the acid test of data analysis, findings and conclusions. Accordingly, it was important for me to keep the procedures used for assessing the trustworthiness constantly in mind. These procedures include consistency checks and credibility or stakeholder checks (Maree, 2007: 113). In this study the consistency checks were done by using data from different sources such as interviews, documents, and photography. At the completion of interviewing or other data collection strategies, transcripts or field notes were submitted to the participants to correct errors (Maree, 2007: 113). Validating and verifying the findings was done by providing copies of a draft report to the participants and asking written or oral comments on the report (Maree, 2007: 114).

## 1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participant protection is perhaps the most important ethical consideration of all. I had a fundamental responsibility to do all in my power to ensure that participants in this research were protected from any physical or psychological harm or danger that might have arisen from research procedures. Ethical considerations are crucial for the credibility of the research. Some of the crucial ethical measures that were taken into considerations in this research included the following:

**Informed consent** - The involved participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the research, its risks and benefits, and gave consent to participate without coercion (Anderson & Asernault, 1998: 18). Participants were made aware of the general aims of the study and what it involved. Consent extended to include publications that may grow out of the study (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004: 104). Participants gave consent to the taking of photographs and documents.

**Avoidance of harm** - The responsibility for protecting participants against harm according to De Vos *et al.* (2005: 58), reaches further than mere efforts to repair, or attempt to minimize, such harm afterwards. It was therefore necessary to inform

participants beforehand about the potential impact of the investigation. Such information offered them the opportunity to withdraw from the investigation if they so wished.

**Confidentiality and anonymity** - Participants were assured in writing (*cf.* Appendix 4) that their identities were masked as much as possible in any report of the project outcomes and processes. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 110), this is a traditional criterion of ethics, and aims at minimizing negative repercussions for participants in light of the outcomes of the study. Confidential information implied that the identity of the participants and the schools remained anonymous. All the indicated ethical considerations were strictly adhered to, to ensure the protection of the participants' human rights, and for the sake of the credibility of the study.

## **1.12 POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study is hoped to be of great significance in that the information obtained will inform future studies. As indicated earlier very few studies have been conducted in South African schools regarding the creation of healthy school environments. The study will have a positive impact in the quest for healthy environments which might contribute to the fight against such challenges as the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

## **1.13 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY**

**Chapter 1: Orientation** - This chapter laid the foundation and introduced the rationale for the study. The focus was mainly on the formulation of the research problem, research questions, aims and objectives and the research methodology.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review** - This chapter dealt with relevant literature on the topic, this chapter gives a background information about the topic, gave an overview of what healthy school environments entail, which include the legislative framework that guide the creation of healthy school environments, provision of healthy nutrition, importance of physical education, strengthening of partnerships and commitment of learners and educators in the implementation of health programmes. I also addressed the importance of leadership and management of health programmes.

**Chapter 3: Empirical Research** - This chapter reported on the research methodology, and specific details on how the research was conducted. The strategy of enquiry and the data collection procedure were highlighted. This chapter explicitly gave detailed information on how research sites were selected through a purposive sampling process, to when data was collected and ultimately transcribed. This chapter also gave an overview of how the research was practically carried out.

**Chapter 4: Research Results** - This chapter analysed and interpreted data collected by means of interviews, documentation and photography. This chapter started by giving a profile of all the participants and the schools they were from. The data was analysed using themes.

**Chapter 5: Conclusions, Findings and Recommendations** - This chapter indicated the findings of the study, shortcomings and the recommendations.

#### **1.14 CONCLUSION**

This chapter started by giving a thorough overview of the study, and highlights the steps the researcher used to fulfill the purpose of the research. The strategies that play a vital role in the creation of healthy school environment were mentioned and were discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The research paradigm, method and participant selection were also analysed and explored. It was necessary to discuss the ethical considerations I had to familiarize myself with the ethical procedures that should be addressed in this research. Finally the chapter is concluded by a chapter lay out which clearly shows how the study unfolded from one chapter to the other. This chapter formed the foundation of the whole study, and subsequent chapters build up on what chapter one had started.

The next chapter, the literature review is presented.