Indigenising life skills education for learners in rural schools of Malamulele Central Circuit in the Limpopo Province – South Africa:

A Social Work Perspective.

By

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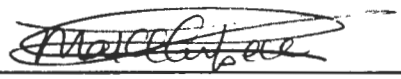
DECLARATION

I Jabulani Calvin Makhubele hereby declare that this document is my own work and that all the sources I have used and quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.



15/06/2009

Jabulani Calvin Makhubele **Date**

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the hero and heroines of my life:

- My late father and late brother - Tshameleni Daniel Khazamula Makhubele and Magezi Phineus Makhubele for teaching me early in life that a man must have ideals that he passionately believes in and lives for and that one has to do everything possible to curve his place in this life and stake his claims.

- My wife - Eunice Sherenet Makhubele for love, patience, understanding, support and for believing in the future even as I pursued my lofty dreams that took me away from home for long spells.

- My mother - Mphephu Nwamikhayisi Makhubele who taught me the virtues of patience, perseverance and hard work that continue to carry me through life to the present day.

- My daughter - Risuna Palesa Ingrid Makhubele for the grace of God in you. With love.

Had it not been for you, whose encouragement and patience were like water and sunshine to a budding flower, this research project would not have come into fruition. To you I say "***Ndzi hanyeleni***".

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In combining graduate school with raising and maintaining a family and a full-time career, the journey to complete this degree has been a long and winding road. I have been blessed along the way with innumerable colleagues, friends, and family members who have provided support and inspiration throughout the process. To my promoter, Professor Lulama Qalinge who provided me with excellent academic guidance, advice, support and ever-willingness to assist when I periodically appeared on your doorstep throughout the research process, to you I say thank you – ***"Khanimamba – ku dya I ku engeta".*** Just as importantly, you added humour and patience that was critical to my intermittent bursts of work on this project. I have been extraordinarily lucky to have colleagues who were supportive of my graduate work. To you I say thank you though I am unable to mention all of you by names. To the principals of the three high schools where the research was conducted, Mrs. Manganyi (Mahuntsi High School), Ms Vala (Ntsako High School) and Mr. Manganyi (Madonsi High School) for their cooperation and interest which facilitated the administration of my research instrument. To my research respondents who made it possible for me to collect data through their willingness and cooperation, I say thank you.

Finally; I would like to thank God of Mount Zion and my fellow ZCC members for the mighty strength, guidance, support, and wisdom to complete this study.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at exploring the relevance of indigenising life skills education in alleviating health and social pathologies among learners in rural areas and to assess the impact of Eurocentric life skills education on learners in rural areas and to investigate the role of parents, social workers and life skills educators in indigenising life skills education.

With regard to methodology, explorative-qualitative design was used as it facilitated the observation and studying of subjects, providing them with information and learning from them about their needs and problems. Exploratory research design was also used as it enabled preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research. It is an open, flexible and inductive approach of research to explore the appropriateness and relevance of indigenous knowledge systems in relation to life skills education in rural areas. Probability-sampling design was used to select a sample from each category of the population groups which were learners, life skills educators, parents and social workers. Literature review, focus group interviews and individual interviews using interview schedule which contained open-ended questions were used to obtain qualitative data. Literature review includes identifying relevant sources of information, assessment of these sources and the application of subject literature in the text. It involves insight and comprehension, the ability to argue a point, synthesis, and the ability to distinguish important study materials from less important materials. The data is presented, analysed and interpreted in such a way that true expressions of research participants are revealed and explained according to their beliefs and experiences.

The study revealed that there is consensus on indigenising life skills education and it also showed that the research subjects had common understanding of

what life skills education is. A concern was raised on the way current life skills education is presented as well as the need to use local language (mother tongue) in the teaching of life skills education. Further, a concern was raised that life skills education should not be examined and that its reading materials should be indigenised. Suggested methods to be used in indigenising life skills education entailed that custodians, holders and vessels of cultural practices, values, beliefs and customs who are parents, community leaders and indigenous knowledge holders should in partnership with life skills educators be actively involved in presenting life skills education. As a method, indigenous knowledge needs to be researched and be brought to the school level. Factors which contribute to the failure of life skills education such as the thorny issue of life skills educators' sexual involvement with learners surfaced. Learners' performance appraisal on life skills education should not be on quantitative results but on learners' participation and behavioural changes.

The study recommended that western methods, paradigms, theories, perspectives and models should be adapted to fit the local conditions of people. The teaching of life skills education should be in mother tongue to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Indigenous life skills education reading materials must be developed to complement the use of mother tongue. There should be a paradigm shift from edu-centric and Eurocentric methods of teaching and learning to Afro-centric methods of teaching and learning. The method should stress learner-centredness and oriented with equal emphasis on social cultural knowledge on the total up-bringing of children.

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Young people in particular, occupy a place of central concern in the modern-day society and therefore need to be protected against health and social pathologies. Risk taking behaviours such as substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour, crime and violence continue to destroy and negatively affect their lives at school as well as when they have already left school. Furthermore, young people face serious challenges and problems of group pressure, competition with their peers, stressful family circumstances, eurocentric lifestyles, absence of parental role models, lack of respect for the elders, misinterpretation of human rights, lack of accountability, different types of abuses and family disorganisation (Visser, 2005: 101 – 102; Alpaslan, 2003:259; Malaka, 2003:381 and Ayo-Yusuf, 2005:32 and 38).

Since the future and hope of every nation, community and family is its children, it is essential that all children be nurtured and socialised in a way that will facilitate their constructive development, so that eventually each child may become an asset to his/her family, community and the nation. Though nurturing and socialisation take place within the family, schools also play a significant role in shaping the development of children. This is confirmed by Srikantaiah (2005:1) in stating that besides the family, children are nurtured and trained in schools too. However, observation has shown that conventional curricular taught in schools does not seem to support children's life long learning and socialisation based on their indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), as much focus is laid on Eurocentric education which negates indigenous knowledge. These Eurocentric educational

practices made Africans to be more secretive and apologetic about practices of indigenous knowledge and tend to regard them as practices for pagans (Pityana, 1999:137).

According to Legari (2006: vi); Mosemege (2005:1-2) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO: on line), indigenous knowledge is the basic component of any community's knowledge system. It encompasses the values, skills, experiences and insights of people, applied to maintain or improve their livelihood. Moreover, Grenier (1998:1) purports that indigenous knowledge systems refer to the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographical area. Indigenous knowledge has gained widespread international recognition as a critical factor for the preservation of both community's cultural and social distinctiveness as well as homogeneity. Critical as it may be, close scrutiny of available life skills education programmes as well as contact with young people has revealed that indigenous knowledge is not taken into consideration in the teaching of life skills education. This is confirmed by Srikantaiah (2005:1) that conventional curricula and achievement tests in many countries do not support students' learning based on their IKS. Learning environments need to be adapted to help students build on their indigenous communities' knowledge and by recognizing students' culture and value systems. This therefore calls for the adaptation of learning environments to help learners build on their indigenous communities' knowledge and encouraging recognition of Vatsonga learner's culture and value systems. The author strongly believes that there is a need to reclaim and establish indigenous knowledge through the medium of life skills education. By indigenising life skills education, it is hoped that the youth will feel proud of their indigenous cultural heritage. It is further hoped that this will create the capacity for them to grasp the complexity and sophistication of their own traditional understanding of the social environment. Indigenous knowledge will empower them to make their own

choices for a sustainable future using both local and foreign knowledge as they see it fit.

Indigenising life skills programmes can equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to help them cope with challenging and difficult situations in a positive and effective way. The fundamental aim of indigenising life skills programmes is to assist learners to make informed, responsible choices and decisions and to maximise their happiness and fulfilment in life. Indigenising life skills education is very relevant because of its intrinsic value as well as the important role it can play in restoring learners, family and community's cultural dignity and confidence in addressing challenges and problems (Ntsoane, 2005:89). Ngwena (2003:191 -193) asserts that for life skills education programmes to be efficacious, the programmes must attend and respond to all real-life situations. In support of this contention, Nelson-Jones (1993:10) asserts that when a positive and empowering life skills programme is presented and inculcated, trainees will succeed to acquire a repertoire of skills in accordance with their developmental tasks and specific problems and challenges that they face in life.

The focus of the study was on rural young learners from secondary schools in Malamulele. This study was conducted in Malamulele central Circuit of Thulamela Local Municipality in the Limpopo Province.

1.2 Rationale for undertaking the study

There were numerous reasons, which prompted the researcher to undertake this study. Amongst others were the following:

- Current life skills programmes in schools are not indigenised to meet and address the challenges and needs of Vatsonga speaking learners. There is a

gap and a need in terms of contextualising life skills programmes to the local cultural and value systems.

- There is no reliable and standard approach for social workers and allied professionals to implement indigenised life skills programmes to learners in schools.

- The involvement of the researcher in discussions with colleagues during case conferences in Limpopo while in the employment of Department of Correctional Services and later the Free State Department of Social Development from 2003 to 2006 on effectiveness of current life skills programmes in schools in an attempt to address social ills affecting the lives of learners.

- Practice experience of the researcher while in the employment of the Department of Social Development based in Bloemfontein. During this time, the researcher was responsible for the development of life skills programmes for Youth Development and Substance Abuse services. The researcher's responsibility made him realise that the majority of the youth, mostly from youth-headed families and particularly those from families of migrant workers, are rarely exposed to adequate parental guidance – hence they are usually not aware of the consequences of their behavioural patterns – lifestyles.

- In addition, the researcher on a voluntary basis annually offers a life skills programme at Marobathota Winter School Enrichment Classes in the Limpopo Province. This is a national winter school programme, which is attended by learners from as far as the Eastern Cape, Free State, North West, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Limpopo provinces. It has been at some of these Winter School Classes that most of the learners showed little or no interest in indigenous knowledge systems. They confirmed that they are regularly exposed to violence in all its horrible, ugly and diverse forms.

Kasiram, Keen and Naidoo (1996:373) state that many learners are buffeted by broken family life and poor social support systems that fuel the development of anti-social and/or hostile values within the society

- Generally, most researchers often avoid conducting research studies in rural areas because of lack of infrastructure and the tedious protocol and bureaucratic processes required by the Department of Education, schools' principals and school governing bodies before permission is granted for a study to be conducted. The researcher felt motivated to conduct the study in the rural communities and was curious to conduct this study in order to encourage indigenising of life skills education programmes in secondary schools of the Thulamela Local Municipality in the Limpopo Province. The researcher is a resident of Malamulele in Limpopo and was motivated by the desire to conduct research in an area, which is seldom if ever considered by researchers.

1.3. Statement of the problem

The heart of every research project is the problem and therefore, the research problem or question is the axial centre around which the whole research project is based (Leedy, 1997:45). The research problem originates out of the incomplete knowledge and/or flawed understanding of the situation. Prior to resolving the practical problems, a research problem should be resolved first as solutions to the research problem point a solution to the practical problems (Booth, Colomb and Williams, 1995:50 and 54 and Schoeman, 2004:11).

Ngwena (2003:191 -193) purports that current life skills education programmes are presented not in a culturally appropriate manner. As a result, skills, knowledge, attitudes and values do not represent the cultural specific realm of

learners. This is due to the fact that the concept of life skills and the way it is presented is based on criteria imposed by the Europeans and Americans. Furthermore, current life skills education teaches western values and norms at the expense of local values (African values) and regard African values as those practiced by illiterates. If life skills education could be rendered in a manner that is culturally appropriate to a particular environment, it is hoped that it will have a positive effect on learners' self-esteem, acceptance, growth and development (Bender and Lombard, 2004: 87; Van Soest, 1994:19; King, 1994:22 and Freeman, 1994:71).

South Africa's young generation is faced with a number of health and social pathologies; top on the list is high levels of HIV and AIDS, despite sound level of knowledge about sexual health risks (Campbell and MacPhail, 2002:331). According to the statistics of the Medical Research Council (2002:3) many young people (learners) drop out of school, play truancy, indulge in alcohol and drugs, are de-motivated in life, indulge in early sexual activities without taking precautionary measures and get involved in criminal activities. This is irrespective of numerous prevention programmes like *Love Life, Ke Moja – No thanks I am fine without drugs, Girl Movements, and the Buddies*, amongst others, which are up and running in communities and schools to address challenges and problems affecting the youth. Notwithstanding these prevention programmes and their achievements, young people continue to indulge in anti-social behaviour as shown by the escalating statistics of substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, crime, teenage pregnancy and indiscriminate sexual behaviour.

Indigenous knowledge is one of the resources that could be used to alleviate health and social pathologies, help to maintain good relationships and healthy lives, share wealth, alleviate conflict, manage local affairs, and thus contribute to global solutions. It is also the social capital of the poor, the main asset to invest in

the struggle for survival, to maintain positive interaction in diversity and a tool to help young people achieve control of their own lives. Indigenous knowledge has contributed to building solidarity in communities affected by globalisation and shielded them against some of its negative impacts (Mkapa, 2004:1). Therefore, indigenising life skills education (integration of indigenous knowledge in life skills education programmes) could help to ameliorate most of the challenges and problems affecting learners. If the above statement is true it can be argued that most of the social ills affecting young people could be reduced to manageable levels. Seemingly, policy and programme developers have overlooked the potential of indigenous knowledge as a resource and have even further neglected the knowledge that women and men, families and communities had developed and maintained for centuries (Mkapa, 2004:2). This is also confirmed by Leautier (2004: 4) in indicating that rural communities not only have knowledge about indigenous practices, they also have knowledge of how to adapt to adverse environments, institutions, and policies.

Zeleza (2002:22); Mkabela (2005:178) and Ramolehe (2006:7) purport that the education system in South Africa is Eurocentric and places more emphasis on the cognitive and/or mental aspects of the learner. It attaches less value and disregards indigenous knowledge and other crucial aspects like moral development and social skills during the upbringing of the learners. The mere provision of education is not enough to achieve specific educational objectives, and therefore should be supplemented by social support services through life skills education (Kotze, 1995:183). For education to be effective as a developmental instrument, learning must holistically develop people, build the community and contribute to their general well being and relationships (Schenck and Louw, 1995:8). James and Gilliland (2001:521) contend that any school system, which operates in isolation without the inclusion of indigenous life skills education, faces the major risks of losing learners not just academically but socially as well. It is therefore, significant that schools through the medium of

indigenised life skills education play a central role in the socialisation and education of the learners who uphold different values from their parents. Educators and learners need to be equipped with indigenous life skills presented in home languages to allow for easier understanding of the subject matter conveyed and for it to be relevant to specific circumstances. Educators should be prepared for a variety of behavioural undulation effects amongst learners as participants in the learning process (James and Gilliland, 2001:517, Van Rooyen and Gray, 1995:88 and Schenck and Louw, 1995:9). The status quo in South Africa is such that life skills education programmes in rural areas are conducted in a foreign language and in some cases taught by educators who do not have knowledge of the local culture, traditions and norms of the communities they are serving. In most instances, the involvement of parents and communities is poor or ignored.

In support of that, Easton, Capacci and Kane (2000:3) assert that parental and community involvement in the education of children is of outmost significance in passing down cultures, traditions and values. Life skills education cannot be in a value-free context or social-cultural vacuum. Learners should not be taught out of their community values and practices and be expected to manage and be able to address health and social pathologies successfully. It is expected that learners are educated so that they can fit into their communities. If attitudes and values cherished by the communities are neglected and undermined, the result can lead to disaster as the neglect destroys self-esteem and poor self-esteem results in wrong or bad choices. It is also noted that children/learners in rural areas face different challenges from their urban counterparts, yet are exposed to the same life skills education. It is these gaps and inconsistencies that propelled the researcher to undertake this study.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the study

1.4.1 Aim

The aim of the study was to explore the relevance of indigenising life skills education in alleviating health and social pathologies among learners in rural areas.

1.4.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To explore the learners', life skills educators', parents' and social workers' views about indigenising life skills education to address health and social pathologies.
- To assess the impact of Eurocentric life skills education on rural learners.
- To investigate the role of parents, social workers and life skills educators in indigenising life skills education.

1.5 Research Questions

Research questions refer to the specific query to be addressed by research. They set the parameters of the project, and suggest the method to be used for data gathering and analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:35). In support of this viewpoint, Schoeman (2004:11) states that research questions flow from the research problem and are indeed a further refinement of the research problem. The study was guided by the following questions:

- What is indigenous life skills education?

- Can the provision of indigenous life skills education play a role in changing the attitudes and perceptions of learners towards their own culture?

- What renders available life skills programmes effective or ineffective in rural areas?

- What is the impact of Eurocentric life skills education in rural areas?

- What is the role of social workers in indigenising life skills education?

- What is the role of educators in indigenising life skills education?

- What role could parents play in the development and implementation of indigenised life skills education programmes for the learners?

1.6 Significance of the study

The value of this study is discussed under the following sub-headings:

1.6.1 Social Work and allied Professions

The findings of this study could serve as a reliable benchmark for an indigenised life skills education programme that focuses on the development and utilisation of assets to enhance resiliency in an effort to address heath and social pathologies. The research study equally could help the service providers in the school setting (educators and school social workers) to implement the programme, evaluate and make recommendations regarding the development of an appropriate programme for the rural learners. Findings of this research study could also help the Department of Education to consider the relevance and importance of school social workers. The findings could further enhance the current life skills education

literature that is Eurocentric in nature to be added to the knowledge base of the social work profession and education.

1.6.2 Community

With regard to the value of this study to the community, exploration of indigenous knowledge may contribute to the revival of traditional social values, norms, customs, and traditions in order to address many social ills assailing youth. While the study was exploring the role of indigenising life skills education programmes in relation to addressing health and social pathologies, learners were conscientised about the need and relevance of indigenous knowledge in their everyday life.

1.6.3 Policy implications

With regard to policy influence, the end product of this research study would enable the Department of Education to consider indigenising life skills education using the findings as the benchmark. The study allowed for the assessment of the nature, appropriateness and adequacy of existing interventions and policies surrounding life skills education programmes as well as an assessment of factors hindering existing life skills education programmes. This is supported by Rothmund (2006:3) who asserts the fact that indigenised life skills education programmes could raise cultural sensitive issues of sexuality, gender inequalities, commercial sex, homosexuality and alcohol and drug abuse.

1.7 Research Methodology

Research methodology is the operational framework, which guide and direct the research project with regard to how the study is conducted. The focus was on the research design, data collection, and data analysis.

1.7.1 Research Design

A research design is the visualisation of the data and the problems associated with the appropriateness and employability of those data in the entire research project. It deals with what type of study undertaken in order to provide acceptable answers to the research problem and/or questions (Leedy, 1997:93 and Mouton, 2003:49). In this study, the researcher employed the explorative-qualitative design, which facilitated him to observe and study his subjects, provide them with information and learn from them about their needs and problems.

Rubin and Babbie (2001:123); Fouché in De Vos (2002:109) and Ferreira (2004:21) assert that an explorative study aims at exploring a relatively unknown terrain and examining new interests and wants to develop methods to be used during implementation of the findings. In support of this Durrheim in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006: 44) states that exploratory research design makes preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research. It is an open, flexible and inductive approach to research as it enables the researcher to look for new insights into the phenomenon. In this study, exploratory research design enabled the researcher to explore the appropriateness and relevance of indigenous knowledge systems in relation to life skills education in rural areas.

The research design entailed procedures that alluded to population to be studied, sampling methods, data collection as well as methods of data analysis and interpretation.

1.7.1.1 Population

Wilson and Hutchinson (1996:240) describe a population as the total possible membership of the group to be studied. In this study, four types of populations were used. These entailed the following:

- Grade 10 learners from the historically disadvantaged high schools in Malamulele Central Circuit of Thulamela Local Municipality of Vhembe District Municipality – Limpopo Province. The rationale being that they have been involved in life orientation subjects from grade 4. The learners will comprise both males and females whose age ranges from 14 to 18 years.
- Life orientation educators from the chosen historically disadvantaged high schools in Malamulele Central Circuit of Thulamela Local Municipality of Vhembe District Municipality – Limpopo Province.
- Parents (members of school governing body) from each selected historically disadvantaged high school in Malamulele Central Circuit.
- Social workers employed by the Department of Health and Social Development in Malamulele Service Point Offices in Thulamela Local Municipality.

1.7.1.2 Sampling

The researcher used probability-sampling design to select a sample from each category of population group as indicated above. Probability sampling refers to a situation wherein each person in the population has the same known probability of being selected. Each person in the population had an equal and independent chance of being selected in the sample (Strydom and Venter in De Vos, 2002: 197 and Durrheim and Painter in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006:134). The sample was heterogeneous in nature, as it included learners of both sexes, whose ages range from early to late adolescence. The sample of

educators, parents (members of school governing bodies) and social workers was neither age nor gender specific.

1.7.2 Data Collection

Qualitative methods of data gathering were used to collect data. The qualitative research method employs procedures, which are not strictly formalized and also adopts a philosophical mode of operation (De Vos, Schurink and Strydom in De Vos, 1998:15 and De Vos in De Vos, 2002: 363). Leedy (1997:107 and 108) identified the qualitative research methodologies as dealing with data that are principally verbal. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:8) state that the qualitative method emphasizes processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity and frequency. To obtain qualitative data in this study, procedures that were used entailed literature review and interviews using focus group and individual interviews. An interview schedule was used to facilitate the process.

1.7.3 Data Analysis

Sarantakos (2000:210) and De Vos (2002:339) contend that data presentation, analysis and interpretation is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. This involves data reduction, presentation and interpretation. It also involves the breaking down of data into constituent parts in order to find answers to the research questions. Description of procedures for data presentation, analysis and interpretation is referred to as the data analysis spiral. The researcher moves in analytical circles rather than using a fixed linear approach.

1.8 Profile of the area of study

A brief profile of the area of the study covers information on the geographical information, educational status in the area, and cultural practices in Malamulele.

1.8.1 Geographical information

The study was conducted at Malamulele among the following communities: Xithlelani, Matsakali, and Gidja-Mhandzeni. These are rural communities. Malamulele is in the Thulamela Local Municipality of the Vembe District Municipality, which is within the Limpopo Province. Thulamela Local Municipality shares boarders on the east with the Kruger National Park; while on the north it shares boarders with Mutale Local Municipality. On the west is Makhado Local Municipality and on the south is Greater Giyani Local Municipality of Mopani District Municipality. In terms of statistics, these communities have a population of 7390 people (Statistics South Africa, 2001: on line)

1.8.2 Educational status and poverty in Malamulele

The majority of people in Malamulele are not literate because they place a very low premium on education. School drop out is largely due to the fact that once learners have been initiated into adulthood by graduating from circumcision school, they usually drop out of school. Reasons advanced for the high drop out rate is disillusionment, as youth are aware of the high rate of unemployment which affects even those who have educational qualifications. The high level of illiteracy which exists in Malamulele, contributes substantially to the spate of health and social problems affecting learners in schools. Thulamela Local Municipality area is characterized by rural settlement patterns; which result in extreme poverty and under development. Like in many other rural areas of the Limpopo Province, the socio-economic lifestyle of many people in Malamulele

may be rated as below the poverty datum lines since the majority of people are unemployed. Unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and lack of recreation are characteristics of Malamulele.

1.8.3 Cultural practices in Malamulele

With regard to cultural practices, focus was on the following: language and religion of the people in Malamulele, cultural and gender mainstreaming issues, male and female circumcision, polygamy, and health and social pathologies.

- Language and religion

The language spoken by the people in the area is Xitsonga/Shangaan though some people are proficient in other languages. Other languages, which are spoken in this area, are TshiVenda, Sepedi, Isindebele, IsiZulu, Afrikaans and English. With regard to religion, the most popular and freely practised types are Christianity, ancestral worship and a combination of both.

- Cultural and gender mainstreaming issues

The Vatsonga people, particularly those who are found in the rural communities are characterised by a sense of inferiority complex in that they still view and hold in high esteem other ethnic groups. This is indicated by the Vatsonga people having double surnames so that they may be accepted when they are in other areas like Venda and Gauteng. For example, the Chauke's are also known as or use Mabasa, Maluleke is Mkhwanazi, Hlungwani is Sono, Khosa is Khoza. To be accepted amongst the Zulu speaking people, Valoyi is Mothodolovhana-Mokalanga-Molozwi, and Makhubele is Mugwena so as to be accepted amongst the Venda and Shona of Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the view that women are subservient to men and that their words carry no weight also still prevails in

Malamulele. A woman has got no decision-making powers. Values with regard to gender, human rights and rights of minors are disregarded.

- Male and female circumcision/initiation

In Malamulele, circumcision institutions are set up occasionally in a traditional way for the purpose of admission of initiates. Such institutions are commonly known as initiation schools. Initiation schools are conducted in winter, once over a period of 5 years. Traditional leaders permit traditional Venda surgeons to conduct initiation ceremonies in the various villages. Community members have high regard for the traditional way of initiation and they tend to scoff at those who have not been to the initiation schools as being circumcised boosts self-esteem. There is however, no control of the age group of people who may participate hence, sometimes, even young children who have not yet reached puberty (for instance, 8 years old) are admitted in the initiation schools, as long as their parents are willing to pay the fee. Some children themselves elope from their homes under the influence of friends and peers and enrol themselves for initiation without parental consent. The sole purpose of these schools is to train boys into men. Young boys automatically become men after circumcision and they feel entitled to do what men do such as indulging in alcohol and sex. The possibility thereafter is that they are dropping out of school.

Initiation is not only confined to males, but females too in Malamulele undergo initiation. Female initiation schools are conducted annually and sometimes more schools are conducted within a year during school vacations. The duration of female initiation schools is shorter than that of male initiation schools as they last over a period of one week. The criterion used for selecting female initiates is puberty. Only girls who have started to menstruate regardless of their age are admitted. Just as male initiation schools, female initiation schools train girls into womanhood and prepare them for childbirth and marriage. Unwittingly, female initiation results in loss of childhood and subsequently early indulgence in sex

and the resultant early pregnancy and/or STD infection including HIV/AIDS (Makhubele, 2004:14).

- Polygamy

Polygamy is prevalent and acceptable in Malamulele. It is regarded as a status symbol for some men irrespective of whether they can afford to feed their families or not. Male indulgence in multiple sexual partners within and outside wedlock is revered as a symbol of maturity, royalty and being macho. No one speaks against this practice and those who indulge in it have social approval and even admiration. Discussions on sexually transmitted diseases are a taboo hence discussions on HIV/AIDS are limited and are actually not popular. Denial of the existence of HIV/AIDS is discernable and even where there are obvious symptoms of the virus and disease, community members still regard the subject as taboo and would rather displace their anger, disappointment and frustration on those who are branded as witches.

Polygamy entails multiple sex partners for males who practise it. It is commonly practised in many countries of Africa in particular. It has been stated that men are more likely to have two or more concurrent sexual partners and are therefore at a greater risk of both contracting HIV and passing it on. To the contrary, women are socialised to be submissive with regard to sexual matters (Foreman, 1999: ix, and Bunch, Carrillo and Shore in Stromquist, 1998:5). Many people shun safer sex practices like the use of condoms. Research findings by Wood and Foster (1995:14) noted that there are negative attitudes towards condoms hence their low use. Condom use is unlikely in situations where sex is forced upon subordinates (Garcia-Moreno and Watts, 2000:257).

- Health and social pathologies

Research study by Makhubele (2004:94 and 96) indicates that pupils in Malamulele schools are to a large extent exposed to sexual pressures and use of substances. In Malamulele, substance use and abuse by both males and females among the young and old is a common form of recreation. Indulgence in substances is a popular weekend and holiday time form of recreation. Substances are to a large extent provided during celebrations such as confirmation, baptism and even funerals. The most easily available drugs are alcohol and dagga. The most common means of earning an income in the area is by selling home-brewed alcohol and dagga.

Crime as one of the social pathologies does occur in rural areas like Malamulele though not in comparison with the urban areas. The South African Police Services statistics for 2005-2006 indicates that crime in Malamulele has decreased compared to previous year: 2004-2005. Most crimes go un-reported to the police due to the fact that traditional (Kangaroo) courts still exist. It can also be attributed to the fact that people no longer trust the justice system as people who committed serious crimes like rape get less sentences. Besides taking the matters to the kangaroo courts, families still attend to their matters before taking it to the justice system and only when two families disagree, the issue is reported to the authorities. There are quite substantial number of cases like indecent assaults, rape, physical abuse, theft, defamation of character, which are handled by family members and traditional (kangaroo) courts before being handed over to the authorities.

1.9 Limitations of the study

The researcher was aware and mindful of the following limitations to the study:

- There was a dearth of literature regarding indigenised life skills programmes amongst learners in South Africa with special reference to Thulamela Municipality of Vhembe District Municipality - Limpopo Province as well as on many low-resourced (rural) areas in the RSA.

- There was a lack of trust by the learners and educators towards the researcher. The researcher first had to establish rapport with respondents (learners, educators and parents) before data could be gathered. The reception of the researcher and the length of period required to establish rapport was a time-consuming exercise. Outsiders, mostly from Universities and other institutions other than the Department of Education, are normally viewed with suspicion and are seldom granted permission to conduct research in schools.

The researcher experienced the following personal factors as limitations to the study.

- **Acquiescence bias** was a limitation as some learners were agreeing with some questions in order to finish earlier. This is confirmed by Zikmund (1994:217-218) who states that acquiescence bias is a category of response bias that results because some individuals tend to agree with all questions or concur with a particular position. To avoid this kind of bias, the researcher asked each question several times in different ways to ensure that one ultimately gets an honest response.

- **Extremity bias** occurred as some learners, parents and life skills educators provided more information as they were trying to substantiate

their viewpoints and as a result missed the points of questions under discussion. Zikmund (1994:218) confirms this by referring to extremity bias as a bias that results because the responding style varies from person to person; some individuals tend to use extremes when responding to questions.

1.10 Definition of concepts

The following concepts are operationalised for the purpose of this study:

1.10.1 Adolescent

An adolescent is the youth at the stage between childhood and adulthood, termed adolescence (Van Den Aardweg and Van Den Aardweg, 1988:13). For the purpose of this study, youth refers to young people between 14 and 18 years who were still at school.

1.10.2 Cultural Deprivation

Barker (1999:113) defines cultural deprivation as the absence of certain socialisation experiences that an individual may need to cope effectively with new social situations. One who has been deprived in this way often lacks the social skills, values, or motivations necessary to deal with the relevant environment. In the context of this study, cultural deprivations meant the lack of cultural knowledge, values, customs, practices and beliefs necessary for one's survival.

1.10.3 Cultural Lag

Cultural lag is the retention of customs, habits and technologies even though they have become obsolete or irrelevant to the new standards set by the prevailing culture (Barker, 1999:113). Cultural lag in this study meant claiming back and preservation of cultural knowledge, values, customs, practices and beliefs to address health and social pathologies.

1.10.4 Educator

An Educator is one who educates, who takes the responsibility of leading the educand (child) up into adulthood (Van Den Aardweg and Van Den Aardweg, 1988:73). In the context of this study, an educator referred to life skills educator who has the responsibility to teach life skills education to learners.

1.10.5 Gender Issues

Gender Issues is the field of study taking gender as a basic organising principle involving: the social construction and exaggeration of the differences between women and men; and the use of these distinctions to legitimise and perpetuate power relations between women and men (New Dictionary for Social Work, 1995:27). For the purpose of this study, gender issues referred to the historical and cultural correlation between men and women based on gender and perception of males towards females.

1.10.6 Indigenous Knowledge

According to Grenier (1998:1), indigenous knowledge refers to the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within, and developed around the specific

conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographical area. Moreover, Mosemege (2005:2) defines indigenous knowledge as the local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. Indigenous knowledge contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities. Indigenous knowledge in the context of this study referred to cultural knowledge, values, customs, practices and beliefs used to prevent and address health and social pathologies.

1.10.7 Life skills

According to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2004:43), life skills refers to a wide range of proficiencies (coping behaviour) that are fundamentally important for the individual's effective functioning in the modern world. Life Skills is defined as the capacity of the individual to successfully cope with the demands of daily living and the human-environment interaction with a view to need gratification, the realisation of values as well as the achievement of an adequate level of social functioning in specific life phases and circumstances (New Dictionary for Social Work, 1995:37). Nolte and Delport (2004:103) define life skills as the ability to internalise knowledge, values and strategies to cope with day to day living, to establish relationships on all levels, to make effective life choices and to implement strategies and actions so that the individual could reach his/her full potential, have a positive self-perception and be able to function psychosocially to his maximum. Life skills in the context of this study referred to any skill which could help a person to deal with life challenges effectively and efficiently and amongst others include the following: self-knowledge, communication, decision-making, creative thinking, critical thinking as well as anger, stress and conflict management.

1.10.8 Life Skills Education

Life skills education as defined by Barker (1999: 278) as the individualised and classroom instruction, practical training and guidance to help people correct deficits in their life. For the purpose of this study, life skills education meant educational lessons aimed at preventing anti-social behaviour and promoting and preserving affluent cultural knowledge, practices, customs, values and mores.

1.10.9 Indigenisation

Mkhize (2004:28) states that indigenisation is an attempt to blend imported theoretical and methodological frameworks with unique elements of the culture in question. Indigenisation aims to transform foreign models to make them suitable to local cultural contexts. According to Osei-Hwedie (1996:215), indigenisation is concerned with the 'appropriateness of theories and practice, as well as values, norms, and philosophies which underlie practice'. In the context of this study, indigenisation means merging western frameworks, models and paradigms into local cultural contexts.

1.10.10 Indigenising Life skills education

As there was no definition of indigenising life skills education, the researcher defined it as the repertoire of competencies rooted in a particular cultural practices, traditions, mores and values that are central for the individuals' normal day to day functioning in a social environment.

1.10.11 Moral Development

Moral Development as defined by Van Den Aardweg and Van Den Aardweg (1988:148) is concerned with learning to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable behaviours within a particular society in which the child/adolescent lives. For the purpose of this study, moral development referred to teaching learners what is the right, proper and acceptable behaviour in contrast of wrong, bad and unacceptable behaviour.

1.10.12 Prevention

According to Barker (1999:374), prevention refers to the action taken by social workers and other social service professionals to minimize and eliminate those social, psychological, or other conditions known to cause or contribute to physical and emotional illness and sometimes socio-economic problems. The researcher in this regard refers to prevention as all activities, carried out by educators, parents, and social workers in schools to address health and social pathologies confronting the youth. The prevention efforts of an educator, parent and a social worker in schools occur in a context of a team.

1.10.13 Learner

According to Thompson (1995:774) and Tullock (1996:868), a learner is a person who is learning a subject or skills. Hornby (2000:731) concurs with the aforementioned explanation when stating that a learner is a person who is finding out about a subject or how to do something. A learner in the context of this study referred to all grade 10 pupils.

1.10.14 Health and Social pathologies

For the purpose of this study, health and social pathologies referred to sex and sexuality including HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, indulgence in alcohol and drug abuse, cultural and gender-based violence, learners dropping out of school, truancy, suicide, assault, theft, rape and other criminal activities.

1.10.15 Rural area

According to the South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (2002:1024), a rural area is defined as relating to, or characteristics of the countryside rather than the town. For the purpose of this study, rural area means under-developed areas such as Matsakali Settlement, Gidja-Mhandzeni settlement and Xitlhelani Settlement.

1.11 Outline of the study

The sections of the research study was organised in this way.

- Chapter 1: General orientation of the study
- Chapter 2: Conceptual frameworks of the study
- Chapter 3: Indigenising life skills education
- Chapter 4: Exposition of health and social pathologies faced by learners
- Chapter 5: Indigenising life skills education: A social work perspective

- Chapter 6: Empirical investigation of the study (Research Methodology)

- Chapter 7: Presentation, analysis and interpretation of data

- Chapter 8: Summary of the Major Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

1.12 Conclusion

In this chapter an overview of the study was presented. The researcher alluded to his rationale for undertaking the study, the problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, research methodology, profile of the area of the study, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, definition of concepts and outline of the study. He indicated the importance of indigenising life skills education with the aim of addressing some of the prevailing health and social pathologies assailing the communities and particularly the learners. He further alluded to reclaiming of indigenous knowledge (values, norms, customs, cultural practices, etc) in an attempt to address these challenges and problems from an African cultural perspective.

The next chapter focuses on conceptual frameworks of the study and is subsequently followed by a chapter on indigenising life skills education and focused on what is indigenisation, the relevance of language in the process of indigenising life skills education and the role of both public and private institutions of higher learning in advocating the use of language in indigenising education.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, conceptual tools that are used for indigenising life skills education for rural learners are introduced. A conceptual framework is an overview of ideas and practices that shape the way work is done in a research project. It is a set of assumptions, values, and definitions under which the research project is undertaken. A conceptual framework is developed to establish the vision that underlies all efforts and is built from a set of concepts which establish the criteria to be utilised when making decisions that affect any aspect of the planned research project. It is used to outline possible courses of action or to present a preferred approach(es) to a research project. A conceptual framework helps to decide and explain the route the researcher is taking, why would he use certain methods and not others to get to a certain point. The objective of the conceptual framework is to reduce the bewildering variety of factors to a few key ones. It clarifies, provides direction and visualises the main strategies and goals that occur as a result of indigenising life skills education for rural learners (Levin, 1997:31, Mouton, 2001:176-177, De Vos, 2003:36 and Nkatini, 2005:27 and 32).

To begin with, there are many theoretical discourses of indigenous knowledge systems and life skills education. The theoretical discourses of life skills education from various perspectives and backgrounds championed the reason for the indigenisation of life skills education for the advancement of knowledge, as well as the privileged locus and foundation of truth and systematic knowledge. For this reason, it is deemed competent to discover adequate theoretical and

practical ways upon which systems of knowledge, skills, attitudes, perceptions and actions could be built and restructured through indigenised life skills education.

For the purpose of this study, the following three theoretical perspectives gave guidance and direction to the research study; these are Afro-centrism, Social Constructivism, and Asset-based/strengths based theory.

2.2 Afro-centrism

As a philosophical and theoretical perspective amongst other perspectives, Afro-centrism provided a pathway towards indigenising life skills education. Afro-centrism, also referred to in the literature as Afro-centricity, "...literally means placing African ideas at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour" (Asante, 1998:2). Asante (1988:6) argues that:

> *"Afrocentricity is the belief in the centrality of Africans in the post-modern era: It is our history, our mythology, our creative motif, and our ethos exemplifying our collective will".*

Furthermore, Adeleke (1998: 508) concluded that:

> *"Afrocentricity developed as a response to the intellectual challenges and perceived threat of a mainstream historiography that was deemed Eurocentric"*

On the same vein, Daniels (2001:301) and Asante (1998:2) further describes Afro-centrism as a worldview through which people should interpret events and define reality. It is about fundamentally affirming tradition and validating or promoting people's cultural worldviews in their environment. For the past few decades Africans have been taken-off of cultural, economic, religious, political,

and social terms and have existed primarily on the periphery of Europe. The main goal of Afro-centricity as an intellectual quest is to demystify historical fallacies about African people and their cultural values, traditions, practices and customs and to re-construct a historiography that precisely embodies and acknowledges African cultural contributions to human growth and development. The Afro-centric theory seeks to re-define, re-assure, and re-affirm self-definition, self-affirmation, and identity for Africans. According to Iheduru (2006:221), Afro-centricity stands to substitute of what is lacking in Eurocentric value system. Afro-centricity perspective acknowledges that African culture and expressions of African values, beliefs, traditions and behaviours are important (Leashore, 1995). As a result, the Afro-centricity theory rejects Euro-centrism theory as it purports to support collective consciousness, which means shared commitment, fraternal reactions to degradation of cultural values, traditions, customs and practices, assault on humanity and collective awareness of common destiny (Adeleke, 1998).

Sundiata (1996); Bennet (2001:179) and Asante (2007) contend that Afro-centrism enables researchers to view African identity from the perspective of African people. It is centred, located, oriented, and grounded in African values, beliefs and practices. It has been noted that concepts and theoretical terminology rooted from a western frame of reference are inappropriate when conducting studies with people of different cultures in developing countries (Ling, 2004:339). The western researchers use standard concepts that may have little relevance to the experience of people from other cultures and reflect their Euro-centric values. An ambiguous western domination of research has sustained stereotypes on minority cultural groups (Stanfield, 1993 and Dasen and Mishra, 2000: 428). Afro-centricity is generally opposed to theories that "dislocate" Africans in the periphery of human thought and experience. Afro-centricity seeks to re-locate the African person as an agent in human history in an effort to eliminate the illusion of the Western Philosophers during colonisation and apartheid periods. Consequently, it becomes necessary to examine all values, beliefs and practices

from the standpoint of Africans as subjects, human agents, rather than as objects in a European frame of reference. Afro-centrism holds that Euro-centrism has led to the neglect or denial of the contributions of African people and focused instead on a generally European-centred model of world civilization and practices of culture, values and beliefs. Therefore, Afro-centrism aims to shift the focus from a perceived European-centred development to an African-centred development, thus viewing African values, beliefs and practices within the context of African culture. Ahluwalia and Nursey-Bray (1997), Schiele (2000) and Osei-Hwedie (2005:10) advanced that Africans should:

> *'see themselves through African eyes, as agents of development, rather than as simply subjects of investigation'.*

This means that their view of themselves as Africans must start from individual self-introspection and proceed towards the family and the community at large.

As one of the conceptual frameworks, Afro-centrism could help social workers to acquire a working understanding of the uniqueness and special qualities of different people with special reference to their cultural values, traditions, practices and customs in a particular environment. Based on the above, it goes without saying that indigenising life skills education is about affirming, authenticating, and putting at the centre the revitalisation of African values, traditions, customs and practices for the benefit of the local people. According to Asante (1998:2) the essence of afro-centrism, as an alternative worldview, seems to be founded on the need to counter a hegemony resulting from economic and cultural influences of the affluent countries of the West towards African people. Gold and Bogo (1992) assert that concepts such as self-esteem and independence are culturally-based norms and values which have different meanings in different cultures and it is through Afro-centricity theory that they can be revived. Through Afro-centrism, indigenising life skills education is tantamount to the mission of the social work profession which is to empower individuals,

groups or communities to live more fruitful, affirmative and rewarding lives by enhancing or restoring their capacity for social functioning within their environments (Hepworth and Larsen, 1993:3; Zastrow, 2000:7 and De Jong and Berg, 2002:9). Life skills education in South Africa and in particular in schools of Thulamela Local Municipality rural areas has been presented and interpreted in a manner that is affirming and promoting Western worldviews and negating local people's cultural views. It is therefore important to ensure that African values, beliefs and practices are revitalised and considered when indigenising life skills education. Through the use of Afro-centrism, learners can be taught positive self-awareness, communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, and stress, anger and conflict management within the context of their culture. Indigenous methods for moral regeneration can be re-activated to help learners to respect themselves, their peers and elders. If learners respect themselves it will be unthinkable for them to abuse themselves and others.

Having discussed Afro-centrism as one of the relevant theories towards indigenising life skills education, the next focus is on social constructivism.

2.3 Social constructivism

Social constructivism may mean many things to many people. Social constructivism or social constructionism is a sociological theory of knowledge that considers how social phenomena develop in particular social contexts. It is based on observation and scientific study about how people learn. It emphasises the social aspects of knowing and the influence of cultural, political and economic conditions in the lives of people. It thus emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding what is happening in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Payne, 1997:31 and Delanty, 1997:113).

Social constructivism as a theoretical framework emphasises multicultural education, provides a direction to teaching and learning that pays close attention to how issues of power, gender, and equity influence not only what subject matter (curriculum) is covered but also how it is taught and to whom. This theory helps educators and learners to engage in empowering dialogues. The kind of dialogue should lead to a deeper understanding of the subject matter and to the application of newly gained knowledge in socially relevant ways. It has a tendency to mould teaching and learning as socially transformative practice and curriculum as an instrument for social change (Rodriguez and Berryman, 2002:1019). As a result, it can direct the indigenising of life skills education as it will provide a platform for integration of cultural issues into real life contexts.

According to social constructivism, knowledge is socially constructed and mediated by socio-cultural, historical, and institutional contexts. It deals with the study of interaction, where people negotiate a particular issue and construct its interpretation and as a result together construct social reality. Therefore, language (in whatever form), more than the individual's mental processes, is a representative locus for knowledge (re)construction (Gergen, 1995; Urek, 2005:452 and Juhila, Pösö, Hall and Parton, 2003:17–18).

Although it is agreed that social constructivism provides a broader orientation for the study of teaching and learning, it is believed that both social and individual constructivism ignore the concept of agency and in this regard it is a school that serves as the bridge that connects all role plays (educators, learners, parents and social workers) in knowledge development with transformative action which is the realisation of the new knowledge created. In this case, indigenising life skills education must present learners with socially relevant and challenging indigenous knowledge so that they in collaboration with their educators can engage in meaningful dialogue and become more active members of their communities (Rodriguez and Berryman 2002:1020; Burr, 1995 and Houston, 2002:151). Moll (1990:12) views thinking as a characteristic not only of the child

but of the "child-in-social-activities". This means that emphasis should be on developing mental functions which must be fostered and assessed through collaborative activities in which learners participate in constructive indigenous tasks or problem solving, with the assistance of traditional knowledge holders, life skills educators, parents and social workers. Through this collaboration, the learner internalizes the supportive talk and tactics used on the social contexts and becomes able to accomplish such tasks independently. From the social constructivist perspective, a major role of schooling is to create the social contexts for mastery and the conscious awareness of the use of cultural tools (e.g. language and communication) so that learners can acquire the capacity for higher-order intellectual activities within the community (Windschitl, 2002:141). This is supported by Parton and O'Byrne (2000:7 and 21), in alluding that the main aim of social constructivism is to revalue the importance of developing detailed and critical analysis of the meaningfulness of language and narrative discussion and to increase awareness of the socially constructed nature of reality. It is said that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things within their own social context and reflecting on those experiences. When people encounter something new, they have to reconcile it with their indigenous ideas and experience. In any case, people are active creators of their own knowledge. To do this, they need an opportunity to ask appropriate questions, explore, and assess what they know. This, according to the researcher calls for the need to indigenise life skills education particularly, for rural learners. Notwithstanding substantial amount of knowledge from the west, schism could be encouraged between western and indigenous knowledge. This is based on the rationale that African indigenous knowledge systems should take a stand as it had helped people to address their health and social pathologies and that need to be drawn back. As a result, current knowledge from the west can not be ignored and neglected too.

Delanty (1997:113) contends that knowledge is always produced from a specific social and historical standpoint, reflecting the interests and culture of the

particular population group. A major focus of social constructionism is to uncover the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the creation of their perceived social reality. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalised, and made into tradition by human beings. Socially constructed reality is seen as an ongoing, dynamic process; reality is re-produced by people acting on their interpretations and their knowledge of it. When people interact, they do so with the understanding that their respective perceptions of reality are related, and as they act upon this understanding their common knowledge of reality becomes reinforced. It is in this sense that it can be said that reality is socially constructed.

Delanty (1997:123) further argues that social constructivism theory emphasizes that human intelligence originates in people's culture and individual's learning occurs first through interpersonal (interaction with social environment) then intrapersonal (internalization). It is thus through social constructivism that critical engagement with people, environment and systems of knowledge is possible. Social constructivism argues that the most optimal learning environment is one where a dynamic interaction between educators, learners, parents, social workers and significant others provide an opportunity for learners to create their own truth due to the interaction with others in a language they feel comfortable with. Social constructivist approach suggests that educators should consider the knowledge and experiences learners bring with them to the learning sessions and encourage the type of learning in which learners can become engaged in interesting activities that encourage and facilitate participatory learning. It brings in a crucial element of active participation which includes dialogue in shared experiences, beliefs, values and cultural practices that is necessary for the creation of meaning and understanding. Participatory learning can be encouraged when the life skills educator can help learners to explore and discover values, beliefs and cultural practices relevant for positive lifestyle. Life skills educators may often guide learners as they approach problems, and encourage them to work in groups to think about issues and questions relevant to

their environment, support them with positive reinforcement and advice as they tackle problems, adventures, and challenges that are rooted in real life situations (Delanty, 1997:123).

Parsons, Jorgensen and Hernandez (1994:76) and Parton and O'Byrne (2000:3) support the above information in asserting that social constructivism is affirmative and reflexive and focuses on dialogue that is listening to and talking with the other people. Basically, social constructivism enables people whilst interacting with each other to discover one's knowledge and internal strengths (Saleebey, 2006:14). According to social constructivism, knowledge is not a fixed object; it is constructed by an individual through her own experience of a particular exposure and learning. Its goal is to create learning communities that are more closely related to the collaborative practice of the real world. When people work collaboratively in an authentic activity, they bring their own framework and perspectives to the activity. They can see a problem from different perspectives, and are able to negotiate and generate meanings and solutions through shared understanding. The social constructivist paradigm enables people to understand how learning can be facilitated through certain types of engaging and constructive activities. It emphasizes a crisscrossing of ideals in peoples' conversations with one another. There is recognition that what people say to others is interpreted in a unique and particular way. The understandings created are shaped by, and will shape, other ideas (Biever, Gardner, and Bobele, 1999: 145).

2.4 Asset-based/strengths-based theory

Life skills education as a preventative strategy views young people as assets because if they are taught good morals, attitudes and perceptions, they can be able to address health and social pathologies. Due to the social work profession's history, background and culture's obsession and fascination with

psychosocio-pathology, victimisation, abnormality, moral and interpersonal peculiarity, which emphasise the use of medical model, resulted to the failure to identify strengths and focus on a client's weaknesses and problems by social workers (Compton and Galaway, 1994:223; Glicken, 2004: 18 – 19 and Saleebey, 2006:2 and 27). Life skills as assets which could be strengths became an alternative for improving the social functioning of learners and addressing their health and social pathologies. Therefore, the emergence of asset-based/strengths-based theory enabled practitioners to shift their focus from medical model to asset-based/strengths-based approach. The asset-based/strengths-based theory alludes to mobilising people's talents, knowledge, capacities, values, experience, background information and resources in the service of achieving goals of having sustainable better life (Saleebey, 2006:1; Ebersöhn and Eloff, 2003:20 – 22; Ebersöhn and Mbetse, 2003:323, Ingram and Snyder, 2006:118; Allison, Stacey, Dadds, Roeger, Wood, and Martin, 2003:267; Greef and Human, 2004; 30). Due to that, indigenising life skills education should be viewed as another positive step in achieving the goal of improving the social functioning of learners and addressing the health and social pathologies assailing them. This can be achieved through the integration of values and sustainable indigenous knowledge.

Life skills education actually operates from the asset based approach because it aims at unearthing and teaching knowledge, skills, values which are necessary to deal with health and social pathologies and thus indigenising life skills education could add to the course. Zastrow (2000:446), Ebersöhn and Eloff, 2003:18, Glicken (2004:4 -6) and Saleebey (2006:1) state that the asset-based/strengths perspectives arises from the profession of social work's commitment to social justice, the dignity of every human being, and building on people's strengths, capacities and competencies rather than focusing exclusively on their deficits, disabilities, or problems. Life skills education equally focuses on social justice, self-knowledge, communication, creative thinking and critical thinking and adding indigenous knowledge would enable life skills education to

be more relevant and understandable to local learners. Asset-based/strengths-based practice provides a structure and content for an examination of realisable alternatives, for the mobilisation of competencies that can make things different and for building self-confidence that stimulates hope in the lives of people.

The term, asset-based/strengths perspective denotes the enabling belief system of social work profession in improving the social functioning of people and addressing health and social challenges and pathologies. By indigenising life skills education, the social functioning of learners will be improved as they would learn to understand themselves in terms of their cultural values, traditions and customs. The asset-based/strengths perspective would assist in indigenising life skills education to learners in a manner that would promote healthy and productive lifestyles by incorporating indigenous knowledge applicable and relevant to their social environments. As an orientation to practice, the emphasis is placed on uncovering, reaffirming, and enhancing the values, traditions, abilities, customs, interests, knowledge, resources, aspirations and hopes of individuals, families, groups, and communities in contrast to the pathological perspective which focuses on people's deficiencies. This approach assumes that the expression and expansion of strengths and resources increases the likelihood that people will reach the goals and realize the possibilities they have set for themselves (Hepworth and Larsen, 1993:71-72 and 194-195; Compton and Galaway, 1994:224; Zastrow, 2000:446; Glicken, 2004:4 - 6 and Saleebey, 2006:1).

Hepworth and Larsen (1993:362), Glicken (2004:4) and Saleebey (2006:13) assert that the strengths perspective obligates social workers to understand that; however downtrodden or sick, individuals, families, clans and communities have survived (and in some cases even thrived) for time immemorial. Their cultural values, traditions and customs kept them thriving and improved their social functioning and enabled them to address their health and social pathologies, they therefore need to be embroiled and infused in life skills education. Indigenous

knowledge as a resource through cultural values, practices and customs remarkably made people be resilient in the face of major crises like death, family feuds and conflicts. Indigenous knowledge has enabled and taught people who have gone to the brink of disaster to come back stronger and wiser and such mechanisms and strategies used need to be re-claimed by indigenising life skills education. People have taken steps, summoned up resources to improve their social functioning and managed those health and social pathologies over the years. Social workers need to establish and know what people have done, how they have done it, what they have learned from doing it, and what resources (inner and outer) were available in their struggle to surmount their troubles. People are always working on their situations and social workers must tap into that work, elucidate it, find and build on people's possibilities. Social workers as one of their responsibilities should help clients to expand their abilities, encourage and assist them to become aware of their strengths and cultivating the inner resources for change in order to deal with the problems (Brehm and Kassin, 1990:635; Corey and Corey, 1993:70; Bernstein and Gray, 1997: 12 and Saleebey, 2006:14).

Asset-based/strengths-based theory creates a context in which learning from past experiences can affect the way in which an individual attempts to cope with the current challenges and problems presented by the time and surroundings, though the threat of pre-judging and undervaluing a person's resiliency, strength, and capacity for change exists (Saleebey, 2006:3). Life skills educators and social workers should therefore be aware of the fact that all people specifically young ones have potential which could be in terms of cultural values, traditions and practices that is waiting to be discovered and utilized during the process of change. Indigenising life skills education could be best used while attending to painful conditions in people's lives and the circumstances that affect their social functioning. With asset-based/strengths-based theory, the focus is not so much on problems, or on what is lacking or wrong, but rather on growth and the potential of people to develop through the utilisation of the available personal,

family, clan and community's assets and strengths. Through indigenised life skills education, myths such as a belief that the person is destined to be nothing more than an outcast could be addressed as everyone is born with potentials and can tap on available resources within the family, clan or community. The focus on assets and strengths encourages a person to recognize qualities within himself, his family, clan and community and amplify existing strengths. Asset-based/strengths-based theory espouses the belief that a person can be more himself when he becomes freed up from socially conditioned 'negative brainwashing' (Potgieter, 1998:9; Glicken, 2004:20 and Saleebey, 2006:17).

Nevertheless, most certainly, identifying problems and needs in more objective and less judgmental terms and re-interpreting possible interventions in a positive way according to the strengths and resources people possess lead to a whole new language and more positive scenario. The notion of possibility recognises that things can be changed. A vision of possibility can be used to mobilise people's potentials and competencies and can empower them to re-claim and re-define who they are and how they want to behave, this is the focus of life skills education. While not wanting to minimise the complex problems and challenges persons are experiencing, somehow the asset-based/strengths perspective makes improvement an ever-present possibility. The asset-based/strengths perspective acknowledges the resilience of people, their ability to endure extreme hardship and to survive seemingly insurmountable problems. Awareness of people's strengths and assets such as skills, indigenous knowledge, values, traditions and customs is vital, for such personal assets, and strengths are resources that can be tapped in empowering people (Hepworth and Larsen, 1993:224; Parton, 2002:243 and Glicken, 2004:21-28). Asset-based/strengths-based believes in people's potentials, skills in resolving problems overtime, values, traditions and customs. By indigenising life skills education, an attempt to improve the social functioning of learners and addressing health and social pathologies assailing their lives could be a reality.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter various conceptual frameworks which gave guidance and direction to the study were discussed. The researcher discussed Afro-centrism and indicated its core values followed by social constructivism and its relevance to the study. He discussed asset-based/strengths-based theories as it also undergird and guided the study. Indigenising life skills education is the next chapter which focuses on what is indigenisation, the relevance of language in the process of indigenising life skills education and the role of both public and private institutions of higher learning in advocating the use of language in indigenising education.

CHAPTER 3

INDIGENISING LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

3.1 Introduction

What can be learnt from the experiences of the past that might point to the future directions in respect of indigenising life skills education? This chapter seeks to draw, amongst others, on the lessons from the African countries in indigenising general education. Such lessons could be utilised in indigenising life skills education in South Africa that is educationally and culturally relevant and sustainable. This is based on the rationale that African people in rural communities have a great deal of experience and knowledge in African values, norms, traditions and customs in addressing health and social pathologies. The knowledge, experience and the insights gained over the years need to be tapped and utilised for the betterment of the peoples' conditions. At this crucial juncture, it is important to take a step back in the face of the climate of innovation and experimentation to ask which of this indigenous knowledge is more desirable in the longer term – for learners, educators, school social workers, parents, and other relevant stakeholders in the field of life skills education.

Julius Nyerere, the first president of the Republic of Tanzania, was one of the most prominent thinkers on education in Africa. His educational philosophy is best outlined in the 1968 publication named: Education for Self-Reliance. In it, he stressed that education in Africa at any level must inculcate a sense of commitment to the total community and help the students to:

> *"accept the values appropriate to our kind of future, not those of our colonial past"* (Nyerere, 1968: 52).

He explained that the educational system of Tanzania must emphasize co-operative endeavour and not individual advancement (Nyerere, 1968: 52). These values, which are community commitment and development, mutual dependence, tradition, cooperation, giving, sharing, generosity, respect, family, community, care, hard work for the benefit of the whole, and respect for self, others and nature, are very different from the ones now in vogue and actively promoted by Western donors, institutions, and consultants who aid them (Marais and Marais, 2007: 813; Robinson, 2001:176; Silavwe, 1995; Daniels, 2001:304; Brock-Utne, 2003: 42; Waller in Saleebey, 2006:52 and Assie-Lumumba, 2006: 98). This is confirmed by William Makgoba who indicated that lawyers, doctors and similarly social workers and life skills education counsellors who are out of touch with the society that they serve, cannot serve that society well. To address this situation he states that:

> "*education has to be contextualised and for the majority population this means the removal of the dominant and alienating Eurocentric philosophy to the humanistic Afrocentric philosophy"* (Makgoba, 1996: 178).

Makgoba (1996: 180) further cautions against training institutions replicating, reflecting and servicing dominant western ethos on the expense of the African cultural values and practices. He indicated that training institutions should strive to accomplish and pursue knowledge and the truth with rigour and excellence; with a purpose and social responsibility to the community they service.

To clearly understand lessons from other countries, it is necessary to understand what is meant by indigenising life skills education; the relevance of language

during the process of indigenising life skills education, and the role of institutions of higher learning in indigenising life skills education.

3.2 What is indigenisation?

The question of indigenising, contextualising, or Africanising life skills education was, and still is, a paramount question in the social science, educational and behavioural fraternities. Debates about the significance of Africanisation, Afro-centric identity, cultural relevance and indigenising life skills education represent some of the key issues in the social science, behavioural and educational debate. An analysis of some of these important issues, as they pertain to improve the social functioning of learners and to address health and social pathologies, as they are the current discourse inside and outside the education sphere, suggests that there is a fundamental need to re-define and understand the current situations affecting learners and assist in indigenising life skills education.

According to Osei-Hwedie (1996:215), indigenisation is concerned with the *'appropriateness of theories and practice, as well as values, norms, and philosophies which underlie practice'*. In the search for an appropriate conceptualisation of life skills education, cognizance needs to be taken not only of the values, norms and philosophies which underlie its practice and those of the client groups which it services, but also of the very *'cultural milieu of the society in which it is evolved and practiced'*. This therefore means that indigenising life skills education must be based on values, norms, traditions and customs of people in a particular cultural environment (Osei-Hwedie, 1996:217).

Yang (2004:3) advocates that indigenisation means to integrate one's reflections on the local culture of a particular society and history into one's approaches. Generally speaking, indigenisation is a process of self-reflection with regard to cultural values, norms and practices in response to long-term western cultural domination. For an example, through indigenisation, a social work practitioner and researcher, as an observer and a participant simultaneously, with firsthand cultural and historical experience, will be able to express an empathetic understanding of the world in which he lives and work. It is through indigenisation that cultural sensitivity in concepts, topics, and methods could be highlighted and increased (Adair and Diaz-Loving, 1999:398). Adair (1999:405) agrees that there has been confusion about the meaning of indigenisation, and attempted to sort out this confusion by analysing a number of the definitions that have been proposed by different authors. He identified four "threads" underlying the set of definitions, namely: that knowledge should; (a) arise from within the culture, (b) reflect local behaviours, (c) be interpreted within a local frame of reference, and (d) yield results that are locally relevant. He describes the above-mentioned definitions as "levels" of indigenisation.

In consolidating the above definitions, the researcher sees the meaning of indigenisation as twofold: one as resisting western domination and secondly as striving for lingui-cultural independence which has epistemological significance. This implies that domination of western ethos and values in expense of African ethos should be limited and that provision of life skills education should be conveyed using the local languages and recognising local cultural values, customs and practices among others. Furthermore, with regard to epistemological significance, life skills education has theoretical frameworks and knowledge base which have to be adopted and applied into local contexts. One major problem in the international mutual borrowing of social science knowledge is that current mainstream theoretical conceptions and methods are exclusively rooted in western experiences. Such international and western knowledge is

fairly universal rather than parochial. Western social theories cause serious problems in their application to other societies/cultures as indigenisation stresses local relevance. Instead of building up a system that is thoroughly different from the existing social sciences, indigenisation problematises the universal application of knowledge and support integration of local experience and knowledge by means of exposing and reflecting on the past and neglected indigenous knowledge (Yang, 2004:2). It is a rather complicated process, as any experience cannot be practically handled without the assistance of existing knowledge, and understanding one's own experience must be aided by the experience of others. This is supported by Xitsonga old adage which says *"rhavi le ritshwa ri tiya hi le ra khale"* when translated it means revitalising indigenous knowledge and infuse it with western knowledge in lieu of discarding western knowledge brought during colonialism and apartheid periods.

As the definition of indigenisation has been unpacked, it is befitting to focus on language as one of the crucial aspects in the process of indigenising life skills education.

3.3 The relevance of language in the process of indigenising life skills education

Research on culturally relevant or culturally responsive teaching, begins more explicitly with the premise that culturally diverse learners pose opportunities instead of problems for educators (Ball, 1996; Ball, Williams, & Cooks, 1997; Foster, 1995; Hopkins, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994). In this case, educators promote learning among learners when they honour different ways of knowing and sources of knowledge, allow learners to speak and write in their own vernacular and use culturally compatible communication styles, express cultural

solidarity with their learners, focus on caring for the whole learner, and maintain high expectations for all.

In 1953, UNESCO released a report on *'The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education'*. The report specifies that African countries have been trying to find an effective approach that would allow them to progress from an education system inherited from the colonial period to a more transformative and culturally relevant education. This effective approach should recognise African values, practices and languages, people's socio-cultural and linguistic background as well as their educational needs. It has been indicated that such a pertinent, effective education approach should be characterised, first of all, by the use of a more suitable local language, the use of sufficient teaching techniques, the use of culturally adequate curriculum content and sufficient financial and material resources (Association for the Development of Education in Africa's – ADEA Report, 2005:5).

Though the research's focus is not on indigenising the whole education system, the researcher feels strongly that indigenising life skills education programmes should be viewed along the same lines as indicated in the UNESCO report of 2005. If life skills education is aimed at improving the psychosocial wellbeing and competencies of learners, language becomes more relevant and central to allow for better understanding of life skills education presented in foreign languages.

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (2005:5) encouraged African countries to strive for relevance of education by adjusting the curricula and using African languages' in teaching and training. The issue of own language was also espoused by Education for All in the use of Mother Tongue Education (MTE). It has been argued that the use of mother tongue or the use of an African

language familiar to the children upon school entry will facilitate effective learning. It is further argued that the use of MTE as a medium of instruction throughout schooling will improve the teaching and learning of the foreign language as a subject of learning and will ultimately make it a better medium of specialised learning wherever appropriate.

As a result of Africa's past colonial history and contemporary neo-colonial relationship, language predominantly became a sensitive issue. The former colonial powers like Britain, France and Portugal, and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and some African elites still persuade to promote the merging and utilisation of the colonial languages in Africa, as a result, they pay no attention to the necessity of indigenisation of the whole system of education through languages (ADEA Report, 2005:8). This is facilitated by the fact that most African countries relied on former colonial powers and multilateral agencies to fund developmental programmes. This situation creates challenges for African countries to use their indigenous languages for education as that will jeopardise their funding.

Vilela (2002:307) states that in the countries controlled by colonial powers, language policies established were more supportive for the development and growth of foreign languages, whether they be English, French, Portuguese or Spanish. After independence of the colonised countries, these languages were preserved and sustained as official languages. It was believed that these languages would allow those independent countries wider accessibility to the world without hindrance of language in communication. As a result of this, the *'official languages'* of the colonisers always existed alongside local indigenous languages which of course were not valued by the colonisers.

To counteract subordination of African languages, in consideration of these complications, linguistic factors should precede any educational plan in Africa. This means that postcolonial language preparation has to be familiar with the harmonization of languages which exists in African communities and to take cognisance of the multilingual nature of Africa, especially in the area of education (Vilela, 2002:306 and 309). Language is perhaps the single most important factor in educational efficiency, and highlights the long term consequences for academic achievement. Language enhances positive academic achievement when one learns to read and write in a language he does speak well. This highlights the researcher's argument against teaching of life skills education in a foreign language. If life skills education prepares and forms the foundation for the promotion of well being in social, mental and health spheres of human beings, it goes without saying that expression of feelings, interaction, behaviour and self-disclosure may take priority. Expression of feelings and self-disclosure may be easily done in own language than in foreign language. Teaching in own language and use of own language by learners facilitate active participation and further influence the way people feel about themselves and others. This is supported by an evaluation study of Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) project in Ghana using participant observation to study the implementation of the language policy in Ghananian primary schools. The study found that pupils participated more actively when Ghanaian language was used as the language of instruction (ADEA Report, 2005:131).

Another example is the study by Chekaraou Ibro who made a comprehensive study of two of the bilingual pilot schools in Niger using Hausa as the language of instruction in the early grades. Ibro confirmed that the use of Hausa language, being the local language of learners (mother tongue), facilitated active participation in class. The author explained how the entire class wanted to participate so much that they would stand up from their seats, move towards the teacher wanting to be called upon to answer questions (Chekaraou, 2004: 323).

He further tells how the teaching in these schools through a language with which children were familiar fostered active teacher-student interaction which enabled learners to *"develop their critical thinking skills which were transferable to all learning experiences*' (Chekaraou, 2004: 341). It could be conclusively indicated that teaching through a familiar language helps the cognitive development of the learners. Basically, native language use contributes to learners developing knowledge that they would not have obtained otherwise, when a foreign language is used. For example, the discussion of idioms related to body parts which carried metaphorical meanings and the proverbs that the teacher discussed with his students were edifying examples which helped children to develop meta-linguistic skills in their own language which contributed to enhancing their overall cognitive potential (Chekaraou, 2004: 343). It is through the use of these idioms and proverbs that facilitate traditional mechanisms for passing on indigenous knowledge to young people. For instance, a Xitsonga proverb "ku tlula ka mhala ku letela n'wana wa le ndzeni' holds true. Literally translated, it means a child learns behaviour from his parents and that is only transferable through language.

Currently there are two competing views with respect to the central issue of local language usage in education: there are those who promote the "Status Quo" in term of medium of instruction (MoI), and those who advocate for the use of a local language strategy as a medium of instruction. The status quo view reflects the current practice in most African countries, which advocates the continual use of foreign language, for instance, English as the primary and ultimate medium of instruction across the whole educational system. On the other hand, the view in favour of a local language strategy as a medium of instruction involves a rupture with the current status quo and advocates the use of mother tongue (MT) or a familiar national language (NL) such as Xitsonga, Tswana and Zulu, throughout the education system as its primary medium of instruction. The latter view aims at enabling indigenisation of education and bringing profound social change in

terms of development and societal progress (ADEA Report, 2005:6). If the latter view is approved, it will enable life skills education also to be offered in local languages as per area.

It is therefore, a fact that the colonial experience and languages are currently not easily irrevocable in Africa. Moreover, it is also irrefutable that there is a need to exploit Africa's rich cultural and linguistic heritage for sustainable development and both for effective and efficient educational systems. As a result, Okombo calls for "moderate re-indigenisation" of what have been predominantly handed down until this day as "post- or neo-colonial educational systems" (Okombo, 2000: 42), whereas the ADEA Report (2005:53) calls for the review of current language policies in terms of general and public empowerment.

The review of language policies can lay the ground for the teaching of life skills education in a local language. For instance, it will be unfair and irrelevant to teach the value of *'ubuntu'* through the use of a foreign language as it will seem to reinforce the western ethos. For the realisation of African renaissance, investment in teaching life skills education to learners in a local language should be considered. Learners should be regarded as the resource to help transmit African values to the future generations. Through this exercise, internalisation of local values and standards could lead to alleviating health and social pathologies.

Having discussed the relevance of language in the process of indigenising life skills education, it is proper to discuss the role of learning institutions in campaigning for the use of local languages in general education and ultimately to life skills education.

3.4 The role of private and public institutions in advocating the use of local languages

Assie-Lumumba (2006: 48 and 50) argues that forcibly, the colonial powers redesigned African education. Both dependency and neo-colonialism shaped the nature of the educational relationship between African countries and their former colonial powers.

Mkabela (2005:178) contends that African indigenous education and culture has windswept hasty change because of colonial invasions. As a result, African cultural values, norms and practices which were regarded as life skills education though informal and mainly taught by elders were eroded. Mkabela further argues that numerous scholars, researchers and practitioners made genuine endeavours to research African culture; nonetheless, there was a tendency to scrutinise culture in terms of the oppressor's instructions and to assess educational needs in terms of the oppressor's programme. Enormously, current life skills education offered in schools is still presented in the coloniser's precepts and agendas as most reading materials for life skills education are written by white people for black Africans with no reference to local cultural practices, values, customs and traditions. This is due to the fact that white people who write learning materials are not residing within those African communities wherein indigenous knowledge is practiced on a day to day basis. According to UNESCO-International Institute for Educational Planning (2006:34), acquaintance of educators with the community in which they work enables them to deliver better education service. Accordingly, in some cases, it proposes that recruitment and deployment of educators should be based on educator's knowledge of the local language and culture. This is confirmed by Kim Richard Nossal who made the same observations though he referred to International Relations in Canada, that textbooks:

"portrayed the world to their readers from a uniquely American point of view: they are reviewed by Americans; the sources they cite are American; the examples are American; the theory is American; the experience is American, the focus is American; and in ...(some cases); the voice is explicitly American (Nossal, 1998:12)".

Based on the above statement, Rodwell (1998:50) argues that for indigenisation to be successful, there is a need for modification and adaptation (radical revision of the content) of the curriculum. Mkabela (2005:178) further indicates that there is no reference to the indigenous education that Africans already had or to the depth of the ancestral opinions that influenced African thinking when the oppressors instituted formal education. She argues that academics, researchers and practitioners who are fascinated in indigenous culture and education presently have made small reference in assessing change to the extent in which African values have continued to exist. Also, no research studies have been conducted to establish the extent to which these African values like 'ubuntu' had continued to influence African academics, researchers and practitioners' actions at different points in time. In brief, Africans are frequently reviewed and evaluated in European frameworks and perspectives and not in terms of their own (Zeleza, 2002:22). Therefore life skills education is still offered using European contexts, frameworks and paradigms in expense of African contexts and frameworks, hence the need to indigenise.

In support of the above, Zeleza (2002:10 and 21) indicates that even the African academic enterprises which are the Universities and Colleges have long endured from a culture of imported scientific consumerism. This culture of using imported knowledge from the west was reputable during the colonial era and multiplied subsequent to independence regardless of rhetorical pronouncements to the contrary and ritual obeisance to local psycho-social, economic and cultural needs. Zeleza further argues that limitations, challenges and uncertainties of African education remained discouraging and demoralising. It is time for African

institutions of higher learning to reflect on western theories, paradigms, and methodologies that trivialise, fake, and oversimplify African experiences, conditions and realities. For African academics to attain academic freedom, they should struggle to discard Eurocentric frameworks, theories and paradigms and develop genuine African intellectual discourses. This will facilitate an understanding of the need to indigenise life skills education as inspired by a burning desire to address the pressing health and social pathologies, and to deepen the understanding of the South Africa's economies, politics, cultures, societies, ecologies, moral orders and gender relations in order to bring about progressive and sustainable change (Zeleza, 2002:22).

For a realisation and contextualisation of indigenous life skills education, there is need for institutions of higher learning to conduct research and develop programmes which are culturally relevant to the communities they serve. Rodwell (1998:45) states that there is a need for the adjustment of frameworks, models and materials to local circumstances. It also applies when indigenising life skills education, that western frameworks, models, paradigms and materials be adapted to fit the local needs and be culturally relevant. Academics, researchers and practitioners have been pursuing western research themes, models and paradigms that are not always relevant to the local circumstances (Zeleza, 2002:12). Assie-Lumumba (2006: 137) states that these impediments can be conquered if people work jointly through the major institutions of higher learning with the aim of purposefully and constructively recovering the past, engaging the present and determining the future.

Institutions of higher learning as centres of knowledge creation and development should in terms of research projects place and consider the issue of cultural location in any analysis regarding human behaviour in respect of values and practices. This also applies to the creation and development of life skills education knowledge to be relevant to the local cultural values and practices. The argument the researcher is advancing is that Africans' social, cultural,

political, philosophical, and economic values, customs and practices, have been cheated for a long period. Consequently, it becomes necessary to examine all data from the standpoint of Africans as subjects and human agents rather than as objects in a European frame of reference. Research should focus on Africa as the cultural centre for the study of African experiences, values, customs, traditions and practices and interprets research data from an African perspective (Mkabela, 2005:179-180)

Mkabela (2005:185) further states that for the Universities to make research culturally meaningful, the qualitative aspect of research should be stressed and this goes for research in life skills education. This could be attained by positioning educational research goals in terms of improving the quality of life of people and life opportunities by infusing cultural values which accentuate the sense of responsibility, respect and commitment into people. Therefore, in this instance, the researcher argues that indigenising life skills education will become relevant and will help in promoting psycho-social and cultural development in a more humane manner. In this sense culture is not simply a significant part of educational development, but it develops into an integral element of both research goals and means. As a result, culture becomes a channelling light, providing guidelines for research.

Brock-Utne (2003: 26) argues that it does not mean that Africa people should return to the system of merely informal education that was pervasive prior to colonization. Instead, he believes that the education provided must be built on African culture, on the wisdom and traditional knowledge of Africans, and on their everyday experiences. It is nonetheless indispensable to apportion indigenous knowledge as key in producing the knowledge for the future. Assie-Lumumba (2006: 136) contends that there is a pressing need to methodically build up indigenous educational paradigm, with a pan-African content in all disciplines. The researcher agrees with the above perpration that any discipline taught to an African child should be taught in a language which he is familiar with and that his

cultural values, practices, and traditions be infused into his learning. The nucleus of the matter is that wherever one commences from, the product should reflect local contributions and procedures.

Simultaneously the focus is not just to throw away whatever people have been trained on entirely, but to contextualise and build on western knowledge. This is due to the fact that world systems are interconnected, the colonisation of African countries and the fact that Western academic activities and insights still dominate over the majority of Africans and will continue to do so for some time to come. The point is that, in order to facilitate indigenising life skills education with the necessary skills, outlook, philosophies and theories, the process must start from within, determine what the problems and requirements are, what resources and skills are available and what processes and procedures researchers and practitioners can borrow from the West. In this case, recognition and utilisation of local knowledge, practice and values will enable the development of appropriate and needed knowledge, values and skills necessary for improvement in indigenising life skills education practice and its sustainability (Osei-Hwedie, 1993:22).

3.5 Prototype for indigenising life skills education: success and failures from other countries

This section focuses on how other African countries have succeeded or not succeeded in indigenising general education which could be imitated as prototype for indigenising life skills education. Specifically, the focus is on how language has been used to indigenise education as well as the epistemological considerations during the process of indigenising general education. Nyamnjoh (2004:162-163) advances the views that there is a need to revisit the dominant epistemological background of western education. He argues that adopting western epistemologies has serious weaknesses when compared with the

popular and other African epistemologies in ensuring African development. Lessons can be learned from these countries which also can be adapted to the South African situation in indigenising life skills education. It should also be noted that life skills education is part of the education as a whole and the reference will be made of education in general. The reason for the researcher in looking at education in general is because he could not access any information or material which relate specifically to indigenising life skills education in Africa or across the globe. The following countries will be discussed:

3.5.1 Indigenisation of education in Nigeria

Nigeria was colonized by the British and subsequently obtained its independence on October 1, 1960 and became a republic in 1963. With a population of 140 million people, Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa and accounts for 47 percent of West Africa's population. Nigeria's population is made up of about 200 ethnic groups, 500 indigenous languages, and two major religions — Islam and Christianity. The largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Igbo in the Southeast, and the Yoruba in the Southwest. Nigeria, with three powerful regional (national) languages has opted for the three language model (Heugh, 2006:58). This is because the language factor is one of the major factors responsible for successes or failures in terms of the provision of education. The provision of education in a foreign language is a main blockade to learning. Language plays a vital role not only in the classroom teaching but also in the teaching of societal values, customs and traditions (Wolff, 2006:27).

Positive attitudes towards African languages by government, education authorities, policy makers and educators could enable and connect to the theoretical framework of indigenisation, which rests on the exploitation of the creative intellectual and educational resources provided by indigenous African cultural heritage and value systems (Wolff, 2005:34 and 2006:27). It is reported in the ADEA Report (2006:14) that protracted benefits of early education is a

good thing, provided education is in African languages such as mother-tongue literacy and mother-tongue medium education (MTE), preferably when used longer. The learners need to be able to comprehend and construct written language required for learning beyond their primary and secondary school education. In this regard, the researcher contends that the South African Ministry of Education and other relevant stakeholders like in Nigeria should have positive attitudes towards African indigenous languages if indigenisation of education is a priority.

Brock-utne and Alidou (2006:111) indicate that the use of familiar or national languages as language of instruction in Nigeria has also facilitated the integration of African cultures into Nigerian school curricula, making bilingual or multilingual education more responsive to the needs of Nigerian children and adults. Children who attended Nigerian schools which used mother tongues or familiar language developed pride in their cultures and languages. Akinnaso (1993) reported that after six years of instruction in Yoruba and in English, the cultural, affective, cognitive and socio-psychological development of learners attending the Ife Project were more advanced than those of their counterparts' attending the regular school where only English was used as the exclusive language of instruction. It has been reported that in schools where a bilingual system (both English and local language) was used and had political and technical support, these schools produced positive results and the learners were culturally more integrated into their own communities than their counterparts in only English-medium-of-instruction schools (Alidou 1997; Chekaroua 2004; UNESCO, 2003 and Brock-utne and Alidou 2006:106). The lesson to be learnt here is that instead of halting English as a medium of instruction, African indigenous languages could be gradually phased-in in the education.

Fafunwa, Aliu, Macauley, and Sokoya (1989); Dutcher and Tucker (1995: 13) and Bamgbose (2005) report that the integration of learner's culture and

languages into curricular activities has facilitated parental participation in rural schools. It also supports a constructive attitude toward schools among parents and learners. In Nigeria, learners who attended the Ife bilingual project had more advanced knowledge about their socio-cultural context and were more active than learners in regular schools mainly taught in English. The learners who used African languages competed positively with their counterparts from other public schools using English and passed the common entrance examination into high schools. Related to the performance and effectiveness of the Ife programme, it is indicated that learners who were educated in Yoruba for six years performed extensively better than learners who were taught in Yoruba only for three years and then taught exclusively in English. If ever indigenisation is the way to go, parents should be involved as that will facilitate inculcation of socio-cultural knowledge, values and traditions into learners.

With regard to epistemological consideration, community participation in curriculum development was adopted as a method and proved a success. It was emphasised that the curriculum should combine the core national content with local content, taking into account context, customs, livelihoods and rural development activities (Heugh, 2006: 60 and 61). In Nigeria, the focus has been on African indigenous education system which placed more emphasis on oral, storytelling and traditional education (Stock, 2004:299). It has been recorded that prior to colonial rule in Nigeria, African indigenous education system strongly emphasised and focused more on communal cooperation and the unity between the individual and his environment. According to Egbo (2000:62 and 66), African indigenous education emphasised on physical training, character moulding, respect for elders and peers, intellectual and vocational training, community participation, cultural heritage and the acquisition of spiritual and moral values. These are issues which are normally stressed in life skills education.

In Nigeria, African indigenous education system is not only necessary for the realisation of the material needs but is also essential for cultural survival. It is therefore aimed at fostering, in learners, a deep sense of collective identity and responsibility to the larger community.

Furthermore, Egbo (2000:62) states that African indigenous education system (social education) is aimed at immediate induction of members into society and preparation for adulthood through initiation school. Learning is largely experiential as children learn by doing, imitating and participating in various ceremonies. All adult members of the community serve as educators due to their experience and exposure to various challenges and problems in life. Education is also role and gender specific. The separation of the education of each gender was the matter of practical convenience rather than one of gender discrimination. Children were also socialised in stages by way of formal instruction in areas that correspond with the roles that they were likely to play in society. Young people were often apprenticed to a specialist in the kind of trade or craft with which they were to earn their living. Boys were often apprenticed to male specialists and girls assigned to female specialists in order for each gender to receive the appropriate education not for exclusionary purposes (Egbo, 2000:62 and Stock, 2004:299 and 300). Both men and women were regarded as experts in transmitting indigenous knowledge through storytelling and other cultural practices. African education did not in any way devalue the knowledge possessed by certain groups (Egbo, 2000:62 and 65 and Okrah, 2003:9).

The fact that learners were taught positive values and standards meant that young people had an opportunity to internalise these values to serve as baseline knowledge to respecting their bodies and that of their counterparts. Such teaching inculcates a sense of personal responsibility, accountability and eventually total independence. What South Africa can learn from Nigeria is the emphasis on physical training, character moulding, respect for elders and acquisition of spiritual and moral values. Issues of value laden story telling, or

transmitting indigenous knowledge through story telling, and other cultural practices can create a positive sense of self-awareness and desire to take control of ones life through making positive choices.

3.5.2 Indigenisation of education in Ghana

Ghana was also colonized by Britain and gained independence on March 6, 1957 and became a republic on July 1, 1960. It inherited the British education system. English became an official language for Ghana. Besides English, there are African languages which exist in Ghana and these are: Akan, Moshi-Dagomba, Ewe, and Ga. Education is one of the most important tools for national development. It becomes the responsibility of any progressive government anywhere to provide and promote sound educational policies as well as infrastructure that will help its people to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to develop their potentials.

McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975) state that it was not until the last quarter of the 19th century that Ghana began to take first steps towards a state-organized education. Before then, informal systems of education had been the main way in which Ghanaian communities prepared their members for citizenship. It is interesting to note that in Ghana the first school was the home: the teachers were the parents and the elders in the family. The curriculum was life and learning was by observation. According to McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975), the first major purpose of such education was the inculcation of good character and good health in the young members of the community. The second was to give them adequate knowledge of their history, beliefs and culture, thus enabling them to participate fully in social life. It could be seen from the foregoing comment that the purpose of non-formal education since the beginning of the Ghanaian society has been for national development. Thereafter, Ghana enacted a national language policy which gave direction in terms of provision of formal education. The national language policy of Ghana from 1971 until 2002 stated that:

During the first three years of basic education, P1-3, teaching and learning are to take place in the predominant Ghanaian language of the area in which the child lives. English is to be taught as a foreign language before it becomes the medium of instruction in P4. Ghanaian languages and culture are then taught as compulsory subjects up to the end of Basic education. French is taught as a foreign language at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level where there are French tutors (Ministry of Education of Ghana, 2001: 24).

In Ghana, indigenisation of education implied 'reform', 'change' or 'innovation' of the curriculum. However, it was not comprehensively pursued as only certain subjects were selected for indigenisation, namely: History, Geography and Religion (Quist, 2003:203). Quist (2003:203) further contends that indigenisation of education was complicated by the persisting dispute amongst the churches, educated elites and the State for control of secondary education content and direction. The dispute stemmed from unwillingness and noticeable complexity in indigenising mathematics and the physical sciences as well as difficulty in accepting one of the several indigenous languages in Ghana as a national language to compete with English. As a result, the arguments by churches, educated elites and the state on indigenisation of the curriculum fortified as some subjects were selected and others not. Instead of indigenising school curriculum, reproduction and modification of the school curriculum took place though in a different fashion. This created concern and fears amongst students (Quist, 2003:204). Seemingly in South Africa, though the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996 as amended) recognises 11 languages, English still dominates other languages in the provision of education.

In Ghanaian schools where mother tongue languages were used by learners as languages of instruction, communication between educators and learners improved and as a result this improved better teaching on the part of the

teachers and better learning by learners. An evaluation study of the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) project in Ghana using participant observation to study the implementation of the language policy in Ghanaian primary schools found that learners participated more actively when a Ghanaian language was used as the language of instruction (Dzinyela, 2001). In Ghana the use of a language that both educators and learners understand facilitated learner-centred pedagogy. The use of national languages as languages of instruction helped pupils become more motivated and involved in learning activities. They communicate better with their educators and among themselves. Alidou and Brock-utne (2006:84) indicate that excerpts of the educator-learners interactions in classrooms showed clearly that the implementation of learner-centred pedagogy is difficult when the language of instruction (in this case English) is not familiar to learners.

Studies related to bilingual education in Ghana indicate that the use of mother tongue in basic education produces positive outcomes if carefully implemented. The primary benefits are the improvement of communication and interactions in the classroom and the integration of African cultures and indigenous knowledge systems into formal school curricula. Effective communication leads to more successful learning opportunities in classrooms where languages familiar to both children and educators are used as language of instructions at least in the first three years of education (Alidou 1997; Bamgbose 2005; Brock-Utne 2000; Brock-Utne, Desai, Qorro 2004; Chekaraou 2004; Heugh 2000; IDRC 1997 and Traoré, 2001). South Africa as well can adopt a bilingual education system as it proved to be a success in Ghana.

In Ghana, International Continued Education and Development (Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung - INWENT) trained more national textbook authors. INWENT has also promoted an integrated language teaching approach which emphasizes the development of oral and written language among first, second and third grades. The textbooks produced in this project help learners develop not only cognitive skills but also meta-cognitive ones which help them to

think about how they best learn and read. In addition, all the reading texts are based on the learner's immediate educational needs, immediate culture, and other regional cultures. These texts also include cooperative learning activities that encourage learners to develop functional and academic literacy. The Ghana Ministry of Education in cooperation with INWENT and Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) produced a comprehensive teachers' guide which includes all the national languages used in cooperation with Assistance to Teacher Education Projects (ASTEP) Programmes (Komarek, 2003). In the ASTEP programmes, culturally relevant textbooks and educators' guides were produced to help educators and learners achieve better performance (Alidou and Brock-utne, 2006: 98). Hitherto the Ghanaian government had for numerous years received support from different donor agencies to implement the policy of mother tongue education for the first three years of schooling. Amongst others there was the Danish government which supported Shepherd Schools in the north of the country and UNICEF's Childscope project in the Afram Plains teaching in local languages. The German Technical Cooperation was working to strengthen the teaching in local languages in the many teacher-training colleges in the country. The World Bank financed the mass printing and distribution of textbooks and teacher guides in two major languages covering about 70% of the Ghanian population (Komarek, 2004).

However, drastic changes took a different direction in the middle of November 2001 when a memorandum was sent from the Prime Minister's Office to "Development Partners" and with a copy to the Minister for Education withdrawing the "Education Sector Policies and Strategic Plans" document. Subsequently, Prof. Akumfi, the then Minister of Education made an announcement on the 28th of February 2002 that:

> *"Instruction at all levels of primary school will be in English. However, pupils in all basic school (both public and private) will be required to study a Ghanaian language as a subject from primary 1. Where there are*

teachers, French will be taught from J.S.S. 1 to J.S.S.3 (Parliament of Ghana 2002: 1871)".

From September 2002, regrettably English became the only medium of instruction at all levels of education in Ghana. Furthermore, Quist (2003:206) argues that regardless of the fact that indigenisation process was in place in Ghana and attempts were made to adapt school curriculum to the Ghanaian environment prior to the year 2002, foreign models still took priority in Ghana. As a result, secondary educational system/model(s) kept on being directed and regulated substantially by western paradigms, frameworks and theories. This implies that no reform in terms of the school curriculum was made as learners were still taught in English and systems and models of education were from the west. This rendered Ghana's indigenisation of school curriculum unsuccessful. In the case of South Africa, political wrangling in education could possibly hinder the efforts of indigenising general education and ultimately the teaching of life skills education. With special reference to South Africa, indigenising of life skills education is still a daunting exercise. This is because, the learning area – life orientation is regarded as the subject which needs to be crammed for examination purposes. Life orientation subject materials are produced by people who are non-local and do not know the language of the local people and also are without a clue of the cultural values and practices. However, one must first learn why any given results are being attained, or not, to understand which elements of the system are facilitating or inhibiting desired results.

3.6 Conclusion

Indigenising life skills education is a process which needs and places an unprecedented pressure on social scientists and the educational fraternity to ensure that the kind of education South African learners receive improve their social functioning and address their concerns, challenges and problems. The process of indigenising life skills education has to be supported by policies,

political will and commitment and lastly resources for the final realisation of the process. Amongst other factors which will enable indigenising life skills education process to unfold easily is the adoption of local languages in parallel with those foreign languages. Attempts have been made throughout the world to indigenise education and both success and challenges have been highlighted.

CHAPTER 4

EXPOSITION OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES FACED BY LEARNERS

4.1 Introduction

There are many changes, challenges and problems facing the young people of the 21st - century due to urbanisation, migration, globalisation, explosion of information through the print and electronic media, misinterpretation of human rights, poor character formation and glorification of youth behaviour and life styles. Notwithstanding the above, young people are expected to learn to prepare for their full adult roles and responsibilities in society against the backdrop of these large-scale socio-political and socio-economic changes, developments, challenges and problems that affect and influence how they are socialised.

Life skills education was introduced in schools in order to guide and prepare learners for life and its possibilities. Specifically, life skills education equips learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society. The rationale for introducing life skills education was to address health and social pathologies by developing skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that empower learners to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions regarding their health, social, personal and physical development and orientation to the world of work (Department of Education, 2002:4). However, it is worrying that the teaching of life skills education has not successfully reduced the health and social pathologies facing the young people in South Africa as proven by the high rate of HIV and AIDS, criminal activities involving learners, violence in schools, substance abuse, rape, cultural and gender based violence, suicide and teenage pregnancy and the list is endless. In

this chapter, challenges and problems as mentioned above (which negatively impact on the lives of the young people) are looked at.

4.2 Overview of health and social pathologies

In a recent study conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) (2008) on the extent and nature of violence in schools, it was found that a total of 15.3% of all learners between grades 3 and 12 had experienced some form of violence while at school. Threats of violence were common at both primary and secondary schools, with 10.8% of primary school learners and 14.5% of secondary school learners reporting that they had been threatened with violence. This implies that a significant number of children within schools live in the constant threat and fear that something bad could happen to them. A further research study by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (2008) found that 1 out of 20 learners reported experiencing incidents of physical assault at school. Robberies are also quite common as 3.1% of primary school learners and 5.9% of secondary school learners reported experiencing robberies while at school. Also significant is the fact that primary school boys (2.5%) are more likely than girls (0.2%) to report having experienced sexual violence, while at secondary schools, girls (4.8%) are three times as likely as boys (1.4%) to have been raped or sexually assaulted (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, 2008:1).

Furthermore, young people are both victims and perpetrators of crimes as it can be seen from the following table outlining statistics on the type of crimes committed by learners alongside the ones committed by their educators. Figure 1 outlines statistics on crimes against children.

Table 1: Individuals responsible for violence perpetrated against school learners (CJCP, Issue 7, July 2008).

Secondary School learners		**Primary School learners**	
Type of violence	**Perpetrators**	**Type of violence**	**Perpetrators**
Threats of violence (N = 985)	Pupil = 93.1% Teacher = 5.5%	Threats of violence (N= 651)	Pupil = 94.2% Teacher = 4.5%
Assault (N= 293)	Pupil = 83.2% Teacher = 14.9%	Assault (N= 452)	Pupil = 50.9% Teacher = 47.7%
Sexual assault (N= 211)	Pupil = 90.1% Teacher = 8.4%	Sexual assault (N= 86)	Pupil =83.8% Teacher = 9.5%
Robbery (N= 399)	Pupil = 89.9% Teacher = 5.1%	Robbery (N= 185)	Pupil = 91.1% Teacher = 4.1%

Table 1 above confirms that learners are involved in different forms of criminal behaviour more than educators. Almost above 93% of threats to other learners signify the intensity and extent of the criminal behaviour amongst learners as it makes other learners not to be free during school hours. It also indicates that learners are not viewing each other on equal footing as learners but as superiors and people to be feared of by other learners.

The table also confirms that different forms of assault are rife at both primary and secondary schools. The high rate of assault at both primary and secondary schools is 83.2% and 50.9% respectively. On sexual assaults, it is 90.1% at secondary schools which is a sign of bullying and aggressive behaviour as confirmed by Kottak (1997:417), Harris (1997:337) and Garcia-Moreno and Watts (2000:254) who aptly commented that men usually use power, which is culturally sanctioned over females, while women are expected to assume a position of subordination. Males tend to be aggressive and violent towards other people and especially towards the females with special reference to sexual matters. Unequal power relations are culturally approved and perpetuated by the way people are socialised in relation to gender diversity, roles, status and need fulfilment, especially around sexual matters. Men are socialised to be the dominant partners and decision makers (Makhubele, 2004: 25).

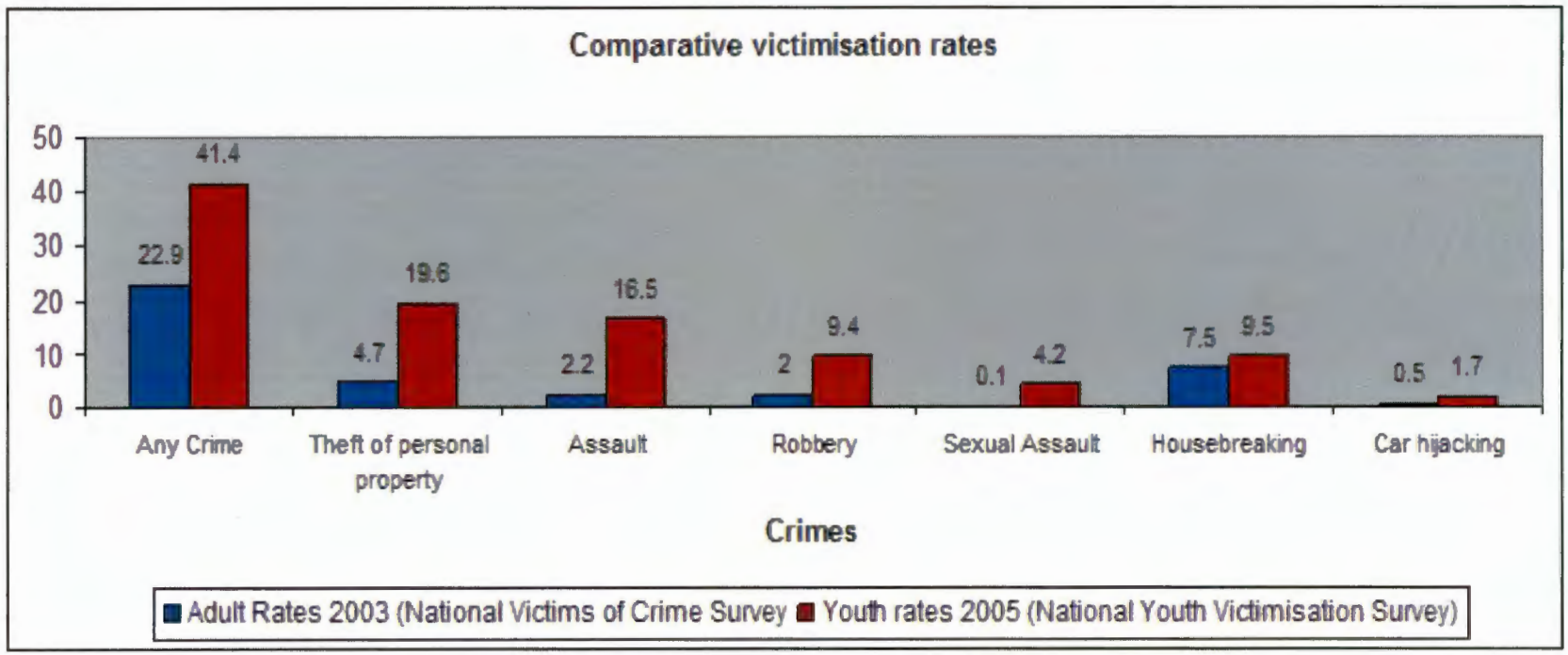
In the last few years, stories of physical assaults with intent to do grievous bodily harm (Assault GBH) have been widely reported in the media. A case in point is that of a matric pupil in Krugersdorp at Nic Diederichs Technical High School on the 18 August 2008, wielding a Ninja sword, and allegedly involved in drug abuse who killed a 16-year-old boy and stabbed two workers. The boy had painted his face black and wore a black balaclava, resembling the drummer of the band slipknot. There were reports from witnesses that the boy had abused drugs and police confiscated dagga from some pupils.

Around August month of 2008 also in Gauteng, another incident, the matric pupil stabbed and killed a 16-year-old grade nine pupil before stabbing two gardeners who were taken to hospital in a serious condition.

Meanwhile, on the 19 August 2008 in Eldorado Park extension three, south of Johannesburg, another youth lashed out with a gun. The 17-year-old schoolboy opened fire on fellow pupils playing after school, but wounded no one. In a fourth case, a 15-year-old learner was arrested with a gun in Pretoria before he could use it.

It is worrying to see such criminal activities committed at schools, taking into account the age factor of learners. This poses a question as to the effectiveness of life skills education offered to learners in schools.

Figure 1: Crimes against children under the age of 18 years



Adapted from Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, 2008

Figure 1 above indicates that 41.4% of crimes are committed against youth. This is a confirmation that there is more crimes committed against children as compared to adults. Almost 16.5% of assault is committed against the youth as compared to 2.2% committed against adults

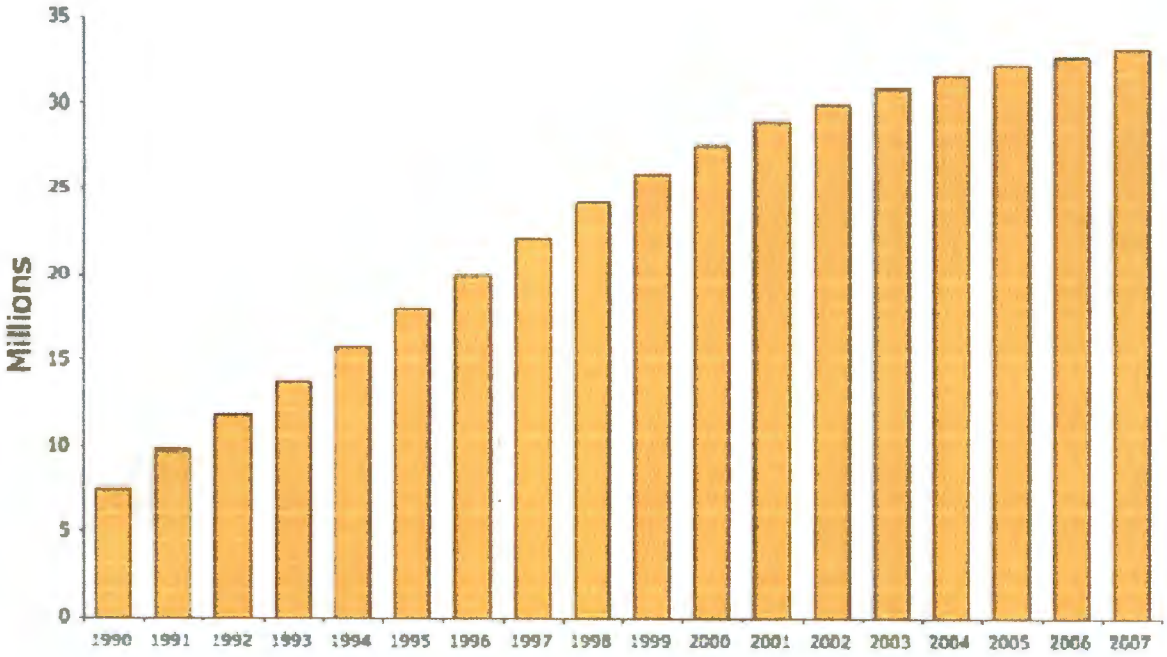
Looking at this statistics, it is not surprising that more children are involved in anti-social behaviour. It would seem that societal systems are failing to protect children and are also failing to socialise them in such a way that they become responsible and productive citizens in the society. Moreover, the education system though, it has introduced life skills education in schools, seems also to be failing to instil acceptable social values and practices of respect and love of humanity.

4.2.1 HIV and AIDS

HIV remains a global health problem of unprecedented dimensions. The HIV and AIDS crisis in southern and South Africa has spread enormously wide and has caused a lot of social problems and individual suffering on a general level. Among all people living with HIV/AIDS, young people are some of the groups which are gravely affected by this epidemic. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most heavily affected by HIV, accounting for 67% of all people living with HIV and for 75% of AIDS deaths in 2007. Records on HIV/AIDS by UNAIDS and WHO (2008) reveal that the incidence of the disease is higher in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) as compared to other countries in the world. In South Africa, it is estimated that around 5. 3 million people live with HIV and out of that 10. 2% are young people. Of the five million people all over the world who were infected during 2001, 58% were below the age of 25. A large proportion of Africa's population is young and this goes without saying that young people who are infected cover the larger proportion. This dreadful disease reportedly claims many lives daily. Heterosexual relationships account for the high rate of the

HIV/AIDS prevalence between men and women in Sub-Saharan Africa (Morison, 2001:12 &13).

Figure 2: Global trends of HIV and AIDS



Source: UNAIDS/WHO in July 2008

The number of people living with HIV has risen from around 8 million in 1990 to 33 million currently, and is still growing. Around 67% of people living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS and WHO, 2008:32).

Table 2: Regional statistics for HIV & AIDS, end of 2007

Region	Adults & children living with HIV and AIDS	Adults & children newly infected	Adult prevalence*	Deaths of adults & children
Sub-Saharan Africa	22.0 million	1.9 million	5.0%	1.5 million
North Africa & Middle East	380,000	40,000	0.3%	27,000
Asia	5 million	380,000	0.3%	380,000
Oceania	74,000	13,000	0.4%	1,000
Latin America	1.7 million	140,000	0.5%	63,000
Caribbean	230,000	20,000	1.1%	14,000
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	1.5 million	110,000	0.8%	58,000
North America, Western & Central Europe	2.0 million	81,000	0.4%	31,000
Global Total	33.0 million	2.7 million	0.8%	2.0 million

Source: UNAIDS/WHO in July 2008

It can be deduced from the table above that Sub-Saharan Africa of which South Africa is part has the highest number of people living with HIV and AIDS.

Table 3: Estimated HIV prevalence among South Africans, by age

Age (years)	Male prevalence %	Female prevalence %
2-4	4.9	5.3
5-9	4.2	4.8
10-14	1.6	1.8
15-19	3.2	9.4
20-24	6.0	23.9
25-29	12.1	33.3
30-34	23.3	26.0
35-39	23.3	19.3
40-44	17.5	12.4
45-49	10.3	8.7
50-54	14.2	7.5
55-59	6.4	3.0
60+	4.0	3.7
Total	8.2	13.3

Source: UNAIDS/WHO in July 2008

Among females, HIV prevalence is highest among those between 25 and 29 years; among males, the peak is in the group aged 30-39 years. According to these results, males aged 15 - 49 years are 58% more likely to be infected as are females in the same age group (11.7% in men versus 20.2% in women). Young people aged 15–24 account for an estimated 45% of new HIV infections worldwide. An estimated 370 000 (330 000 – 410 000) children younger than 15 years became infected with HIV in 2007. Globally, the number of children younger than 15 years living with HIV increased from 1.6 million [1.4 million–2.1

million] in 2001 to 2.0 million [1.9 million–2.3 million] in 2007. Almost 90% of people infected with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS and WHO, 2008:33) and South Africa, for the prevalence of HIV infection among 15 - 24 years old, is the second most affected after Swaziland which has the highest.

In a South African context, blacks are the people mostly affected by poverty. The poor living conditions of black people in the RSA have particularly been created by the apartheid policy. In their plight for seeking income as well as lack of privacy in their homes, they became vulnerable to high-risk behaviour, which exposes them to STI's, and HIV/AIDS. Other researchers concur to have observed that poverty contributes to the escalation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Webb, 1997:31; Gilks, 2001:171-173 and Mill and Anarfi, 2002:326). While researchers confirm that men are the most likely victims of HIV/AIDS, women and children from the underdeveloped communities have been observed to be the fastest growing segment of the population developing HIV/AIDS (Stein, Nyamathi and Kington, 1997:520 and Des Jarlais and Caraël, 1999:235). The effects of HIV and AIDS on learners are enormous and heart-breaking as in most instances they discontinue their education, some do not have people to care for them as parents could be far away working and ultimately die young. Though current life skills education addresses issues of HIV and AIDS, one would expect that learners will be more cautious about sex without condoms, abhor fornication and abstain as it is the only most reliable means of protection against infection with HIV.

4.2.2 Murder (Aggressive behavior by and against children)

Murder is the act of killing another human being with malice, mostly using a deadly weapon. It is presumed that the assailant brings a deadly weapon with him/her with intent to use it. To give a picture of the intensity of young criminal activities in South Africa, the following incidents are worth mentioning. Earlier in 2008, a learner from Siyathuthuka High School shot two fellow pupils after they

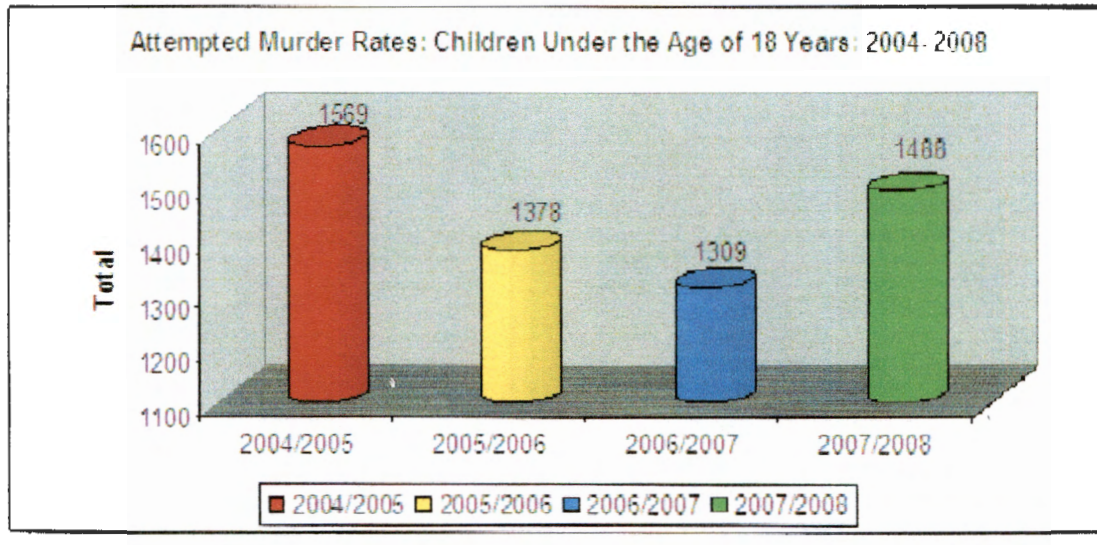
hit him with a belt during a row over a desk. In the Western Cape, a 13-year-old boy was stabbed on the school premises by a 14-year-old boy who was carrying a knife. When asked why, the boy said: '*Because it is the last day of school*'. In KwaZulu-Natal, a Grade 10 pupil was arrested after stabbing a teacher to death at Thornwood Secondary School in Pinetown. These are some incidents that have made the headlines in South Africa over the past year (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, 2008:1) and confirm statistics outlined in Table 1.

Murder can be construed as lack of respect for one's life. In life skills education, it is expected that learners are taught about self-respect and respect for others. They should also be taught stress, anger and conflict management which could assist in ensuring that they do not kill other people as a way of showing their anger and embarrassment.

The question is, how is information communicated, how is it correctly disseminated to the learners, are learners able to internalise these life skills which they are taught to ensure that they live responsible and productive life.

The figure below indicates the magnitude of the crimes committed against the youth from 2006 to 2008. This picture also has an influence on the behaviour of young people in the country.

Figure 3: Murder rates against children under the age of 18 from 2004 to 2008.



Adapted from Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, 2008

Figure 3 indicates that murder rates have increased since 2004. From 2006 to 2008, the murder of children under the age of 18 has increased by 22.4%. There are compounding factors which lead to murder of children and some amongst others are that they are killed whilst stealing and while some are in crossroads with other criminals.

4.2.3 Substance Abuse

Drug abuse has serious consequences in the homes, schools and the entire community (National Drug Master Plan, 2006 - 2011: 1). Ramolehe (2006:17) states that since the beginning of human history and before, people have found ways to alter their bodies and minds by taking substances such as herbs, alcohol and drugs. She argued that addiction usually does not happen overnight. Rather,

people who become addicted to drugs (such as alcohol, cocaine, heroin, marijuana, etc.) are gradually introduced and desensitized to them over a period of time and they may initially enjoy the use of drugs in a recreational sort of way. For instance, someone might get into the habit of having a beer or some wine after work as a way of releasing the days' stresses. Someone else may use marijuana on an occasional basis as a way to share special time with friends or as an aid to appreciating food, music or sex. Another person may start using cocaine as a way of staying up late at night to study for examination.

Rothmund (2006a:329) contends that most drugs (with the exception of alcohol) are illegal. A great number of learners have tried illegal drugs. Dagga and alcohol are the most commonly abused substances amongst the learners in Limpopo Province (Malaka, 2001:273-275). One of the most and easily accessible drugs in the RSA particularly in the rural areas is alcohol. It can easily be brewed at home and be used for a variety of reasons such as entertainment or ritual purposes. Learners in rural areas have been reported to come to class smelling of alcohol. It is a common feature to see a group of peers conglomerating around ablution blocks to smoke dagga or share a bottle of alcohol. Because of easy access, during breaks learners go to shebeens and taverns to treat themselves to alcohol. Thereafter, they become rude and difficult for educators to control. Criminal behaviours indicated in table 1 and figure 1 mostly happen under such conditions. In life skills education it is expected that learners are taught about the effects of alcohol in their bodies and mental health. When drunk, learners have no inhibitions and they throw caution to the wind and do not mind indulging in unsafe sex which might expose them to HIV/AIDS infection. The use of alcohol and other psychoactive drugs, notably cocaine, fosters the unprotected sexual activity which is a high-risk behaviour leading to HIV infection. Alcohol damages the immune system and leaves the body vulnerable to HIV infection. It also depresses the immune system. It increases susceptibility to other AIDS-related diseases like tuberculosis (TB) (Plant in Sherr, 1993:223-226).

Learners who abuse alcohol and/or other drugs may become addicted and leave school and consequently resort to criminal activities (as portrayed in Table 1 and figure 1 respectively). Learners mostly abuse alcohol because it is not classified as illegal and therefore easily accessible. Learners may also be disposed to stealing in order to gain continuing access to drugs. They may also kill or injure other people (through driving and firearm accidents) while intoxicated, and may get and pass along to others infectious diseases (like HIV and AIDS and Hepatitis). Ultimately, they may end up killing themselves (through suicide, malnutrition, overdose or drug related physical degeneration and disease).

Categorically, young people are not an exception to problems of drugging as they journey in life. The following citation from Aurora Alcohol and Drug Centre (2005:5) support the above-mentioned ideas:

> *"Apart from many other problems the adolescent experiences (physical, emotional, intellectual, and social), experimentation with alcohol and drugs is often part of the process the adolescent goes through in an attempt to feel grown up, to find commonality with peers, and to rebel against societal values. However, this may lead to dependency on these drugs".*

Illegal drug use usually begins in teenage years and it may not be recognised for some time. Illegal drug use is the concern for everyone. Drug use is not something that is restricted to any particular individual, family or community. The only difference is how an individual, family and community see the situation and how they react (Lockley, 1996:1 & 3).

The drug usage behaviour, which has implications for HIV/AIDS, is judged to be more than just a weakness. Substance abuse is an indulgence, delinquency and addiction to chemicals that are illegal and have implications for perverse sex (Sontag in Bharat, 2000:45 and Stevens-Smith, 1998:16). Health and social pathologies have been strongly associated with moral denigration and lifestyles involving deviant and perverse sex, intravenous drug use (IDU) and promiscuity. Drug use is often associated with loss of control and mind distortion (De Miranda, 1996:5) and subsequently high-risk behaviour, which among others include unsafe sex. The spread of HIV/AIDS between sexual partners is associated with the use and abuse of substances, which is a high-risk behaviour for HIV infection (Kesby, 2000:1728).

Female learners who abuse substances are the potential victims of rape due to the fact that drugs alter their moods and judgement and that places them at high risk of being infected with HIV (Nataraj in Reid, 1995:42; Webb, 1997:6; and Morison, 2001:7). Female intravenous drug users are more likely than male intravenous drug users to have a drug-using partner and to share injection equipment with that partner (Brown and Weissman as quoted by Campbell, 1999:61). Female intravenous drug users who trade sex for drugs and money are more likely to be HIV positive than those who do not trade in sex because they indulge in unprotected sexual intercourse (Garcia-Moreno and Watts, 2000:257; Moore and Halford, 1999:157; Ickovics and Yoshikawa, 1998:192; Gross and Billingham, 1998:81 and Peersman and Levy, 1998:192).

The quality of life in many communities has been reduced substantially because of the prevalence of alcohol and other substance abuses. Rural black youth begin drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and marijuana and using smokeless tobacco and solvents by age 10 and begin using cocaine by age 11. When a young person sees himself or herself as hopeless, powerless, and with a bleak future, indulgence in substance abuse becomes a way of coping with life. Alcohol

and drug abuse within black communities may be the ramifications of internal factors such as poor conformity to societal values, and negative role models which encourage heavy and abusive drinking (Pearson, 1994:9 & 10).

4.2.4 Sexual abuse and Rape

South Africa is reported to have one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world; with adolescent girls between the ages of 12-17 being particularly at risk. This is the age where such girls are in schools. Rape and sexual assault are extremely common in schools as depicted in Table 1 that almost above 90% in both secondary and primary schools have committed sexual assaults. Adolescents' learners are under tremendous pressure to have sex at an early age. In South Africa, 30% of female learners indicated that their first sex was coerced whilst male learners often tolerate or even condone sexual coercion. It has been reported that female learners also may view sexual violence or sex that is obtained through force, fear or intimidation as normal (Jogunosimi, 2001:1; United Nations, 1998:173, Department of Social Development, 2002:131 and UNFPA, 2003: 21 & 25).

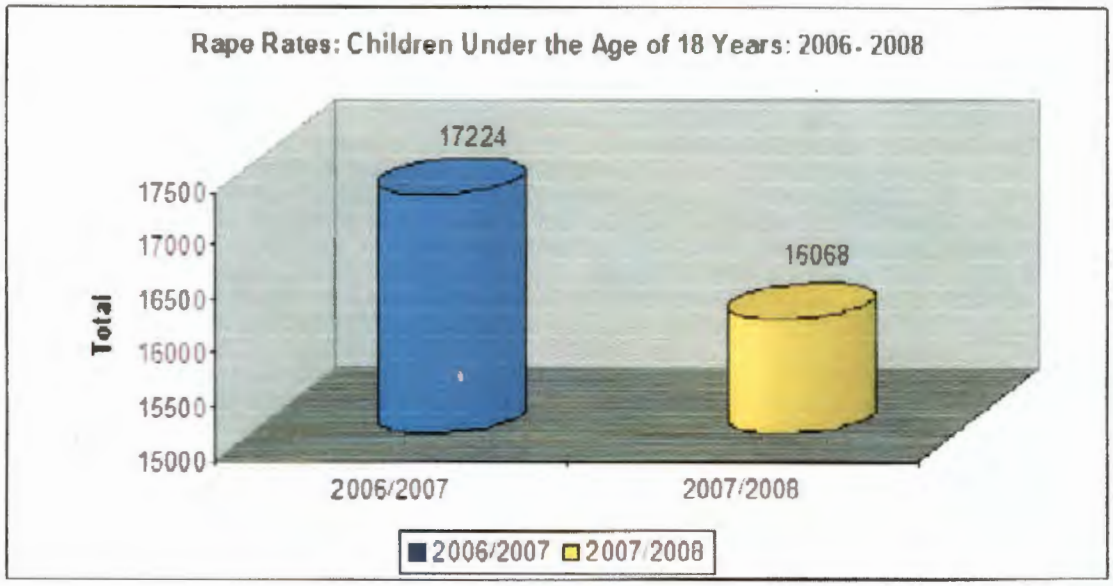
Rape, one of the most conspicuous forms of this violence, has reached epidemic proportions in South Africa. Numerous cases of rape have been reported as having happened in toilets, classrooms or behind high walls. It occurs in all spheres of society and all female learners are potential victims. Gang rape is also an increasingly common form of rape. Cases of sexual assaults have also been reported in school premises.

Male learners wish to dominate, which may be expressed through rape, is not instinctual. Controlling and domineering behaviour is learnt from family modes of

relating, the media, activities and society's glorification of "strong armed" masculinity and docile femininity (Vogelman, 1990). This explains numerous cases of bullying in schools. Male learners are being taught to define their power in terms of their capacity to effect their will, without the consent of those involved, especially female learners. Thus the underpinnings of rape lie in the rapist's objectification and dehumanisation of his victim. For an individual to rape or engage in extreme violence, it is necessary for him to perceive his victim as less than human. By dehumanising the rape victim, she loses her status as a feeling, thinking human being who has the right to make her own choices, including the right to say no. Young girls who are raped by school mates or male educators sometimes abandon their school careers and end up abusing drugs. Rape is not the only means by which females are dehumanised, rather it is an extension and a more extreme form of the broader social oppression and subjugation to which females are subjected.

It is clear that rape is used as a means of thwarting marginalisation, as it is a powerful and effective way of reasserting one's centrality and importance, at least in relation to the victim, and to those in the community who feel threatened by this violence. The figure below depicts a high rate of rape towards the youth.

Figure 4: Rape rates of children under the age of 18 years between 2006 and 2008



Adapted from Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, 2008

Though Figure 4 shows that incidents of rape against children under the age of 18 years have decreased, regardless of such decrease, the effects might be far-reaching as probably the majority of youth could be perpetrators of heinous crimes such as rape in the future.

4.2.5 Cultural and Gender-based violence

Cultural issues such as social and health beliefs, attitudes, marriage, self-identity, cultural identity, perception on girl child, sexual reproductive health and rights, amongst others, play an important role in the day to day interaction of all members of the society (Bernstein and Van Rooyen, 1994:376). Cyr-Delpe in Reid (1995:67) points out that culture is at the core of the struggle against health and social pathologies around the world and the hope for the future is anchored

on changing attitudes and sexual behaviour which is inclusive of personal, religious, and social beliefs. It is imperative that the cultural and gender mainstreaming issues be taken into account when indigenising life skills education in an attempt to vilify the health and social ills ruining the lives of the young people.

South Africa is a patriarchal society. In a patriarchal system, men are regarded as natural leaders and are preferred over women to hold positions of power. Women are regarded as subordinates and they therefore have to support men's roles and status. Women are expected to be followers and not leaders. Irrespective of these, the respect for a woman as a nurturer takes precedence (Sadie and Van Aard, 1998:88; Lagarde, Enel, Seck, Gueye-Ndiaye, Piau, Pison, Delaunay, Ndoye, and Mboup, 2000:78; Hamel, 1999:74; and Phiri, 1997:68).

The existing status quo of unequal power relations in most societies is deeply rooted in religious beliefs and values. Categorically, in South Africa, Christianity is the dominant religion. The church and various Christian denominations are inclined to emphasise a man's superiority and the maintenance of gender stereotypes. Religion is not only an aspect of culture, but it is also on its own, a lifestyle which exerts immeasurable pressure on women. Lauver (2000:78) asserts that hierarchical and dualist beliefs in religion have had negative implications for women.

4.2.6 Suicide

In South Africa, as in the rest of the world, the occurrence of suicide amongst teenagers and young adults is rising dramatically. It is the second largest cause of death amongst teenagers. The number of young men who commit suicide is three times higher than that of young women. This might be as a result of the different psycho-pathology found in men and women. Also it might have something to do with the effectiveness of the method used to commit suicide.

Firearms are used more by men and are more fatal than drinking pills, a method preferred by women (The South African Depression and Anxiety Group, 2008). A different scenario is evident amongst young people as Schlebusch (2005:58) found that more female than male youth seem to commit suicide. Anger and aggression are feelings regularly found in youth attempting to commit suicide. Self -destruction amongst youth can be direct and result in suicide or it can be indirect and result in high-risk behaviour such as substance abuse, unprotected sex or generally dangerous activities (Schlebusch, 2005:58).

Youth suicide is a growing epidemic. Suicide and attempted suicide is a response to crisis mounting terrifyingly among the youth. There is no single motive for suicide and attempted suicide; but rather a combination of complex and contributory factors, although one incident can serve as a trigger for suicidal action or attempted suicide Ackerman (1998:19) and Joan (1986:38). There are various reasons why young people commit suicide or attempt suicide, these are, but not limited to, feelings of loneliness, rejection, desperation, hopelessness, meaningless, inner anger, helplessness and inferiority. Amongst other causes are problem drinking either by young people themselves or by their parents, divorce and separation of their parents or guardian, sexual abuse, molestation, disapproval of relationships by parents or significant others and absence of parental role models, as mentioned by Alpaslan (2003:259-260); Berman and Jobes (1992:107, 109 and 141), and Fernquist (2000:258).

Rothmund (2006b:11) and Ramolehe (2006:17) outline several risk factors that are associated with suicide amongst young people including the diagnoses of psychiatric disorders such as depressive disorders. Depressive disorders seem to have a significant impact on suicide figures amongst youth, sometimes in combination with substance abuse, anxieties or other psychiatric disorders. It is commonly believed that youth from difficult or dysfunctional backgrounds are more vulnerable and more prone to commit suicide. This can be associated with poor problem-solving skills. Common factors amongst youth include increased

impulsiveness, emotional instability and lack of reasoning and decision-making skills. The symptoms of teenage depression are very different from the symptoms of adult depression. Where adults tend to present with sadness and melancholy, teenagers present with irritability, low frustration thresholds or angry outbursts. Teenagers might complain about unfounded medical symptoms such as head and stomach aches. They could complain of feeling worthless or might not be able to cope with criticism or feedback regarding their behaviour. Young people with depression may withdraw themselves from their parents or regular friends but tend to keep up at least some relationships although sometimes with a different crowd they socialised with before. Furthermore, Ramolehe (2006:19) categorically mentions another risk factor in South Africa which appears to be matric examination. Stress levels before writing matric are very high and this appears to impact on suicide attempts by youth. Other stressful events associated with teen suicide are disciplinary crisis and social failure such as rejection by friends, or an unsuccessful intimate relationship. The question is, are these issues discussed in life skills education and what mechanisms are given to learners drawn from their cultural knowledge to withstand the above-mentioned challenges.

In order to understand their own development, young people need life skills education to understand the process, facts, myths and feelings accompanying human development. They need support to survive, heal and prosper after being raised in dysfunctional families or growing up without an adult parental figure. Youth also need life skills education to cope in an angry and violent society.

4.2.7 Teenage Pregnancy

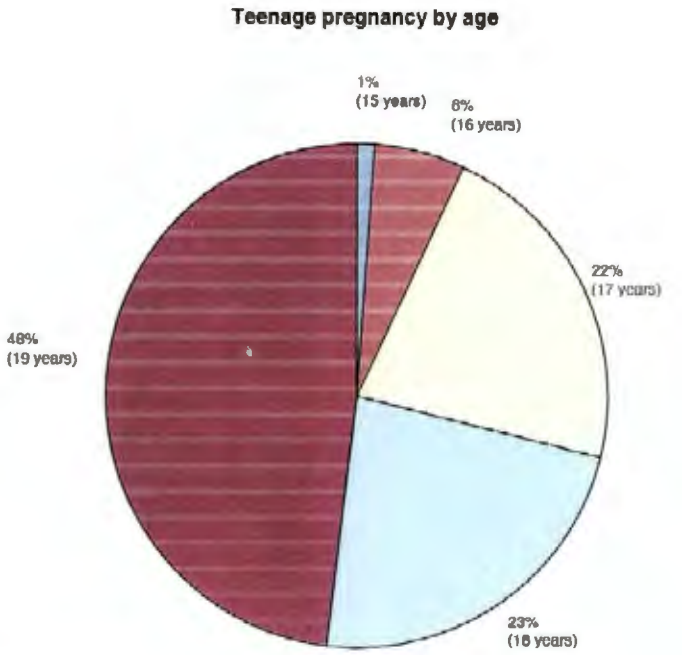
David Harrison, Chief Executive Officer of LoveLife (2008) has asserted that:

> *"South Africa has a huge teen pregnancy problem - one in three girls has had a baby by the age of 20,"*

He further said that the effects of teenage pregnancy may affect the social, economic and medical health of both the mother and the child with social and health considerations being the most important to tackle. Statistics South Africa (2001) revealed that about 800,000 teenagers become pregnant every year and almost 34% of the girls get pregnant before they turn 20. Alarmingly, 11% get pregnant at around 15. In addition, a shocking 12% of sexually active 12 to 14 year olds have never used a condom. In Gauteng Province, the number of pregnant schoolgirls jumped from 1,169 in 2005 to 2,336 in 2006. It is reported that behavioural changes and a reduction in the number of sexual partners is a must for teenagers. With the high rate of teenage pregnancy in South Africa, the need to provide indigenous life skills education is dire.

Findings by Suri (1994: 42-45) and Fontes (1993:21) have shown that there is a very strong association between poor performance at school and the possibility of early, unplanned pregnancy and childbearing. Poor performances are exacerbated by negative attitudes towards education and poor occupational prospects and as a result teenagers resort to child bearing as an escape mechanism from poverty. Learning social acceptable behaviour during early years of development is crucial for learners to deal with challenges of having a child in early years of development. However, in the past, cultural practices, values and customs placed high premium in pregnancy for girls and child bearing which is a better route to adult status (Bernstein and Van Rooyen, 1994:378-379) and that should be challenged through indigenous life skills education. The figure below depicts statistics for teenage pregnancy by age. These are the ages in which children must be at school.

Figure 5 Teenage Pregnancy from 15-19 years olds



Source: Reproductive Health Research Unit (2004) National HIV and Sexual Behaviour Survey of 15-24 year olds, 2003

Figure 5 shows that pregnancy among 15-16 year olds accounts for 7% of all teen pregnancy, while 17- 19 years olds account for 93% of teen pregnancies.

4.3 Conclusion

The aspirations of every community are centred on development and becoming healthy and wealthy. South Africa's young population experience challenges particularly as learners are assailed by various health and social pathologies such as HIV and AIDS, substance abuse, rape, teenage pregnancy, suicide and cultural and gender-based violence; all these hinder their career development and ultimately leave them stranded and poor. Learners are both victims of these health and social pathologies as well as perpetrators. Each community attempts to develop a health and social care system and prevention strategies that will help it to survive; hence there are different health and social systems and different strategies that are used in different communities. Promotion, prevention and treatment strategies should therefore recognise the culture of people they aim to service hence indigenising life skills education could play a key role. Based on that background the focus in the next chapter is on indigenising life skills education with special focus on social work.

CHAPTER 5

INDIGENISING LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION – A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE.

5.1 Introduction

The future and hope of every nation, community and family is its children. Children need to be nurtured from babyhood, teenage period through adolescent till they reach young adulthood stage and beyond. Teenage and adolescent stages are preparatory phases for children and as they are very critical and challenging stages, children need social support, guidance and nurturance. A social worker is a professional with a strong desire to help people improve their lives. They assist people by helping them cope with issues in their everyday lives, deal with their relationships, and solve personal and family problems. School social work is a specialized area of practice within the broad field of the social work profession. School social workers bring unique knowledge and skills to the school system and the learner-services team. School social workers are instrumental in furthering the purpose of the schools of providing better education for better life. Furthermore, school social workers create an environment conducive for teaching, learning, and for the attainment of competence and confidence in collaboration with parents, school management, educators and the community at large. Moreover, besides coordinating, facilitating, organising psychosocial services to learners, school social workers provide life skills education. Life skills education programmes are a burgeoning field which offers constructive learning opportunities to meet some of the complex health and social ills affecting the society.

5.2 Contextual background of learners' problems

Decades of the erstwhile government's efforts to segregate the majority of people in the end destroyed stability, perverted civilised values, inflicted brutalities and impoverished the majority of Africans (Van Dyk, 1996: 20). Globalisation, democratisation and glorification of youth behaviour and life styles are some of the changes, challenges and problems facing the young people of the 21-century. Young people are expected to learn to prepare for their full adult roles and responsibilities in society against the backdrop of these large-scale socio-political and socio-economic changes, developments, challenges and problems and they affect and influence how young people are socialised. Prior to attaining democracy in South Africa, young people have been involved and at the forefront of political freedom. Politicians utilised young people to pursue their political dreams through senseless murdering, looting, plundering, instilling political intolerance, mistrust and fighting's which directly and/or indirectly resulted and manifested in violent–related behaviour within the micro-systemic environment in the form of marital and domestic violence, child abuse and vandalism of property (Kasiram, Keen and Naidoo, 1996:373). Violent behaviour engenders serious outcome for everyone and violence produces fears. Where there is fear there is the rejection of love, positive relationship and courtesy. In a violent realm there is hatred, mistrust and jealousy towards one another (Sacco, 1995: 111). Such an involvement of young people in political freedom prior and post-apartheid era led to the erosion of social values necessary for their total up-bringing and maturity which could yield accountable and responsible adults in the society.

The impact of apartheid in post-apartheid South Africa is evident. South Africa attained freedom in 1994, however, the freedom has brought many opportunities for the youth, yet they are still exposed and assailed with many challenges. South Africa has a young population of almost 18.1 million. The plight of young people (learners) are challenges that have reached catastrophic proportions. In effect, there are outrageously high incidents of rape, child abuse, HIV/AIDS,

teenage pregnancy, promiscuity, substance abuse, criminal activities, cultural and gender-based violence, and teenage suicide and all these social ills affect everyone – directly and indirectly. This situation calls for the intervention of social workers who are expected to dynamically come up with different life skills programmes to address health and social pathologies and improve the social functioning of learners. Schools are the best medium to teach life skills education because that is where learners are found.

5.3 A brief overview of school social work

In South Africa, the practice of school social work is only visible and available to private schools which are referred to as Model C schools. The rationale being that these schools are able to pay the salaries of social workers. These school social workers work within the school system and they are part of the management and also involved in programme planning together with educators. Others social workers who work in programs that interface with the schools (school-linked services) are referred to as Social Workers-in-Schools. These social workers are employed by the Department of Social Development and render services to the Department of Education. However, only the Free State Department of Education has introduced Socio-pedagogues who are social workers rendering social services to schools but placed at the district offices of the Department of Education. In this section, school social work, social work-in-schools and socio-pedagogue will be used interchangeably as they render the same services. Life skills education and life orientation would also be used interchangeably as they both serve the same purpose and have the same contents.

Schools are central crossroads of life for most learners; they are a major venue for learning, experimentation and socialization. The school is one of the critical agents of socialisation in preparing a learner for future realities and challenges

(Kasiram, 1994: 371). The school is recognised as one of the social institutions that can play a significant role in the moulding of socially acceptable behaviour, reconstruction of the eroded values, development and encouraging social integration within the society (Kotze, 1995: 183). School social workers are ideally situated to take a comprehensive view of the developmental trajectory of learners who are attending school (Zastrow, 2000:372).

Research in school social work in South Africa has thus far been carried out in some provinces only and amongst certain races (Kasiram 1994:363) while most of the previously disadvantaged rural provinces like Limpopo have been overlooked. School social work has changed with the dynamic changes of society. School social workers provide social services and assistance to improve the social and psychological functioning of learners and their families and to maximize the well-being of families and the academic functioning of learners. A school social worker works at the nexus of the systems of home, school and the community. In schools, social workers often serve as the link between learners' families and the school, working with parents, guardians, educators, and other school officials to ensure the learners reach their academic and personal goals, needs and potentials. In addition, school social workers address health and social problems and advice educators on how to cope with difficult learners. Social Workers in schools help learners overcome problems they may be having at school or at home. They help learners to get the best out of their education, their health, and their well-being (Knapp 2003: xv and Studer, 2005:4).

Increasingly, school social workers conduct life skills education workshops to learners in order to prevent and address different health and social pathologies such as HIV and AIDS, gender-based violence, substance abuse, bullying and aggressive behaviour. They design and provide helpful programmes for learners and help bridge the gap between school and home. They liaise with other professionals to ensure that every learner gets help to cope with problems ranging from learning difficulty to parental neglect, or abuse or other dangers in

the home (Zastrow, 2000:357). The lack of life skills education programmes in schools places an unprecedented emphasis on the educational fraternity and social sciences to address decaying morals, values and norms amongst the learners and the society in general (James and Gilliland, 2001:516).

The following is a comprehensive list of the functions and roles of a school social worker:

The primary functions of school social workers are resilience-oriented individual services, group counselling services, coordination with families, assessments and advocacy related to learners with special needs (Quigney, 2005:82).

Staudt (1991), Allen-Meares (1994), Zastrow (2000:374 - 380) and Usaj, Shine, and Mandlawitz (2006) outline numerous functions and roles of school social workers. School social workers as members of the educational team, promote and support learners' academic and social success by providing specialized services that may include:

- Providing counselling, guidance and support to learners and their families upon referral from educators or through self-referral.
- Providing a consultative and support service to educators with regard to objectives and the needs of individual learners.
- Participating with school teams in promoting improvement of conditions and standards affecting learners who have difficulty adjusting socially and emotionally or who are viewed as being "at risk".
- Assisting schools in designing and developing an appropriate preventative programmes and services for learners who may be potentially "at risk". Life skills education as a preventative programme becomes paramount in dealing with health and social pathologies
- Providing expertise in the development of career guidance policy and/or peer counselling program where required.

- Assisting learners and their families to locate and access needed services from other community agencies, and may be involved in considerable advocacy work (Collaboration and consultation with community agencies, organizations, and other professionals).
- Helping learner to improve interpersonal relationships amongst themselves, with their educators, parents and the entire society.
- Helping learners to cope with difficult and crisis situations.
- Helping learners to learn and apply problem-solving, conflict resolution, communication, stress management, anger management and decision-making skills.
- Developing and implementing plans to enhance students' school success.
- Providing ongoing emotional and behavioural support to students.
- Communicating information about how factors such as family, culture, socio-economic status, physical and mental health can affect students' performance.
- Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect situations.
- Designing and implementing behaviour management plans.
- Providing social, emotional, behavioural, functional and adaptive assessments.
- Maintaining records of contacted referrals and provide appropriate contact with school personnel regarding progress and closure of cases.

5.4 Relevance of school social work in indigenising life skills education

School social work and life skills education are greatly intertwined as both focus on improving the social functioning of learners. The vision of social work is to enhance social functioning through prevention, restoration and remediation services and promotion of social justice while the vision of life skills education is to enhance the quality of life of learners by meeting their basic social, health,

educational, economic, and environmental needs within a healthy and sustainable environment (Hepworth and Larsen, 1990: 5-6 and Rothmund, 2002). The overall mission of school social work and life skills education/life orientation is to address health and social pathologies and improve the social functioning of learners. Prior to indulging in details regarding the relevance of school social work in indigenising life skills education and/or life orientation, a comparative analysis outlining the differences and similarities of the two is necessary.

5.4.1 Differences and similarities between school social work and life skills education

In terms of the differences between social work and life skills education, certainly the difference is too thin. Life skills education is one of the fields within social work. However, it can be offered by other disciplines like psychology and education though these disciplines fall within the family of humanities.

With regard to similarities, both disciplines are concerned about the prevention of substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, bullying, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS and promotion of intelligence, peace education, self-confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, both school social work and life skills education promote psychosocial competence, mental well-being, healthy interaction and positive behaviour (WHO, 1997). According to Zastrow (2000:372), school social workers are ideally situated to take a comprehensive view of the developmental trajectory of learners who are attending school whereas life skills education can be broadly defined as an approach that develops skills for psychosocial competence in adolescents, both to build the needed competencies for human development and to adopt positive behaviours that enable them to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life (Mangrulkar, Whitman and Posner, 2001:5). Moreover, life skills education as

defined by Barker (1999: 278) is the individualised and classroom instruction, practical training and guidance to help people correct deficits in their life.

Furthermore, the Department of Education (2003:9) defines life orientation as the study of the self in relation to others and to society. Like social work, applies a holistic approach in dealing with individuals as they are viewed as bio-psychosocial beings. They are both concerned with the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners, and the way in which these dimensions are interrelated and expressed in life. The focus is the development of self-in-society, and this encourages the development of balanced and confident learners who will contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy, and an improved quality of life for all. Life skills education guides and prepares learners for life, and for its responsibilities and possibilities. School social workers like life skills educators play a significant role in the moulding of socially acceptable behaviours, reconstruction of the eroded values, development and encouraging social integration within the society (Kotze, 1995: 183; James and Gilliland, 2001:516, Staudt, 1991; Allen-Meares, 1994; Zastrow, 2000:374 – 380; Quigney, 2005:82 and Usaj, Shine, and Mandlawitz, 2006). Both school social work and life skills education addresses knowledge, values, attitudes and skills about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagement, recreation and physical activity, and career choices. Both equip learners with skills to solve problems, to make informed decisions and choices, and to take appropriate actions to enable them to live meaningfully and successfully in a rapidly-changing society.

School social work and life skills education are proactive in nature and ensure that learners are given cultural knowledge and information so that they could make informed decisions about their lives. They both emphasise a pragmatic approach to the practice and teaching based upon local cultures, values, needs, economics, and politics and should reflect the principle of "indigenisation"

(Anderson, Wilson, Mwansa, and Osei-Hwedie, 1994: 75). School social work and life skills education programmes are inseparable and central to the process of empowering individuals to engage in and cope successfully with life and its challenges. In this way, school social workers empower learners with cultural relevant knowledge so that learners would be able to exercise greater control over their own lives (Van Rooyen and Gray, 1995:87, Margow, 1999:83 and Bender and Lombard, 2004: 87). Both school social work and life skills education are more on character formation, addressing health and social pathologies and on improving the social functioning of learners.

5.4.2 Training on indigenous life skills education

School social workers form an integral part of the team in the process of indigenising life skills education. They play their part through training life orientation educators and learners on life skills education. The focus of school social worker during trainings will be on theoretical basis, objectives and methods of life skills education (WHO, 1997). In addition, school social workers could offer training to trainees who could be life orientation educators and learners who in turn would train other learners (train and trainer programme). The school social worker could use some social work techniques such as brainstorming and role playing during training. Brainstorming is a creative technique for generating ideas and suggestions on a particular topic and role playing is the acting out of a scenario based on the example situation given by the trainer (WHO, 1997: 22). The content during training should focus on cultural sensitive practice and there should be customerisation of western theories, models and paradigms into local contexts. Utilisation of African languages, partnership and collaboration with other stakeholders (Educators and social workers) should ensure that the process is not flawed and that parental involvement is encouraged.

As a result of escalating health and social pathologies, social workers and life skills educators need to be proactive by developing cultural sensitive,

preventative programmes (Blom, 2004:51 and Malaka, 2001:269 and 275 and Malaka, 2003:381). For the preventative programmes to be efficacious, the programmes must attend and respond to real-life situations (Ngwena, 2003:191 - 193). In support of this contention, Nelson-Jones (1993:10) asserts that when a positive and empowering life skills education programme is presented and inculcated, learners would succeed to acquire a repertoire of skills in accordance with their developmental tasks and specific problems and challenges that they face in life. School social work through indigenising life skills education could play a major role in rejuvenating the spirit of self-worth, respect and cultural pride particularly amongst the African learners. Therefore school social work through life skills education must attempt to develop its own major assumptions about personality and social life; locate the basis of the profession and its rationale; develop a process which enables refined knowledge and skill to emerge out of practice; define social work and its mission to capture the African world view; clarify the domain and expertise of social work; and identify the knowledge, philosophy and value bases of the profession (Osei-Hwedie, 1996: 224 and Mamphisana and Noyoo, 2000: 30 -31).

For social work services and particularly life skills education to be relevant and powerful there must be deliberate attempts to both indigenise services and mould them along the lines of the predominant ethos of the South African society. Social work and life skills education that is properly contextualized in African culture, tradition and civilization will empower learners to define and contribute to national pride, peace and sustenance. Social work should go a step further and ensure that theory runs parallel with practice, given the fact that past curricula were borrowed from Western universities and replicated in an African setting. School social workers should therefore develop their own cumulative knowledge and in the process redefine their practice skills. In this way, the idea that problems must be solved in ways familiar to both the social work professionals and community members becomes a reality, and gives a practical meaning to indigenisation (Osei-Hwedie, 1996 and Mamphisana and Noyoo, 2000: 30). An

exploration of the context of practice underlines the impetus for indigenising life skills education

The contents of life skills education should be adapted to the learners' age, their specific preoccupations, and cultural environment as values, attitudes and cultural practices determine and influence behaviour. The learners are encouraged and assisted in order to define their own socio- cultural values, to become aware of them, to analyse critically different situations and anticipate the consequences of their doings on their future.

5.4.2.1 Customerisation of western theories, models and paradigms into local contexts

The development of social work mainly in African countries was sturdily influenced by colonising countries and also is modelled after those colonising home countries (Anderson, Wilson, Mwansa, and Osei-Hwedie, 1994:71 and 72). While traditional social work roles are not without their efficacy, the social problems and issues assailing the majority of African countries and specifically South Africa call for a different approach, highlighting the significance of local knowledge, values, skills, and practices, if social work is to be a meaningful and viable profession. It has been stressed that African countries are beset with a "crisis of inadequacy" due to the fact that development is influenced by colonial experience, and Western theories of modernization and economic growth. Western influences in the theories and philosophies of social work have been deliberated at great lengths as well as the need for indigenising social work (Osei-Hwedie, 1993: 19; Anderson, Wilson, Mwansa, and Osei-Hwedie, 1994: 72; Drower, 2002:14 and Bak, 2004:86).

As an approach in indigenising life skills education, Schiele (1996) advocated an Afro-centricity paradigm in working with African clients in a multicultural country like South Africa. Ife (2000: 62) and Yip (2005: 595) suggested that social

workers need to think and act locally. Indigenising life skills education in social work practice should consider the following components:

- An adaptation of western life skills education theories, models, paradigms and practices into local needs
- A local political and socio-cultural context shapes the implementation of life skills education practice.
- A reflection of the professional imperialism and colonialism behind the impact of the western life skills education approach
- A re-engineering of skills and techniques with micro or macro social work paradigms according to local needs and practice experiences

5.4.2.2 Utilisation of African languages

Another major aspect in respect of indigenising life skills education is language. Even though South Africa at the present hosts significant linguistic diversity, minimal attention has been paid to language usage in social work and life skills education as English still dominates. Language in both its overt and covert forms permeate social work and life skills education by means of three dimensions to linguistic diversity that is language as a problem; language as a right; and language as a resource (Harrison, 2007:71 and Ling, 2004:339).

Linguistic diversity is a key demographic feature of both the local and global contexts in which many social workers now operate (Dominelli, 2004; Kornbeck, 2003; Pugh, 1996; Ruzzene, 1998). Yet, despite this dynamic multilingual environment in which social work takes place, language policy remains an under-researched and under-theorized area in social work (Harrison, 2003; Kornbeck, 2001; Pugh, 1994). As a result, indigenising life skills education becomes a challenge. According to O'Hagan (2001: 164), African languages have been more generally regarded as inconveniences in terms of providing education, training and practice. Indeed in the domain of international social work, English

dominates in terms of providing education, training and practice (Dominelli, 2004 and Harrison, 2005). In indigenising life skills education, the language factor should be considered as the main issue.

With respect to the South African context, the extent of historical, linguistic, cultural, ideological and religious diversity is of great concern. This diversity has relevance for indigenising life skills education within the country, especially in view of the role of culture and language in the construction of meaning, the influence of ideology, values and beliefs on the practice of life skills education. The widespread use of English language materials in educational institutions should be considered whilst indigenising life skills education and life skills education should respond to the social reality in which it is found (Osei – Hwedie, 1993:19; Mfune, Osei-Hwedie, and Mwansa, 1996:121; and Drower, 2002:18 - 19).

5.4.2.3 Partnership and collaboration with other stakeholders (Educators and social workers)

There are concerns that the education system alone cannot adequately prepare learners for life and work in the 21st Century. This has prompted the researcher to explore new ways of designing and enriching life skills education with indigenous knowledge. On that note, the possibility of indigenising life skills education could be dependent on the knowledge base of social workers. Social workers due to their training and exposure in dealing with health and social pathologies, squarely are capable of collaborating with schools in providing life skills education to learners. Moreover, integrated approach in social work enables them to address learners as individuals in totality, and not just as individuals in the school setting as they are members of the families, communities, and society at large and are influenced by cultural values, practices, traditions and customs. The need to provide life skills education

programmes is due to the fact that skills for managing complicated and harsh circumstances are not naturally acquired (Kotze, 1995:183 and Ngwena, 2003:191 -193).

Based on the above, there is a need for the integrated service delivery approach in schools, which would involve social workers and educators working together towards the development and implementation of indigenous life skills education programmes. A growing number of learners manifest emotional and behavioural problems that require professional attention which is beyond the knowledge and capabilities of their educators (Kasiram, Keen and Naidoo, 1996:373). Professions should complement one another and not compete and/or push each other aside. School social workers and educators should therefore work together towards alleviating the problems that hinder learners from achieving maximally academically and socially. This is true because educators are expected to deal with different types of maladaptive behaviours portrayed by learners. This becomes overwhelming to educators since they do not receive any training on behavioural sciences. This also creates problems for educators because they are expected to provide counselling. Counselling as a special field requires specialised training which they are not trained for. Identification of abused children also becomes problem due to lack of training. A learner who falls asleep in class may be misconstrued as being lazy and non-interested whereas the learner might be suffering from domestic violence. It is the role of the social worker to provide information to life skills educators and to offer training where possible. A social worker can also facilitate training of peer counsellors to encourage learners to take responsibility for one another.

In support of this view, Strydom (2003: 69); Kotze (1995:183) and Bak (2004:89-90) assert that professionals outside the school realm, should be utilised to complement life skills education programmes. Whereas the educators are more oriented toward the curriculum and classroom activities, social worker should serve to supplement the educational function of the school. School social

workers would help learners who have difficulties in engaging constructively in the school programme. The partnership between educators and social workers is essential in ensuring that learners are well groomed and empowered with the core life skills such as self-knowledge, communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, anger, stress and conflict management skills, as they are human beings who are affected by their immediate environment as well as their past and present experiences and also by their future aspirations (Burke and Clapp 1997:560; Kasiram 1994:365 and 371-372; Williams and Ellison 1996:147; and Franklin and Warren, 1999:397).

5.4.2.4 Parental Involvement

Both social workers and life skills educators can utilise the involvement of parents in imparting cultural sensitive, preventative programmes to learners. As such parents could be useful in transmitting indigenous knowledge through storytelling and being part of the life skills education programme development team. Storytelling has a long and rich tradition and history amongst indigenous people. From generation to generation, indigenous people have used storytelling to pass down cultural values, customs, practices that enhance relationships, and offered guidance in correcting deviant behaviour (Waller in Saleebey 2006: 54).

Storytelling by parents could help life skills education programmes to be contextualised to real-life situations that confront learners. The fundamental aim of life skills education programmes is to assist learners to make informed, responsible choices and decisions and to maximise their happiness and fulfilment in life. Traditionally, storytelling takes place in the evening when members of African families gather to socialize. The art of storytelling lies in the storyteller's ability to scream, laugh, shout, rasp, whisper, and imitate ... the way an animal, devil, witch, or ghost might talk, and the storyteller may repeat phrases again and again to remind the listeners of where the story is and where it is going (Abrahams, 1985: xvii) and encourage the audience to participate.

Although the actual setting of these stories is known to their audiences, storytellers often change stories by adding details that reflect the idiosyncrasies of someone in the community which gives the tales immediate relevance and pragmatic meaning. Through story telling people are able to assess the comprehensive, normative, and empowering nature of indigenous African morals (Leslie, 1998). Listening to the voices of indigenous people themselves explaining their experiences and life stories (Marais and Marais, 2007:812) is one way to contribute to creating a healthy young population and greatly assist in indigenising life skills education.

Van Soest (1994:19), King (1994:22) and Freeman (1994:71) assert that the learning process begins with awareness and understanding of one's cultural background and its meaning and significance in interaction with others as it enhances the positive self-concept. Self-awareness is one of the core skills in life skills education. Awareness of one's cultural self is an important part of the process and state of self–knowledge. A conscious awareness, understanding, acceptance and internalisation of one's culture, history and ethos are essential for effective, positive and life-enhancing thoughts and behaviours.

Christmon (1994:40) contends that coping efforts take place within a context of personal and situational resources and constraints. The availability and utilisation of indigenous knowledge through life skills education could enable a person to manage life stressors. Life skills education buffers individuals from negative effects of strenuous conditions and it contributes to the positive well-being of an individual. It is therefore essential that all learners must be nurtured and trained in a way that will facilitate their constructive development, so that each learner may become an asset to his community. Furthermore, whilst social workers are striving to indigenise life skills education, attention should be paid to effective parenting as experience has shown that adequate parenting and sound nurturing of children is sometimes taken for granted by some parents and education system. This results in cultural deprivation leading learners to experience health

and social problems. It is common that parents shun their responsibilities and think that it is the duty of educators to train learners in life skills education which will help them to live harmoniously with other people in the society and to know the difference between socially accepted and unacceptable behaviour. It is therefore strongly indicated that for the process of indigenising life skills education to be successful, involvement of parents is of utmost importance.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter looked at the view of social work in indigenising life skills education. A brief contextual background of the learners' problem and overview of school social work was provided as well as functions and roles of a school social worker. Further discussion on how a school social worker could play a role in indigenising life skills education was presented. The next chapter focuses on empirical investigation of study. In respect of research methodology, research designs, population, sampling methods, methods of data collection and analysis as well as ethical considerations are presented.

CHAPTER 6

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

6.1 Introduction

Padgett (1998: 4–9); Reissman (1994: 113) and Sherman and Reid (1994: 2) argue that historically the focus of social work research has been and more recently connected to an emphasis on the processual, qualitative understanding of an individual's problems and crises within a social context. Within social work there has always been a desire to capture lived experiences from the standpoint of people who live and experience those conditions and honour people's cultural and ethnic diversities (Padgett, 1998: 8; Reamer, 1998: 7 and 9).

Researchers in South Africa have a specific ethical responsibility to carry out relevant and effective research. In South Africa there is a demand for educational redress and a need for an education system that is indigenised as well as efficient and effective, whilst also being responsive to the country's socio-economic needs. When dealing with the majority of the South African population, one cannot apply a western model of service provision. Hugo (1998:8) clearly states that the western model has an inherent feature that makes it alien to Africa: it is disorder oriented. It has been acknowledged that no profession can continue to exist as is and maintain the status quo if the needs of the communities that it serves are ever changing and dynamic. This calls for research in all disciplines and social work profession is included. There is a growing awareness that differences across and within cultural-linguistic groups need to be recognised and researched to provide new pathways in service delivery. Research has to be relevant to the needs of the South African

population resulting in service delivery becoming more appropriate and relevant to the changing needs of the social, health and education sectors in particular. In support of the above statement, Hugo (1998:8) asserts that:

> *"research must be seen as the cornerstone upon which the Africanisation of education can be developed."*

The purpose of the present chapter is to describe the research methodology required to answer the research questions presented in chapter 1. Research methodology covers research design, population and sampling, data collection and analysis and finally ethical considerations.

6.2 Research Methodology

Research Methodology devoid of any direction and guideline from theory is bound to be fruitless, in the same way, theory without links to empirical data is likely to be barren (Jason, Keys, Suarez-Balcazar, Taylor, Davis, Durlak, and Isenberg, 2004:20). Research methodology is the operational framework, which guided and directed the research project with regard to how the study was conducted. Research methodology stipulates how the researcher possibly may go about practically studying whatever he believes can be known (Terre Blanche and Durrheim in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006:6). Research methodology includes the research design, methods of data collection and data analysis.

6.2.1 Research Design

Basavanthappa (1998:92); Parahoo (1997:42); Fouche and De Vos (2003:137); Mouton (2001:55); Huysamen (1993:10); and Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:63) state that research design is a blueprint, plan, structure and a strategy of

investigating and answering the research questions and it describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analysed. A research design is the visualisation of the data and the problems associated with the appropriateness and employability of those data in the entire research project. It deals with the type of study undertaken in order to provide acceptable answers to the research problem and/or questions (Leedy, 1997:93 and Mouton, 2003:49). In this study, the researcher employed the explorative-qualitative design, which facilitated observation and studying of subjects, providing them with information and learning from them about their needs and problems.

Rubin and Babbie (2001:123); Fouché in De Vos (2003:109) and Ferreira (2004:21) assert that an explorative study aims at exploring a relatively unknown terrain and examining new interests and wants to develop methods to be used during implementation of the findings. In support of this Durrheim in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006: 44) states that exploratory research design makes preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research. It is an open, flexible and inductive approach to research as it enables the researcher to look for new insights into the phenomenon. In this study, exploratory research design enabled the researcher to explore the appropriateness and relevance of indigenous knowledge systems in relation to life skills education in rural areas.

Since the study was exploratory, qualitative research method was used. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to use tools that can explore issues in detail and allow for inductive methods in exploring and discovering new grounds on indigenising life skills education. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:8) state that the qualitative research design emphasizes processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity and frequency. According to Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:274), there are two main principles in qualitative research which are: understanding-in-context and self-as-an-instrument.

Understanding-in-context refers to meanings of human creations, words, actions and experiences that can only be ascertained in relation to the contexts in which they occur – both personal and societal contexts. In support of this, Denzin (2002:29) state that the critical qualitative social work researcher is not an objective, politically neutral observer who stands outside and above the study processes and the complex of cultural values, traditions, customs and practices. Rather, he states that the social work researcher is historically and locally situated within the very processes being studied. A gendered, historical self is brought to and influences the research process. This self, as a set of changing identities, has its own history with the situated practices that define and shape the internalisation and manifestation of cultural values, traditions, customs and practices. Therefore, in indigenising life skills education with special reference to Vatsonga speaking people, the researcher has to understand the participants from their 'native' point of view as he is one of them. For the researcher to indigenise life skills education, meanings to the life skills education have to be contextually and inherently grounded to Vatsonga speaking people of Malamulele. However, with regard to self-as-an-instrument, the researcher is the primary instrument for both collecting and analysing the data. Based on that, the researcher was able to master the following skills which enabled him carry out his research study and these were listening, observing, probing and interpreting.

The research design entailed procedures that alluded to the population to be studied, sampling methods, data collection as well as methods of data analysis and interpretation.

6.2.2 Population

Anastas and MacDonald (1994:263) and Zikmund (1994:444) describe the concept population as used in research, to refer to any complete group of entities that share some common set of characteristics and to which the results of the study may be generalised. Wilson and Hutchinson (1996:240) describe

population as the total possible membership of the group to be studied. In this study, four types of populations were used. These entailed the following:

- Grade 10 learners from the historically disadvantaged high schools in Malamulele Central Circuit of Thulamela Local Municipality of Vhembe District Municipality – Limpopo Province. The rationale being that the grade 10 learners have been involved in life orientation as a subject from grade 4. The learners comprised both males and females.
- Life orientation educators from the chosen historically disadvantaged high schools in Malamulele Central Circuit of Thulamela Local Municipality of Vhembe District Municipality – Limpopo Province.
- Parents who are members of the school governing body from each selected historically disadvantaged high school in Malamulele Central Circuit.
- Social workers employed by the Department of Health and Social Development in Malamulele Service Point Offices in Thulamela Local Municipality.

As the populations comprised large numbers of people, the researcher selected a sample from which to administer the research instrument.

6.2.3 Sampling

According to Durrheim in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:49), sampling is the selection of research participants from an entire population, and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and/or social processes to observe. In support of that, a sample refers to a group of units selected from a larger population in some way so as to ensure that it is representative of the characteristics being investigated (Black, 1998:43 and Strydom and Venter in De Vos, 2003:199). Wilson and Hutchinson (1996:241) and Rubin and Babbie (2001:259 and 260) state that a sample refers to those

elements of a population from whom data is collected and generalizations are made.

The researcher used probability-sampling design to select a sample from each category of the population group as indicated above. Probability sampling refers to a situation wherein each person in the population has the same known probability of being selected. Each person in the population will have an equal and independent chance of being selected in the sample (Strydom and Venter in De Vos, 2003: 197 and Durrheim and Painter in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006:134). The sample was heterogeneous in nature, as learners of both sexes irrespective of age were included. The same applied to the sample of educators, parents who are members of school governing bodies and social workers.

6.2.3.1 Selection of respondents involved

There are a total of six high schools in Malamulele Central Circuit. Out of the six high schools, 3 high schools were randomly selected. This represented 50% of the schools in the targeted area and this ensured feasibility and representativeness of the study. The three chosen schools were Mahuntsi High School, Madonsi High School and Ntsako High School. Only grade 10 learners from each of the chosen schools were involved in the study as they have been involved in life orientation subject from grade 4. The selection of learners to be involved in the study was as follows: The researcher obtained a sample frame of all grade 10 learners from each chosen school: the total number of grade 10 learners was 370. A number was allocated to each name on the sample frame and finally through the use of simple random sampling technique, 50% of the total number of learners was selected. The sample size constituted 185 learners. A sample of life orientation educators was not necessary as all life orientation educators were involved in the study. They were all six (6) in number. This constituted 100% of the population. In selecting parents, focus was on those

parents that were members of the school governing bodies. All parents who were members of the school governing bodies were included in the study. The total number was 21. There are only 5 social workers serving Malamulele area and all of them were involved in the study.

6.2.3.2 SAMPLE SIZE

Table 4

	Mahuntsu High School	Madonsi High School	Ntsako High School	Total
Learners in grade 1(	Total number of Grade 10 = 110	Total number of Grade 10 = 140	Total number of Grade 10 = 120	Total number of Grade 10 = 370
	50% of the total Number = 55	50% of the total Number = 70	50% of the total Number = 60	50% of the total Number = 185
Life Orientation Educators in each school	2	2	2	6
Members of School Governing Body in each school	7	7	7	21
All social workers serving Malamulele area				5
			Total	217
Focus group discussions with learners	5 focus groups consisting of 11 members	7 focus groups Consisting of 10 members	6 focus groups consisting of 10 members	18 focus groups discussions

6.2.4 Data Collection

Durrheim in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006: 51) states that data are basic material with which researchers work and come from observation which

can take the form of numbers (quantitative data) or language (qualitative data). Qualitative methods of data gathering were used to collect data for this study. The qualitative research method employs procedures, which are not strictly formalized and also adopts a philosophical mode of operation (De Vos, Schurink and Strydom in De Vos, 1998:15 and De Vos in De Vos, 2003: 363). Leedy (1997:107 and 108) identified the qualitative research methodologies as dealing with data that are principally verbal. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:8) state that the qualitative method emphasizes processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity and frequency. Grinnell (2001:111) states that qualitative data collection typically involves multiple data collection methods. To obtain qualitative data, procedures that were used entailed literature review, focus group interviews and individual interviews using interview schedule. Focus group interviews were held with learners and parents while individual interviews were held with life orientation educators and social workers. Each of the methods is discussed below:

6.2.4.1 Literature review

Literature review entailed critical selection and scrutiny of primary and secondary sources for authentic and relevant information on life skills education. According to Kaniki in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:19) and Mouton (2001:86 – 87), literature review involves the identification and analysis of information resources and/or literature related to the research study. This process includes identifying relevant sources of information, assessment of these sources and the application of subject literature in the text. It involves insight and comprehension, the ability to argue a point, synthesis, and the ability to distinguish important study materials from less important materials. It requires the researcher's ability to, amongst others; correctly apply subject literature in the text, with regard to logical and valid conclusions or deductions (Mark, 1996:365).

Furthermore, literature review helps to identify knowledge gaps and to develop a research problem through reading and/or examining previously published historical, theoretical and empirical resource materials. It further helps to identify a theoretical framework, issues and variables related to the research topic. It helps to identify conceptual and operational definitions and give direction to research methodology (Marshall and Rossman, 1995: 24 –28 and Kaniki in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006:19 - 22).

6.2.4.2 Interviews

Face to face interviews were held with six (6) life orientation educators and five (5) social workers. This was employed to give an opportunity not only to get to know the participants closely but also to understand their feelings and/or their experiences with regard to indigenising life skills education. Talking to people is a good and direct way of getting to know their feelings and experiences even though information gathered through interview comes "after the fact" since it relies on the interviewee's recollection of experiences. An interview creates an arena within which particular linguistic patterns (such as typical phrases, metaphors and stories) come to the fore (Kelly in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006:297, Bogdan and Biklen, 2006 and Sayer, 1992). Moreover, according to Whyte (1991), Bodgan and Taylor (1998), Maxwell (2005), and Maxwell and Miller (2008), interview provides an opportunity for gathering qualitative data in the participant's own words, or language and from the perspective of how the participants interpret their world. By investigating the participant's cultural perspectives, the researcher had an opportunity to look at things thorough the 'eye' of the participants (Mkabela, 2005:179-180). Kelly in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:297) also contend that conducting an interview is a natural way of interacting with participants than making them complete a questionnaire, do a test or perform some experimental task.

6.2.4.3 Focus group interviews

According to Kingry, Tiedje and Friedman (1990:124), a focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a liberal, non-threatening environment. Morgan (1997:6) and Kelly in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:304) describe focus groups as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. The researcher used focus group interviews for the purpose of promoting self-disclosure among participants. This enabled the researcher to know what the participants thought and felt about indigenising life skills education. Focus group discussions generated data on each group's perceptions regarding indigenous knowledge through life skills education in dealing with health and social problems. Focus groups helped to explore new topics of which little was known on indigenising life skills education. Focus group discussions were held with learners and parents. The comparisons by the participants on a particular issue, experiences and opinions are valuable source of insight into complex behaviours and motivations (Morgan, 1997:13, 15). Furthermore, Kingry, Tiedje and Freidman (1990: 1284) contend that the group provides stimulating and secure place for members to express ideas and opinions without fear of rejection and criticism. Since the group is a learning process, new constructs are being discovered and helps to unearth dynamic emotional processes which determine behaviour.

In spite of that, there are demerits with regard to focus group as a method of data collection and the researcher has taken notice of that. These include dominance of expressions, opinions and ideas of active members at the expense of other members. However, the researcher was also cognisance of too much silence during focus group discussions in fear of appearing stupid or talking too much. The researcher used ice-breaking exercises like talking about the weather. Round Robin technique was also used during the introduction to enable group

members to open up. The researcher is quite aware of sub-group formation (cliques) which might disturb the smooth running of the discussion. The researcher conducted 18 focus group discussions, thirteen (13) groups consisting of 10 learners each and five (5) groups consisting of 11 learners each. Also 3 focus group discussions interviews were conducted with parents who are members of the school governing bodies and totalled to 21.

6.2.4.4 Individual interviews (one-to-one-interviews)

Since this was an explorative qualitative study, unstructured individual interviews were used to collect data with life orientation educators and social workers. Individual interviews are sometimes referred to as one-to-one interviews. According to Greef in De Vos (2003:302), individual interviews are meant to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of a particular subject. Individual interviews involve some planning, such as making up an interview guide (interview schedule) covering a list of topics or specific questions that the researcher wants to explore with participants (Roper and Shapira, 2000:22).

The researcher recognised some merits and demerits of this data collection method. With regard to the merits of this method according to Morse (1991:189), Collins (1998:3, 5) and Greef in De Vos (2003:298), unstructured one-to-one interview:

- Is referred to as 'conversation with a purpose' and elicit information in order to understand participants' point of view

- Is carried out without utilising any of the researcher's prior information, experience or opinions.

- Enables understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they attach to those experiences

- Is focused, discursive and explorative

- Develops into a social interaction in which meaning is negotiated between the researcher and the participants.

According to Greef in De Vos (2003:305), Collins (1998:12), and Field and Morse (1994:66), the demerits on unstructured one-to-one interview which the researcher took cognisance of are that:

- Participants may be unwilling to share information.

- Responses from participant may be misconstrued and sometimes untruthful.

- It is demanding in achieving and maintaining balance between flexibility and consistency in data collection as one is likely to jump to another issue unaware.

- Due to too much flexibility and inconsistency, there is a danger of obtaining great amount of irrelevant information.

6.2.4.5 Use of interview schedule

Greeff in De Vos (2003:302) defines interview schedule as a questionnaire written to guide interviews. Holstein and Gubrium (1995:76) state that interview schedule provides the researcher with a set of pre-determined questions that will be used to engage the participants during the interview. In this research, an unstructured interview schedule was used for data collection with focus groups

and individual interviews. According to Notter and Hott (1994:104), an interview schedule is similar to the questionnaire in that each interview follows a set pattern of questioning, with a wording and sequencing of questions being the same for all respondents. The questions for the interview should be as carefully planned and organised and as accurately worded as the items in the questionnaire. An interview schedule includes a series of questions with probes designed to obtain additional, clarifying information (Leedy 1997:199), Greeff in De Vos (2003:302) and Rubin and Babbie (2001:210). An interview schedule contained open-ended questions which were posed to the respondents.

It is absolutely impossible to discuss data collection methods without mentioning reliability and validity of the data collection instruments.

- Reliability and validity

Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique applied repeatedly to the same object yields the same result each time. Reliability suggests that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomena (Delport in De Vos 2003:168 and Durrheim and Painter, 2006:152). Researchers have developed several techniques for cross checking reliability. An informal method of establishing reliability is to question respondents about issues that are relevant to them and be clear in what is asked. In addition, to enhance the reliability of a measurement instrument it should be administered in a consistent fashion, that is, there should be standardisation in the use of the instrument from one situation to the next (Durrheim and Painter, 2006:153). For the purposes of this study, the researcher conducted a pilot study.

Validity is a term describing a measure that accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure (Durrheim and Painter, 2006:147). Validity takes different forms, each of which is important in different situations. They include face, content, criterion and construct validity. For the purposes of this study content and construct validity were important. Content validity refers to the degree to which a measure covers the range of meaning included within a concept, that is, the extent to which an instrument is a representative sample of the content area (domain) being measured (Royse, 2004:129 and Durrheim and Painter, 2006:149). Concerning content validity an extensive literature review of the area under investigation was conducted. This ensured that the content covered by the interview schedule for both focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews was relevant to the topic under discussion. Construct validity is the extent to which an instrument measures a characteristic that cannot be directly observed but, must instead be inferred from patterns in people's behaviour (Royse, 2004:130). For the present study, the researcher made an inference regarding indigenising life skills education.

To check the reliability and validity of measuring instruments, a preliminary study was conducted with few learners, parents, life orientation educators and social workers.

6.2.5 Pilot study

For the purpose of this study a pilot study was conducted to ascertain the reliability and validity of the interview schedule with the following objectives:

- To develop the data collection instrument that is relevant to achieving the set objectives;

- To determine the reliability and validity for the study;

- To adopt changes if any to the interview schedule (Neutens and Rubinson, 1997:108); and

- To determine the suitability of the interview schedule compiled for the study and to consider further developments to the interview schedule by determining the content validity, that is, how accurately the instrument measures the study underway (Leedy, 1997: 33).

6.2.6 Data Analysis

After data collection has been completed, it was necessary to quantify and interpret the qualitative data collected. It was important to organise the raw data and present them in a fashion that would provide answers to the research questions and/or objectives. Data analysis entails categorising, ordering, manipulating and summarizing the data and explaining them in a meaningful manner. Grinnell (2001:113) asserts that the data should be presented, analysed, interpreted in such a way that true expressions of research participants are revealed and explained according to their beliefs and experiences. In support of that Sarantakos (2000:210) and De Vos (2003:339) contend that data presentation, analysis and interpretation is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. This involves data reduction, presentation and interpretation. Description of procedures for data presentation, analysis and interpretation is referred to as the data analysis spiral. The researcher moves in analytical circles rather than using a fixed linear approach. The researcher circles around; moves upward and downward according to the following steps:

- Collecting and recording data;

- Managing data;
- Reading and memoing;
- Describing, classifying and interpreting; and
- Representing and visualising.

The basis of qualitative data analysis is transcripts, tapes, notes and memory (Greef in De Vos (2003:318). Qualitative data analysis must be systematic, sequential, verifiable and continuous. Words and quotes and context in which they were said, frequency of comments on a particular issue as well as their extent and specificity influence data analysis. Quotations were used in the data analysis as they are easy to read and they verify the point in the text (Morgan and Krueger 1998:3 -17, 31 and Krueger and Casey, 2000:128, 130) and Greef in De Vos (2003:357). Since qualitative data is very rich as opposed to quantitative data which is in numbers, it was more difficult for the researcher to condense the data and ultimately he integrated the voices of participants in the analysis. Qualitative data analysis is often longer and more descriptive and as a result qualitative researchers use varied literary writing styles which are personal, familiar and friendly and in actual fact increase length of the report (Neuman 2000:473). The researcher's own perspectives as they shaped interpretation of events could not be excluded. This is due to the fact that the researcher was a 'research instrument' due to his involvement as he personally conducted interviews with individuals and focus groups.

6.3 Ethical Considerations

According to Strydom in De Vos (2003: 63), ethics is a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, are subsequently widely accepted and offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards research subjects, other researchers and research assistants. Ethics imply preferences that influence behaviour in human relations. The researcher as the Professional Social Worker took into consideration the rights of the respondents as he was guided by the values and principles of the social work profession. When conducting research study the researcher have a moral and professional obligation to be ethical. Ethical issues are the concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way of conducting research. Many ethical issues involve a balance between two values, which are the pursuit of scientific knowledge, and the rights of those being studied. Permission to conduct research was obtained from chosen schools, parents, and social workers. The ethical issues pertaining to this study were:

6.3.1 The right to privacy

Social science researchers have to be extremely vigilant in respecting subjects' right to privacy and right to self-determination. According to Strydom in De Vos (2003:67), privacy means, "that which normally is not intended for others to observe and analyse". The right to privacy is the individual's right to decide when, where, to whom, and to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs and behaviour will be revealed. To maintain and preserve privacy, the researcher ensured that the respect, dignity and worth of participants are observed during individual and focus group interviews and brainstorming sessions. The right to privacy is expressed more concretely through the following; allowing the respondents:

- The right to refuse to be interviewed;
- The right to refuse to answer any question;
- Not be interviewed during mealtimes; and
- Not be interviewed for long periods.

6.3.2 The right to confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher kept confidential information shared with research subjects. The researcher ensured that confidential information provided by the research respondents was not divulged or made available to other persons other than the supervisor of the researcher. The researcher ensured that confidential information provided by research participants was treated as such even when such information enjoys no legal protection or privilege, and no legal force is applied. Research subjects had a right to remain anonymous. Anonymity means that no one, including the researcher, should be able to identify any subjects afterwards. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that identifying particulars of respondents like names, surnames and identity documents were not used and/or recorded in notes and electronic devices to preserve their anonymity (Babbie, 1990:342 and Mouton, 2001:244).

6.3.3 The right to full disclosure about the research and the right to participate in research (informed consent)

All research participants were not coerced to participate in the study, rather voluntary participation was encouraged with informed consent. The aim of the research was communicated to the participants vividly inclusive of possible

advantages and disadvantages. The researcher ensured that informed consent was obtained by requesting the participants to sign a consent form and return it to the researcher. In the form, the researcher indicated the institution he was coming from; explained the benefit of the research and who will benefit. The research subjects were informed of their right to withdraw and terminate participation from the research study if need be.

6.3.4 The right not to be harmed in any manner (physical, psychological and emotional)

In the form which research participants were to consent to, the researcher reassured the participants that they will be protected from any kind of harm, be it physical, psychological and emotional. The researcher ensured that recording which included personal, physiological data with the participant's identity documents which would embarrass and harm the participants psychologically and emotionally were avoided (Babbie, 2001:471 and Mouton, 2001:244).

6.3.5 The right not to be deceived

The researcher did not deceive the subjects by informing them that the research study was not for him and for career development. A common complaint was that researchers exploit people so that they can obtain the data they need for their own intellectual interests and then give nothing back to the people who provided information both in terms of financial assistance and findings (Bailey, 1994:463). The researcher did not intentionally deceive participants by lying about research purpose. The researcher ensured that information required by participants would be provided and that a promise in writing was made that they would be provided with the research findings to enhance the cooperation.

6.4 Conclusion

Research contributes to the transformation process and in particular relevant research is imperative in order to account for the needs of the country and the stakeholders in particular. It is therefore intended that the information to be derived from this research will contribute to the field of life skills education specifically and social work in general and ultimately impact on service delivery. This chapter described the methodology that was utilised in investigating the indigenising life skills education within the South African context. The sub aims of the study were specified. Detailed descriptions of the research design, subject selection and materials and instruments were provided. The research procedure explained how the data was collected and analysed and subsequently followed by ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 7

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from learners, life orientation educators, parents and social workers. The focus of the study endeavoured to respond to research questions generated which were:

- What is indigenised life skills education?
- Can provision of indigenous life skills programmes play a role in changing the attitudes and perceptions of learners towards health and social pathologies?
- What renders available life skills programmes effective or ineffective in rural areas?
- What is the impact of Eurocentric life skills education in rural areas?
- What is the role of social workers in indigenising life skills education?
- What is the role of educators in indigenising life skills education?
- What role could parents play in the development and implementation of indigenised life skills education programmes for the youth?

The objective of this chapter is not simply to collect and collate information, but also to analyse and interpret information in order to answer research questions and achieve the stated research objectives. The objectives of the study were:

- To explore the learners, life orientation educators, parents and social workers view's about indigenising life skills education to address social and health pathologies.

- To assess the impact of Eurocentric life skills education on rural learners.

- To investigate the role of parents, social workers and life skills educators in indigenising life skills education.

The findings of the study are compared to the theory and research findings of other researchers and authors where applicable. Data from four population groups was compared for any significant correlations.

7.2 Response Rate

A representative sample was chosen from the following populations:

- Learners: 185 learners were targeted and all participated.
- Life Skills Educators: 6 Life skills educators (2 per each school) were targeted and all participated.
- Parents: 21 parents who are members of the school governing bodies (7 per each school) were targeted and all participated.
- Social workers: 5 social workers servicing the Malamulele area were targeted and all participated.

Data was collected through the use of individual interviews (One-to-one Interviews) and focus group discussions. Unstructured individual interviews were used to collect data from life orientation educators and social workers. The researcher managed to interview all Life Skills Educators and Social Workers as preliminary arrangements were made and approval was obtained from authority figures. Furthermore, the researcher conducted 18 focus group discussions, thirteen (13) groups consisting of 10 learners each and five (5) groups consisting of 11 learners each. Furthermore, 3 focus group discussions were held with parents from each selected school and that totalled to 21 focus group discussion sessions.

Each data collection tool as per population group was analysed and interpreted separately. Analysis and interpretation of findings is divided into four sections as per population groups:

- Section A: Empirical responses from learners.
- Section B: Empirical responses from life orientation educators.
- Section C: Empirical responses from parents.
- Section D: Empirical responses from social workers.

7.3 Section A: Empirical responses from learners

The data below was collected from focus group discussion sessions held with learners from three rural schools which are: Madonsi High School, Ntsako High School and Mahuntsi High School.

7.3.1 Learners' understanding of life skills education

Learners indicated that life skills education teaches them about life in general. Learners referred to life skills education in Xitsonga as

> *'Ntivo vutomi - yi nga dyondzo leyi dyondzisaka munhu mahanyelo ku suka ekaya, eka vanghana na le ka vanhu hinkwavo, yi dyondzisa xichavo, ku tihlayisa na rihanyu lerinene, ku amukela na ku hlonipha vanhu vanwana, vutihlamuleri na ku twisisa vutomi hi ku angarhela'* which means education for life. It focuses on human development, interpersonal relations, respect, individual protection and physical health. They said they are taught how to accept and respect themselves and other people. They are taught to take responsibility in whatever they do in life.

This was also echoed by life skills educators and social workers and is confirmed by Pretorius (1999: xi) who states that learning should place more emphasis on skills needed in everyday living and requirements of the world of work, but not on memorisation of learning material. For education to be effective as a developmental instrument, learning must holistically develop people, build the community and contribute to their general well being and relationships (Schenck and Louw 1995:8). An observation by the researcher on this aspect was that learners defined life skills education as a learning area that provides a comprehensive wide range of proficiencies, practical training and guidance to help them correct deficits and improve their well-being in their life and environment.

7.3.2 Presentation of life skills education

Learners advanced different views on the presentation of life skills education. Almost 50% of the learners indicated that they are happy with the way life skills

education is presented as it touches on pertinent issues in their lives like love affairs, alcohol and drug abuse, violence, sexual abuse and teenage pregnancy. To support the learners' statement, a point was made by life skills educators during sessions with them that they correlate life skills to real life issues affecting the lives of learners such as sexuality, peer pressure and career choice.

The other half indicated that they are not happy about the way life skills education is presented because they are taught in English and some of the words are not explicitly said. An example given in this issue was that some words and/or concepts in Xitsonga do not translate well into English words and/or concepts such as sexually transmitted infections (STI's) including HIV/AIDS and sexual harassment. It was mentioned that, it is quite difficult to understand and translate to English the disease like *'makhuma'* which rural people correlate with STI's and some with a situation wherein a man has slept with a woman who has recently experienced abortion, miscarriage or widowed. As a result, presentation of life skills education in English becomes difficult for them to comprehend the subject as if there are English diseases and Xitsonga diseases.

Learners who said they were not happy with the way life skills education is presented also indicated that since they have to write examination in life skills education, there is little interaction between them and the educators and they are not allowed to come up with topical issues for discussions as they are expected to follow the syllabus. Life skills educators also echoed a similar viewpoint in indicating that the teaching of life skills education is edu-centric, meaning that more emphasis is placed on the comprehension of the curriculum (cognitive and/or mental aspect of the learners) and takes learners away from understanding, correlating and manifesting the cultural values and norms learnt in their classrooms (social-cultural aspects). In support of the fact that learning must be inclusive and focus on knowledge, skills and values, Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:13) advance the fact that learning outcomes must be future-

oriented, learner-centred, focused on knowledge, skills and values and characterised by high expectations for all learners.

A deduction made by the researcher was that the Department of Education's standards to maintain quality in school create difficult situations for life skills educators as they do not always address some of the special issues that are of critical importance to learners in rural areas, particularly those serving African indigenous rural communities and learners. An emphasis should be placed on fostering a strong relationship between what learners get at school and their lives out of school by ensuring that opportunities are provided for learners to engage in in-depth experiential learning in real-world realms.

7.3.3 The use of mother tongue in teaching of life skills education

There were different views in terms of the use of mother tongue, specifically in the teaching of life skills education. Those who argued that life skills education should be taught in mother tongue which is Xitsonga indicated that since life skills education discusses issues in life which affect them in their realm, mother tongue is important as that will make the subject comprehensible. They stated that:

> *'N'wana u dyondza kahle no twisisa timhaka loko a dyondzisiwa hi rirmi ra manana hikuva hi rona a nga ri mama'* which means a child learns and comprehend easily through mother tongue because it is a language the child learnt from home.

They further indicated that information, which would enable them to live fruitful lives, should be conveyed to them in Xitsonga in precise and concise terms. They said it would not make any difference teaching them something which they cannot make reference to in real life. An effort should be made to ensure that

English words and/or concepts be translated into Xitsonga in order to make the learning area comprehensible. It was the learners' view that since life skills education is a practical learning area, it does not need one to learn practical things in foreign language as that will distort the meaning. They supported their viewpoints by stating that some Xitsonga words lose the real meaning when translated into English such as *'ku hunguka' in* Xitsonga which in English there is no exact word to explain it except that it is correlated to words like adultery and teenage pregnancy. In support of that, Kathard (1999) states that more than 80% of the population of South Africa are indigenous Black, African first language speakers. Due to that, teaching and learning should consider the use of African first languages to facilitate effective learning. Parents also supported the use of local language in teaching and learning.

Notwithstanding the views of the overwhelming majority, few learners emphasised that life skills education should not be offered in mother tongue which is Xitsonga. Their view was that there are no words in Xitsonga for instance, to describe concepts such as HIV and AIDS and some names of drugs like mandrax, cocaine and heroine are not accounted for in Xitsonga. They further indicated that Xitsonga concepts are not easily used in issues of sex and sexuality as that is regarded as taboo and as a result the use of such words is equated with lack of respect and as such use of English words would come in handy.

Basically, the researcher felt that English terms, concepts and words should be interpreted to fit local customs, traditions, conventions, practices and values, especially with reference to meanings associated with the definition of such concepts, terms and words to the use of the local mother tongue. The use of mother tongue is envisaged to improve the learning and comprehension of the life skills education. The use of local language in terms of sex and sexuality should be used with caution as it could be seen as a sign of disrespect or conversely be used by learners to fuel their anti-social behaviour.

7.3.4 The importance of indigenising life skills education

Generally, learners were of the view that indigenising life skills education is crucial as it may help in addressing some of the health and social problems such as drug abuse, crime and HIV and AIDS. The emphasis was on young people who no longer respect cultural practices and customs, originally designed to inculcate respect, love and responsibility. The learners hoped that indigenising life skills education will rekindle a sense of self-esteem and respect for self and others. This they felt will counteract negative views about culture such as *'whoever is still conforming to their cultural practices, traditions and values is viewed as a person who is uncivilised and foolish'*. They said that *"munhu a famba na mikarhi"* - meaning that a person should move with time and developments. In support of that, during the Indigenous Life Skills and Moral Regeneration amongst the Youth Conference held at North West University – Mafikeng Campus, an Assistant Director for Moral Regeneration in the National Department of Social Development - Deliwe Minyuko (2008) in her presentation asserted that:

> *'It is regrettably noted that as we become more interested in traditional belief systems, the youngsters of many indigenous groups are becoming disinterested in their native culture. Outside influence provides them with a negative view of their culture and they believe it is a waste of time to learn about traditional practices'.*

She further indicated that the youth can benefit from learning and incorporating indigenous knowledge in terms of learning useful skills that were successfully utilised by their grandparents. She gave an example of the selection of a marriage partner where the extended family was fully involved and certain cultural processes were compulsory to be followed. This process increased the secrecy of marriage and as a result people who practiced that cultural value were not amenable to divorce compared to the current situation.

Health and social pathologies affect everyone irrespective of their status in society and learners are the most affected population group. Learners stated that if life skills education can be indigenised, they would learn from older people how they lived and performed certain cultural practices and customs that prevented the spread of health and social pathologies. They advanced the reason that if life skills education can be indigenised, it would enable learners to expand their cultural knowledge and instil and strengthen their cultural identity. The view of the researcher is that indigenous knowledge sustains life in various communities and has a significant bearing on sustainable development. If indigenous knowledge could be integrated into the school curriculum, specifically in life skills education, most of the health and social pathologies assailing the learners could be addressed. Indigenous knowledge could assist to develop sensitive and caring communal values and attitudes, which have been eroded by the colonialists and western methods of learning.

7.3.5 Methods to be used in indigenising life skills education

Unanimously learners indicated that the elderly people who are parents and grandparents are regarded as *'Tiphuphu ta mindyangu va nga vahlayisi na vasirheleri va ndzhavuko'* meaning custodians and vessels of cultural practices, values, beliefs and customs and should in partnership with life skills educators, present life skills education. Topical issues such as sex and sexuality, gender mainstreaming issues, alcohol and drug abuse, violence and teenage pregnancy currently affecting the lives of youth, should be handled. Learners proposed that at least once a month an elderly person who is well conversant with cultural practices, values, customs and practices should visit learners per class and engage them in topics which are pertinent in their lives to give advice and ways of solving such challenges. The method of presentation of life skills education should provide dialogues in an open manner, free of intimidation. The researcher is of the view that bringing parents and grandparents to offer indigenous

knowledge to learners during life skills education lessons, would encourage learners to learn from their parents, grandparents and significant others in their communities. It would also help learners to respect and appreciate the knowledge possessed by their elders. Such relationship and engagements (between parents and learners) could help mitigate the generation gap and help to develop intergenerational harmony between the *'new and the old'* which seems to be widening in a faster pace. To support the above statement, there is a need to move away from western methods which compromise African methods of learning and teaching. Rodwell (1998:45) contends that there is evidence of concern about the over-dependency on Western training methods and materials, the use of strategies, which are incongruent with indigenous values, norms and expectations and the need for the adaptation of models and materials to local conditions. The localization of the life skills education curriculum is a pivotal process in providing greater flexibility to allow learning to become more meaningful and relevant.

7.3.6 Learners' views about the role of parents, social workers and life skills educators in indigenising life skills education

Learners apportioned the blame to parents for sometimes being *'too Western'*, as they believe that being fluent in English is highly significant and fashionable. They further asserted that though parents are viewed as custodians and vessels of the cultural practices, values, beliefs and traditions; they sometimes seem to support and encourage learners to behave like white people, hence labelled *'too Western'*. A practical example is where parents at home will force their children to speak in English instead of their mother tongue. As people who know the cultural practices, values and traditions, it is a concern that they do not encourage their children to use their languages and also do not teach their children those cultural values and norms which simultaneously would instil indigenous knowledge to their children. Due to that, parents are viewed as taking

a back seats, being irresponsible and showing no concern about the value of their language, cultural practices, norms and values. Learners strongly felt that parents should not distance themselves in the education of their children as is currently the case and should not forget that *'n'wana i ndyelo wa hlengeriwa'* meaning everyone is responsible for the total up-brining of the child. They said that some parents could hardly check what their children have learnt at school. There was a general consensus that since parents continue to complain about learners' misbehaviour, lack of respect for elderly people, their role in indigenising life skills education will give them the opportunity to contribute towards changing young peoples' perception towards life.

The researcher is of the opinion that parents could assist in revitalising some cultural practices, values and beliefs and further show learners the collections of artefacts and explain their significance. Life skills educators together with social workers could bring their intellectual knowledge which when infused with western knowledge could be of help to learners. It is further the opinion of the researcher that indigenous knowledge be integrated into school curriculum to enable schools to act as agencies for transferring and transmitting cultural values, practices, traditions and customs from one generation to the next.

Learners' views with regard to social workers' role in indigenising life skills education was that social workers have a capacity to assist though they view them as people who disorganise families instead of organising them. This they attributed to unnecessary protection of children and women disregarding whether they are wrong or right. An example given in this regard was that husbands have the responsibility to discipline their wives and children and social workers have the tendency to interfere as they claim it is their role to protect women and children. This makes social workers to be viewed as taking sides and as a result of this friction, disorganisation develops in the family. An emphasis was made on this issue as one participant stated that:

'Va-Social worker va dlaya no hahlula mindyangu ya vanhu. Loko wanuna a ringeta ku tshinya nsati kumbe n'wana wa yena, vona va nghenelela laha eku heteleleni wanuna a pfaleriwaka ekhotsweni. Swinga kotekisa ku yini ku ri va tlhela va kuma ndzhuti na xichavo lexiyani leswaku va ta kota ku pfuna ku aka na ku pfuxeta hi vutivi bya ndzhavuko eka dyondzo leyi ya Ntivo Vutomi. This means that social workers destroy families. When a man disciplines his wife and/or child, they interfere and ultimately a man is incarcerated. How possible could social workers re-claim and earn respect from the society so that they could assist in indigenising life skills education'

It is apparent that young people in Malamulele have misconceptions about the role of social workers. This could be attributed to lack of knowledge regarding the functions and responsibilities of social workers coupled with lack of knowledge on basic human rights. Another possible reason could be the way young people are socialised in terms of their cultural values, norms and practices which abhor any person outside the family, clan or neighbourhood to offer help as it is believed and has been the practice that problems have to be resolved within family structures. In spite of the negative remarks towards social workers, learners stated that parents, social workers and life skills educators jointly could frequently visit the schools, have time for children and be involved and participate in designing the indigenous life skills education curriculum. Blom (2004:51) supports the above by indicating that social workers and related professionals should work together towards alleviating the problems that hinder learners from achieving maximally. These professionals should be more involved in planning and presenting programmes which guide and train learners on indigenised life skills education.

Furthermore, with regard to life skills educators, learners cautioned that educators have lost respect of the learners because of sexual relationships with learners. They indicated disgust and dismay at life skills educators who teach

them life skills which could relate to sex and sexuality whilst at the same time are having an affair with some of the learners. They exposed that some of the learners have children with educators. On the same length, educators having sexual relationships with learners cannot reprimand any misconduct done by learners. In this case educators are no longer assuming the roles and responsibilities of parents within the school setting. This, according to them, makes learning and teaching not to be effective.

In support of the above, parents, social workers and life skills educators echoed similar viewpoint confirmed by Pretorius (1999: xi) who states that proper and fruitful learning involves a wide range of stakeholders, like parents, educators, and business leaders in determining required outcomes as it would enable learning to address more directly community needs more directly.

7.3.7 Effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of life skills education programmes in schools and the relevance of language in indigenising life skills education.

In responding to this question, learners reiterated that parents are not actively and fully involved in the education of their children. By this they said that parents at home encourage children to speak English and if found using mother tongue, the child is regarded as *'outdated'*. Also, they indicated that the content of the curriculum and the teaching of life skills education is *'too much American'* and the language used is English. This to them renders life skills education ineffective

The thorny issue of educators' sexual involvement with learners was echoed once again as contributing to the ineffectiveness of life skills education. If life skills education is about values, respect and responsibility, it therefore means that educators who have affairs with learners are the wrong people to teach life skills education. The question was how possible could it be for a person without

values and responsibilities to teach the subject that emphasises values and responsibilities. As a result, learners expressed lack of respect for such educators. To confirm the issue of lack of respect by learners for educators who are involved in sexual relationships with learners, the researcher noted a statement made by learners that *'they are educators at school and not after school'*. It was not surprising when one female learner called one of the educators by his first name, which under normal circumstances is a sign of disrespect. Thus, according to learners such behaviour and conduct by life skills educators renders life skills education ineffective. The researcher observed that learners do not view life skills educators as people in *'authority and with authority'*. Their conduct confirmed that some learners enter into sexual relationships with educators and this could greatly affect the effectiveness of life skills education.

Regarding the effectiveness of life skills education, learners mentioned that it is through life skills education that sex and sexuality can be discussed in class between life skills educators and learners. Consequently, information and new knowledge can be acquired to create awareness of self and others and to resist sexual abuse by indiscriminate educators.

The researcher realised that learners were free to talk about sex and sexuality and that could be attributed to the effectiveness of life skills education.

Pertaining to language, learners indicated that language is very relevant and important in indigenising life skills education and that if the correct Xitsonga language is not used, it renders life skills ineffective. They advanced reasons that learners are taught life skills education in English on topical issues like sex and sexuality, which they need to put into context. The most relevant reason stated was that the teaching of life skills education in English posed some challenges because some words in English do not carry exactly the same meaning in Xitsonga as Xitsonga language has its own words which have different meanings

or do not exist in English like *'makhuma'* and *'ku wela'*. Stroud (2002) supports this by saying *"language is perhaps the single most important factor in educational efficiency"* and underlined the long term consequences for academic achievement when one learns to read and write in a language he/she does not speak well.

Furthermore, with regard to language, learners mentioned that it is through language that cultural values, practices and customs are learnt and as a result if not used with the correct audience, language would render life skills effective or ineffective depending on the preparedness of the audience. As Xitsonga language is part of their culture, they proudly indicated that a child will learn better how to talk to parents, to other elderly people and learn appropriate greeting habits in a respectful manner through Xitsonga language. Transmission of African values like reciprocity, belongingness, shared welfare and symbiosis is through the language. It is through the language that one can make decisions, solve problems and enable family members to work together with understanding.

The researcher observed that learners were willing to learn in their mother tongues so as to avoid misinterpretation of information. This according to the researcher stands a better chance to contribute to the effectiveness of life skills education.

7.3.8 The contribution of indigenous life skills education in alleviating health and social pathologies and improving the social functioning amongst the youth

Learners stated that they believe that indigenising life skills education could assist in alleviating health and social pathologies as indigenous knowledge proved to be helpful to their parents in terms of decision making on the selection of a marriage partner and observing certain social protocols when there is

disagreement between two family members. Learners indicated that they observed how their parents utilise indigenous knowledge to cure different ailments. One participant stated that mostly when a family member is ill, traditional methods of treatment are applied and the person gets cured without western medical attention. Another comment on this issue was that cancer amongst the Vatsonga speaking people can be healed using a newly formed termite heap – *'xitshuka xa majenjhe'* in Xitsonga. Learners also observed how indigenous knowledge had been utilised to help women give birth at home without any complications. They witnessed children being born at home (and not in clinics) growing up to be healthy as children born in clinics and hospitals.

Though current life skills education addresses challenges experienced by learners, it is void of indigenous knowledge. In addressing health and social pathologies, learners indicated that indigenous life skills education could teach learners how to communicate their feelings in a respectable manner; know how and to whom to share their sorrows, needs, happiness, hopes, dreams and fears. It could also enable young people to demonstrate appreciation and affection, commitment to community and spiritual well-being, positive communication, togetherness and the ability to cope with stress and crisis. If properly utilised, indigenous life skills education could enhance a network of care and be an integral social resource in society and could contribute to individual and family satisfaction and resilience by encouraging togetherness, care, love, support, and commitment to one another which is different with learners currently, hence the proliferation of health and social pathologies.

Learners were aware of the challenges they are faced with. They confirmed that some of the challenges facing the youth are due to neglect or lack of regard of the cultural practices, values and customs. For example, the abuse of substances, taking alcohol in the presence of elders and using abusive language was a taboo in olden days. Teenage pregnancies and promiscuity were abhorred. They indicated that if they adhered to cultural practices, respect of self

and authority most of the health and social ills could have been avoided. This is based on the rationale that in the olden days respect was a virtue and this prevented young people from engaging in anti-social behaviour. They indicated that there is need to revisit how things were done in the past for current and future reference. They alluded specifically to the rejection of self-help groups called *'tsima'*. *'Tsima'* means mutual self-help groups wherein community members came together to; for example, assist in building a house for someone in the community and as such social problems like lack of housing were resolved at community level. This was based on the concept of 'ubuntu'. Other examples given were neglect and rejection of indigenous procedures used in decision making. The most touchy and thorny issue of youth intimate relationships and teenage pregnancies were some of the issues that involved decision making at a higher level. This explains why teenage pregnancy was not common in the past. Decision making in issues of alcohol consumption were mentioned. This referred to who was allowed, when and under what circumstances. This deterred young people from abusing substances and reinforced the belief that alcohol can only be consumed after certain rituals were performed. Some of the responses on the contribution of indigenous knowledge in addressing social pathologies related to dismissal and deserting of moral story telling. Some of the learners indicated that they were taught not to steal through moral story telling as it would highlight horrific results if someone was involved in stealing and that deterred them from stealing.

The researcher realised that learners possessed a wealth of knowledge which they obtained from their parents and significant others, and as a result need to be encouraged to apply indigenous knowledge in their day to day living. The researcher further assert that if indigenous knowledge could be revisited and utilised, it could be of help to address some of the health and social ills assailing the youth. In support of that, the Department of Education (1996:17) and Spady (1994:19) indicated that learning should focus on higher-level competencies such

as critical thinking and problem solving. These outcomes require integration, synthesis and functional application of content.

7.3.9 Cultural issues to be discussed or included in an indigenous life skills education programmes.

The following came up in all the focus groups discussions as issues to be included in indigenising life skills education: sharing on how respect, discipline and decision making were handled in the past. With regard to respect as a value, it was specifically stated that it should include what learners are expected to do to show that their behaviour is respectable and socially acceptable. On the issue of discipline, the discussion should include merits and demerits of discipline and corporal punishment as a form of discipline. An interesting issue raised was mate selection. Learners were very much interested in discussing how marital partners were chosen, who were involved in deciding who should marry who under what circumstances and conditions. Issues of early sexual contacts and when a teenager is expected to talk freely about sexual issues, the right time to start consuming alcohol were considered for inclusion. They stated that in the past there were diseases, which could affect a person through sexual activities such as *'makhuma'* and *'ku wela'*. They strongly felt that such information is needed to provide knowledge on how such diseases relate to HIV and AIDS.

The researcher noticed that learners are curious about knowing their cultural practices, values, traditions and customs so as to improve their social functioning and identity. The researcher believes that a solution to the current education system which negates, vilify and undermine African indigenous knowledge systems should be to revitalise and integrate African indigenous knowledge which focuses on African cultural practices, values, traditions and customs into the education system. This is supported by William Makgoba in asserting that:

> "*Education has to be contextualised and for the majority population this means the removal of the dominant and alienating Euro-centric philosophy to the humanistic Afro-centric philosophy*" (Makgoba, 1996: 178).

On the same length, Okombo calls for "moderate re-indigenisation" of what have been predominantly handed down until this day as "post- or neo-colonial educational systems" (Okombo 2000: 42).

7.3.10 The competence of life skills educators in local cultural customs, values and practices

It was strongly emphasised by all learners that most educators are not well conversant with the cultural values, customs and practices of learners as some are Northern Sothos', Vendas', Ghanaians' and Zimbabweans' who know little about the cultural practices, values and customs of the Vatsonga speaking people. According to the learners these are the educators who maintain Euro-centric education approach and tend to use examples from their own cultural background which are highly incomprehensible to them. According to learners, life skills educators from a different cultural background experience difficulties and challenges in terms of making life skills education interesting and vibrant since they are from different cultural groups and do not understand the customs, values and practices of the learners. Learners were actually advocating for life skills educators from the same cultural group as determined by geographical location.

An insignificant number of learners responded by saying that their life skills educators are from the same cultural group which is Vatsonga and have a clear understanding of cultural practices, values and customs though the challenge remains to be the medium of instruction which is in English. It was revealed during focus group discussions that learners feel good when taught by educators who understand their cultural practices, customs and values because it makes

the learning real, alive and relevant with appropriate examples given to substantiate the topic in question and within the right context. Learners indicated that they easily associate with those life skills educators and that enabled them to interact, ask questions and make comments without fear of being misinterpreted and misunderstood. Such educators make them feel *'a kaya'* meaning feeling *'at home',* comfortable and open. Mazibuko confirmed the above during the 34th International Association of Schools of Social Workers (IASSW) held in Durban from 20 to 24 July 2008 that educators and practitioners alike should understand the local cultural values, traditions, practices and customs of people they are servicing. Life skills educators equally echoed similar sentiments.

7.3.11 Stakeholders to be involved in the process of indigenising life skills education

Since life skills education is part of the curriculum, Life skills Educators need to be involved in indigenising life skills education. This is important because they are the ones to convey life skills to learners. In addition to life skills educators, parents, traditional leaders and social workers were mentioned as important in designing indigenous life skills education. More emphasis was placed (as indicated earlier) on parents who possess indigenous knowledge. A caution was put when considering parents to be involved in indigenising life skills education as learners asserted that:

> *'Vatswari va nwana i valungu na swona va tele vulungu ngopfu, timhaka ta xintu a va titivi. Loko koka ku nga xiyaxiyiwi hi vukheta le byi kulu, swilavi na swihoxo leswi kulu swi nga va kona na swona hi ndlela ya leyo ku tava ku nga ri ku pfuxeta xintu hi dyondzo leyi ya 'Ntivo Vutomi'* meaning that some parents are too western and they do not know cultural issues. If that is not taken care of, serious problems and mistakes can be committed and that would not be indigenising life skills education.

This means that care should be taken to utilise only members of the community who are well informed on cultural issues and who have the cultural interest at heart. These are normally referred to knowledge holders who understand social protocols.

Learners were of the view that social workers could be involved in the process of indigenising life skills education. This was based on the rationale that social workers deal with health and social pathologies within communities and this will encourage them to look at communities in the cultural context in the process of intervention. It was also mentioned that some social workers have already been involved in conveying life skills education programmes to learners. Besides being professional, social workers are members of the families and part of their entire society. They further stated that the role of social workers is to visit families and communities and through that interaction they tend to learn how communities live and how certain social problems are handled. Special mention was made by one learner who indicated that whilst he was running away from school, a social worker was involved to assist the family. As a result of her involvement, the family is now able to deal with a variety of problems they encountered. Kotze (1995:183) confirms this in indicating that mere provision of education is not enough to achieve specific educational objectives, hence, these should be supplemented by social support services.

It can be deduced from the above that the total up-bringing of the child does not rest solely with the biological parents, but with all people as confirmed by old Xitsonga adage that *'n'wana a hi wa u n'we'* meaning it takes the whole community to raise a child. This means that in communities; parents, traditional leaders, life skills educators and social workers should all come together to share views and experiences in the process of indigenising life skills education. This will certainly prove that indeed children culturally belong to all and not to a particular parent.

7.3.12 Learners' interest in listening to moral story telling from old people or community knowledge holders

All learners indicated that they would enjoy listening to moral story telling by the elders or community knowledge holders. They stated that this will enhance interaction and reduce the cultural gap between the old generation and the new generation. Some learners further stated that other people have deserted their grandparents and if learners are encouraged to interact with them and listen to moral story telling that could be a relief for both learners and elderly people. They stated that *'rhavi le ri tshwa ri tiya hi le ra khale'* meaning that a new branch is supported by the old one. Conversely, learners indicated that elderly people do not have time for them. The rationale given was that elderly people are afraid of their grandchildren, as there is a tendency to take advantage of their vulnerability.

The researcher observed that story telling could serve as a way of entertainment and off-loading stress, whilst on the other hand it helps young people learn values, norms and traditional way of living. In support of the above, parents echoed similar viewpoint as Egbo (2000:62 and 65) and Okrah (2003:9) state that both men and women are regarded as experts in transmitting indigenous knowledge through storytelling and other cultural practices and customs.

7.4 Section B: Empirical responses from Life Skills Educators

The data below was collected from individual interview (Face-to-face interview) sessions held with Life Skills Educators.

7.4.1 Life skills educators' understanding of life skills education

Life skills educators stated that life skills education is the kind of education which deals with the holistic development of learners from childhood to adolescence stage. It focuses mostly on the development of self in society. Life skills education helps and enhances the application of learned principles of life in activities of everyday interactions. It helps a person to live in terms of the dictates of acceptable standards and is the natural home of value education in the curriculum. Life skills education makes life easier as it empowers learners to make responsible choices in their lifetime as citizens of the country. The learning area assists learners to discover themselves and life in general as well as to acquire skills of living. It is about the preparation of learners to face the challenges of the real adult world, be it in the family, community and workplace environment or in the social situation with friends and significant others. It is the breeding ground in diversity management as it teaches respect of oneself and others in terms of culture, religion, traditions and values.

Life skills education is the classroom instruction and guidance to help learners' correct deficiencies in their lives. It teaches learners to internalise knowledge, values and strategies to cope with day to day living. It helps learners to establish relationships at all levels and to make effective life choices. It is through life skills education that learners learn to implement strategies and actions so that they could reach their full potential and develop a positive self-perception for them to be able to function psychosocially to their maximum. In essence life skills educators stated that:

> *'I dyondzo ya Ntivo-Vutomi, yi nga dyondzo leyi pfunaka vanhu ku ri va titiva ngopfu vana la va ha kulaka. Yi va dyondzisa ku hanya hi ku rhula na vatswari na vanhu hinkwavo ku nga ri hi rimbewu, muhlovo kumbe vukhongeri byo karhi. Yi dyondzisa ku amukela xikanwe na vu tihlamuleri evutonwini'* meaning that life skills education is a learning area which

teaches about self-awareness particularly to the youth. It teaches them to live peacefully with their parents and other people regardless of gender, colour or creed. It teaches learners to accept and take responsibility in life"

In support of what life skills educators said, Pretorius (1999:29) states that learners must be taught to become competent future citizens. Life skills education arises out of the need to assist learners to develop attitudes, knowledge and skills that will enable them to participate fruitfully in the world of work on completion of their schooling. Malan (1997:16) also shares a similar sentiment when she writes that the outcomes of learning should be formulated in terms of the execution of the roles such as educator, information disseminator, initiator and opinion giver, which show competent, stable, learned and responsible adults in the labour world. During the sessions, the researcher noticed that life skills educators and learners had common understanding about life skills education.

7.4.2 Life skills educators' view about indigenising life skills education

Life skills educators are of the view that if life skills education can be indigenised, cultural practices, customs, norms and values can be the focal point and be emphasised when teaching the subject. They strongly felt that the partnership with parents could provide learners with the opportunity to learn indigenous knowledge. They stated that learners could learn to interact with elders on a daily basis on different issues, be it alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence and domestic violence and find out how these health and social pathologies could be tackled. Such discussions could help learners to find the subject stimulating. They further said that indigenising life skills education could address social problems like lack of respect, abuse of the elderly, early sexual indulgence and crimes such as bullying, assault of others and theft.

Life skills educators further indicated their dismay at the erosion of indigenous knowledge because of the myth that indigenous knowledge is outdated, weird and *'not fit for the current'* health and social ills without looking at its merits. This can be equated to the English notion of *'throwing the baby out with water'*. To counteract this, life skills educators emphasised the importance of indigenising life skills education as in the olden days respect was a virtue and the family and community structures were used to deal with health and social problems. The researcher observed that life skills educators seemed to be interested in indigenising life skills education as they hoped it could aid in dealing with the health and social ills assailing the learners. In essence they expressed that:

> *'Yi ta va mhaka ya kahle swinene ngopfu na swona yi ta hi pfuna e ku dyondziseni vana mahanyelo. A hi swi koti ku n'wana loko a ri na swiphiqo hi ya ekaya hiya lavisisa, hikokwalaho ka sweswo, miehleketo leyi ya ku pfuxeta dyondzo leyi ya Ntivo-Vutomi yi ta pfuna. Mhaka–nkulu ya hina i ku vona ku n'wana wa humelela loko lembe ri hela'* meaning 'it would be a very good idea as it will help us in moulding and modifying behaviour. We are unable to intervene when a child experiences problems which basically emanate from their homes as it is beyond our work mandate and expertise. As a result the notion of indigenising life skills education will enhance and enrich current life skills education. Our main focus is to see the child passing at the end of the academic year'.

7.4.3 Methods of indigenising life skills education

There were several methods proposed by life skills educators as indicated below:

- First, they indicated that as one of the methods, the needs and realities of learners should always be taken into account. The disrespectful

utterances that *"n'wana in n'wana"* meaning a child is a child should be avoided, the reason being that they are the target group to internalise cultural values, norms, mores and customs in their daily interactions if morality is a need to be attained. Due to that, learners need to be respected as their active participation is crucial in indigenising life skills education.

- Second, learners should be taught and made aware of the need to respect cultural practices, customs and values.
- Third, they indicated that parents who have a wide knowledge of indigenous knowledge and practices should be involved.
- Fourth, collaboration and partnership should be formed with social workers and parents to change and question perceptions that turn to vilify, undermine and disregard indigenous knowledge. The researcher noted that partnership amongst social workers, life skills educators and parents is of paramount importance in indigenising life skills education. This is due to the fact that professionals within and outside the education system should be responsible for the total up-bringing of children.
- Fifth, indigenous knowledge needs to be researched and be brought to the school level.
- Sixth, the issue of reading materials written in English was emphasised and suggested that indigenous life skills education reading materials be developed in local language. This confirmed the researcher's observation that current life skills education reading materials are too universal, western oriented and disregard the value of African indigenous knowledge systems.
- Seventh, indigenous people need to take pride in their indigenous knowledge and heritage and appreciate their culture and traditions as that will serve as a benchmark in indigenising life skills education.

7.4.4. Infusing cultural issues and giving cultural correct examples to learners whilst teaching life skills education

Life skills Educators responded by saying that culture is life and should be respected and considered in teaching life skills education as everyone has a cultural background. Life skills educators looked at this issue from two different perspectives. On the one hand, integrating cultural issues in life skills education could enable and inculcate in learners the culture of love and respect for themselves as that would enhance their self-esteem and increase their self-awareness. Giving cultural examples when discussing life skills education topics is necessary to expand on explanations and make effective elaborations.

However, on the other hand, life skills educators came with different views on infusing cultural issues and giving cultural examples whilst teaching life skills education. The reason advanced by life skills educators was that some learners necessarily might not be coming from the same cultural background as their life skills educators and other learners in class. Because of that, minority learners in class who are not from the same cultural background with life skills educators and majority of learners would feel excluded, lonely and isolated. As a result of that, life skills educators indicated that as learners may be culturally different in a class, some learners might be uncomfortable when their cultural practices or other cultures if culture becomes a focus of the teaching and learning. The researcher noticed that it would be proper to have life skills educators coming from different cultural backgrounds though learners indicated a descending view as it would teach them cultural diversity and acceptance of other people from different cultural backgrounds. It was further stated that some learners do not value much of their heritage and ridicule others who seem to enjoy and talk about it. It goes without saying that Euro-centric approach in education, colonisation and apartheid have destroyed tremendously the cultural identity and pride of African people. It should be noted that knowing oneself culturally could assist in total development of the person. In support of the above, Mkabela (2005:185)

asserts that culture also guides the means and process of educational development.

7.4.5 Cultural background of life skills educators

Employment in the education system in South Africa does not discriminate on the basis of gender, sex, religion and place of origin. Only the credentials in terms of the qualifications of the prospective educator are looked at. Because of that, educators can apply for employment wherever they feel interested and comfortable. It was noted that some of the life skills educators are from different cultural backgrounds with learners, though they are expected to teach life skills education and be culturally relevant. However, the majority of life skills educators indicated that the majority of learners in the school are predominately Xitsonga speaking people and from the same cultural group as they come from. This therefore means that they subscribe to common cultural rites, practices, customs and values. Because of that, it is easier for them to relate to learners and give culturally practical examples. It was however indicated that life skills educators did not escape the Euro-centric influence and that this might have an impact on indigenising life skills education. This was equally echoed by the learners and is confirmed by Assie-Lumumba (2006: 48 and 50) who argue that the colonial powers reshaped African education. Basically, Africans are often judged in European contexts and not in terms of their own (Mkabela, 2005:178). In support of the above, Rodwell (1998:45) and Zeleza (2002:12) state that there is evidence of concern about the over-dependency on Western training methods and materials as well as the use of strategies which are incongruent with indigenous values, norms and expectations.

The researcher observed that educators and researchers still follow western research themes that do not address local conditions because they were trained in western methods of teaching. There is a need for the adaptation of models and

teaching materials to local conditions. Another observation made by the researcher was that life skills educators still adhere to western methods of teaching and learning since they are rated and appraised on the number of learners who passed not on how many learners have internalised the values, knowledge and skills in their everyday living.

7.4.6 Life skills educators' view on the nature and approach to life skills education

Life skills educators indicated that education in general is Euro-centric and referred to it as *"dyondzo ya valungu"* meaning Euro-centric approach is still encouraged and respected as the Africanism of learners is not considered and enhanced. They further confirmed that life skills education as it is was designed to suit a particular thinking of competing for wealth and supremacy based on Eurocentric views of the world. This is enhanced by reading materials which are written in English and/or Afrikaans for African learners.

It was the view of the life skills educators that if life skills education is aimed at teaching learners' cultural knowledge, values, traditions and customs, Afro-centricity approach becomes relevant and should be adopted. It is through Afro-centric approach that indigenous knowledge, values and skills could be inculcated. African learners particularly those from historically disadvantaged communities learn information, values and skills different from the one's practiced in their homes. Euro-centric approaches make African learners feel inferior and as a result anything which is attached to Black African initiative is frowned upon. According to Okrah (2003:8) and Stock (2004:299), the Western–oriented education alienated and continues to alienate students from their own culture and moved them toward a different new lifestyle.

7.4.7 Impact of Euro-centric Education

Life skills educators stated clearly that so many things have been eroded completely in terms of African values, norms, customs and practices. Amongst others, the culture of respect which is the foundation of Africanism has been eroded. For example, it was an abomination in an African way of life to see young girls dating men much older than they are as this showed lack of respect. They indicated that family ties have been eroded as shown in the lack of reciprocity, shared heritage and welfare, assisting each other in times of need and sense of belongingness which is paramount in African communal life. Another major factor which contributed to the erosion of African values, practices and customs is change and move towards nuclear families which automatically tend to exclude extended and compound families. Extended and compound families were maintained and sustained over the years and that needs to be revived if African renaissance is to be realised.

The researcher noted that though people could not resort back to extended and compound families, African values, customs and practices such as shared welfare and heritage, reciprocity and love can be re-claimed and sustained. The researcher also observed that the current behaviour of learners is reinforced by Euro-centric education they receive as it emphasises individualistic, person-centred focus rather than group or community focus as is the case in Afro-centricity approach.

7.4.8 Effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of life skills education programmes in schools

There are various factors which contribute towards effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of life skills education in schools. With regard to ineffectiveness of life skills education, life skills educators said that it is due to the fact that learners'

performance is appraised on quantitative results and not on learners' participation and behavioural changes. Furthermore, due to the Edu-centric nature of education, learners only focus on passing examinations and not on implementing what they learned at school for their future benefit and that renders life skills education ineffective. Similar sentiments were repeatedly echoed by learners.

The lack of managerial leadership at district and local levels as well as the political will and commitment at national and provincial levels to indigenise life skills education, the lack of buy-in from different stakeholders and financial constraints renders life skills education ineffective. In addition, life skills educators indicated that life skills education is rendered ineffective by the fact that it is based on a syllabus to be completed at a given time and therefore life skills educators tend to focus on keeping or maintaining the deadlines. This is also coupled with the lack of appropriate reading materials to improve learning and comprehension. They made mention of the lack of resources such as persons knowledgeable in indigenous knowledge and libraries for learners and life skills educators to access information.

On the issue of effectiveness of life skills education, life skills educators said that learners work in groups and it helps them to exchange ideas, and this leads to an enhancement of skills and is also participatory-learning oriented subject. What further enhances its effectiveness is that learners also interact with other learners from other schools to debate on issues ranging from alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence.

Life skills educators were of the view that the use of local language can improve the effectiveness of life skills education. This is based on the rationale that language carries human culture, enhances learning and comprehension. Western languages are barriers in life skills education especially in rural areas as learners are not fluent in English and therefore unable to articulate feelings and

emotions. Language has an important role as it is an integral part of communication in transmitting indigenous knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another. They cited an example of Afrikaans speaking people who have successfully transmitted values, traditions and practices to the young generation through the use of language. On the same breath, Indian, German, Spanish and Portuguese speaking people also use their own languages to transmit their values and traditions thus making it possible for Vatsonga speaking people to equally transmit their values, mores and customs through Xitsonga language.

The researcher observed that it would seem that the edu-centric approach has a tendency of disturbing the learning process. Using local language in presenting life skills education will facilitate the process of asking questions and establishing a relationship of trust between the educators and learners. It is through a good command of language that fears of learners are allayed and myths could be dispelled.

7.4.9 The contribution of indigenous knowledge in alleviating health and social pathologies and improving the social functioning of the youth

From time immemorial indigenous knowledge has been used to address difficulties and challenges experienced by African people. Indigenous people had their own ways and means of curing various ailments from malaria and TB to sexually transmitted infections and diseases. They also had indigenous knowledge to address social problems like gender based violence, assault, rape, theft, lack of respect, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy. For instance, traditionally, cancer was cured using a newly formed termite heap. Young girls were prohibited from eating certain types of food like eggs as this delayed sexual activity and thus prevented early pregnancy. Girls and boys on reaching puberty were initiated into adulthood by receiving information from elders on how to

maintain their virginity. No young person was allowed to use alcohol until such time that he was given permission by elders on reaching a particular stage in life. These were respected socio-cultural protocols that prohibited young people to indulge in anti-social behaviours. Socio-political and socio-cultural protocols enabled people to know whom to talk to, where and when so that respect is maintained and sustained throughout the family, clan, lineage and community.

Specifically, life skills educators said that experiences from the past should be drawn on issues of how intimate relationship, alcohol consumption, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy were handled. Similar sentiments were espoused by the learners. Furthermore, they emphasised reciprocity, belongingness, love and respect for one another and symbiotic relationships. It was noted by the researcher that life skills educators possess a wealth of indigenous knowledge. It was also observed by the researcher that they know various socio-cultural and social-political protocols in knowledge dissemination.

7.4.10 Stakeholders to be involved in indigenising life skills education

It was unanimously agreed by life skills educators that the Department of Education should drive the process of indigenising life skills education in partnership with the Department of Social Development. The Department of Education was discussed to be the driving force because of its role as a custodian of education and the powers it possesses in developing intervention programmes. The Department of Social Development was selected because that is where social workers are based. Social workers by virtue of their profession convey life skills education to the youth in different schools. Their involvement will facilitate the process as they already have life skills education programmes in place. It was mentioned that the two departments jointly could appoint

independent consultants to help to ensure that indigenising life skills education is free from bias. The independent consultant should bring on board life skills educators, social workers and parents as part of the whole process. Community leaders, elders, and learners as consumers of service were also considered as stakeholders to be involved in the process.

The role of life skills educators would be to initiate discussions and reflections based on their experiences and professional knowledge. Life skills educators, parents, community elders and social workers together could help learners to discover the origin of their beliefs, customs, practices, norms and values.

More than parents, community elders and social workers, life skills educators are strategically placed to impart indigenous knowledge to learners as they spent the better part of the day under their supervision. As a result, life skills educators and indicated stakeholders are expected to plan carefully in order to educate and persuade learners to reflect on, and embrace such African cultural practices, customs, norms and values. Yang (2004:3) states that indigenous knowledge refers to the knowledge unique to a given culture or society characterised by the common sense, ideas, thoughts, values of people formed as a result of the sustained interactions of society, nature and culture. Life skills educators were convinced that indigenising life skills education will restore the moral fibre of the society and simultaneously address some of the health and social pathologies. In support of the above, Okrah (2003:9) asserts that it is high time that social scientists and educators explore and review what can be retained in their cultural heritage and how the schools can help in that process. The researcher noticed that there is strong belief that indigenising life skills education could help in empowering learners with indigenous knowledge and skills. It is through empowerment that people will gain a sense of mastery and control over their own lives. Indigenising life skills education will begin with how one sees oneself and one's place in the world and builds upon a kinship relationship with peers, family and the entire society through active social participation.

7.5 Section C: Empirical responses from parents

The data below was collected from focus group discussion sessions held with parents who are members of the school governing bodies from three schools.

7.5.1 Language preference in the teaching of life skills education

Parents fully agreed that life skills education should be taught in the context of Xitsonga cultural values, customs and practices. The following sentiments were espoused:

> *'Vana va fanele va dyondzisiwa mahanyelo na mikhuva ya Xitsonga va ha ri vatsongo. Loko munhu a lava leswinene a tiendlele. Vatsonga va ri byalwa byi bava ku suka embiteni. Hikokwalaho ke, vana va fanele va dyondzisiwa mahanyele na mikhuva ya vatsonga ku ri mundzuku va va vanhu va vutihlamuleri* meaning that children should be taught Xitsonga customs, values and practices whist still young. If a person wants good results, he must work for that. Therefore children should be taught good behaviour, customs and traditions of Vatsonga speaking people so that they become responsible adults of the future.

Parents stated that teaching life skills education in the context of Xitsonga culture will enable learners to know what it is that they are expected to do, how to behave and what to do in different circumstances, be it in bereavement, marriage and during crises. Parents were also of the view that teaching life skills education in the context of Xitsonga culture will help bring back the moral fibre of Vatsonga speaking youth. This was also echoed by life skills educators and social workers who strongly felt that the youth of today are looking down at culture as they view it as outdated. The researcher also noted that parents are also concerned about the education their children are receiving which vilify and marginalise Xitsonga

values, practices and customs. Their concern was more on anti-social behaviour which is the result of emulating western values as seen from the media.

7.5.2 Parents' willingness in expounding moral story telling and folklores to learners.

Parents were very much aware that story telling and folklores could be some of the strategies to impart indigenous knowledge and wisdom to the younger generation. This they believed could have an impact on the up-bringing of children. They said they would be very much interested to present moral story telling to learners as they themselves benefited from such. Parents felt that it was their obligation to get involved in the education of their children. Egbo (2000:62 and 65) and Okrah (2003:9) state that parents are correctly positioned and viewed as experts in transmitting indigenous knowledge through storytelling and other cultural practices. This was also echoed by life skills educators during their sessions with the researcher. However, the challenge they faced was that indigenous knowledge is not documented, stored, coded, classified or recorded anywhere and this will make it difficult to refer learners to any form of documentation. However, they felt that the process of indigenising life skills education may enable the capturing and preservation of data. The researcher also observed that since parents are currently concerned about the behaviour of their children, it would be proper and opportune for them to get involved in the process of behaviour change through the use of indigenous knowledge, skills and values.

7.5.3 Methods of indigenising life skills education

Though not recognised, life skills education has been in existence for many years in an African way. This was mainly in the form of indigenous organisations and traditional education. The only difference was lack of documentation and data

preservation. The emergence of western education brought documented and codified standards which have to be followed and that led to the vilification of African ways of teaching life skills education. To recapture indigenous education and to win the buy-in, parents were of the view that different methods need to be taken into consideration as indicated below:

- Parents and community leaders as knowledge holders, vessels and custodians should be actively involved and participate in ensuring that their children get the education which is culturally right to inculcate high morals and values which will eventually make them good citizens.

- In designing life skills education curriculum, parents stated that it should not only be the exercise of the experts and academics in writing-up the materials but parents should be involved.

- During presentation of life skills education subject, parents should be involved to augment the life skills educators' work.

- There should be commitment of financial resources to ensure that indigenising life skills education becomes a success as it might involve visiting strategic places and inviting experts from relevant organisations.

7.5.4 Contribution from the past as a way of improving the social functioning of youth

Observation and experience has proved that western oriented modes of communicating life skills education to learners have been insensitive to the various cultural community settings (Rothmund, 2001). This is confirmed by

Ramolehe (2006) who states that indigenous ways of communication such as folk media, indigenous organisations and traditional education are important aspects of culture which should be respected by outsiders. This means that there is much that can be borrowed from the past to improve the current social functioning of the young people. Parents mentioned the following few aspects which could be re-claimed to improve the social functioning of learners: respect, reciprocity, belongingness, shared heritage and welfare and symbiosis. Learners could learn to respect other people's origin, culture, beliefs and traditions, respect sexes, elders, tolerate each other and accept that people are different. Parents said one of the acceptable ways of showing respect is through the manner of greeting which has been lost in the present generation. In the olden days children were taught ways of greeting elders using handshakes and bowing down on their knees. There were certain behaviours that young people could not portray in the presence of adults such as fondling and kissing the opposite sex. Boys and girls were taught to respect each other. For an example, amongst the Vatsonga speaking people, boys and girls were allocated different huts. Boys were not allowed into the girls hut. Boys used *lawu* (boys' hut) and girls, the *nhanga* (girls' hut) as their rooms. That taught boys to respect the territory of girls and the same applied to girls. Because of this internalised respect, problems of rape, assault and abuse were unheard of.

The concept of *mintsheketo* known as folklores should be revived where boys and girls would sit around the fire with their grandparents and were told stories about life and how to survive. Most important of all these folklores were aimed at teaching young people preservation, protection of self and others and social protocols. If this be true, it suffice to believe that indigenising life skills education would help in alleviating health and social pathologies as learners will truly be given the authentic African way of behaving and showing respect to others.

Parents agreed that the current life skills education programmes do not adequately prepare learners to face challenges. They indicated that it is a curriculum for the sake of curriculum and has no impact in the lives of learners in terms of acceptable social behaviour. This is confirmed by the high rate of pregnancy, substance abuse, HIV infection, bullying, assaults, sexual abuse and school drop out among learners. They said that it is more focused on getting learners to pass their grades than empowering them with skills and knowledge for better survival. They further espoused that the current life skills education focus is on HIV and AIDS in expense of other health and social pathologies like drug abuse, gender based violence, and xenophobia.

Parents felt very strong about indigenising life skills education to make it relevant to the needs and aspirations of learners. They advocated for the inclusion of other skills such as communication, assertiveness training, decision making, stress and conflict management.

7.5.5 Erosion of African basic values

Parents stated that respect as it used to be in the African context has diminished and learners are currently behaving in a non African way towards adults and peers. The real meaning of "ubuntu" is gradually disappearing. They mentioned that good morals, values, love for humanity, reciprocity, sense of identity and belongingness and shared commitment and welfare have been eroded and need to be re-claimed. This is supported by Van Dyk (1996: 20) who states that decades of erstwhile colonial and apartheid governments' efforts to segregate the majority of people in the end destroyed stability, perverted civilised values, inflicted brutalities and impoverished the majority of Africans. Parents repeatedly echoed the issue of respect and emphasised that if respect is not re-claimed, indigenising life skills education will be a futile exercise.

7.5.6 Effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of life skills education programmes in schools

Parents expressed that life skills education can be regarded as ineffective because it seems to fail to positively shape the behaviour of learners. They were concerned that learners are gradually getting out of hand, are ill prepared for life challenges and are also losing their African identity. This, according to parents, is due to the fact that life skills education is too western and not congruent with African culture. They further indicated that it will be difficult and incredible to expect learners to know cultural values, customs and practices without being taught by parents and community leaders as they are people who are knowledgeable in indigenous knowledge. Parents stated that when children get home, they manifest different behaviour which is contrary to what is socially expected. What makes current life skills education ineffective is that it is too western and not congruent with African culture.

Another challenge that renders current life skills education ineffective according to parents is not using a local language. Unanimously, parents agreed that Xitsonga language should be used in the teaching of life skills education for it to be effective. They said that the use of Xitsonga language will enable learners to understand the issues under discussion much clearer and with great interest. Xitsonga language is affluent in proverbs and idioms which carry meanings and if translated into English will lose the actual meaning. They emphasised Xitsonga language use as it would enable learners to express themselves with confidence and pride. Language is the effective tool for teaching and learning. There are words which cannot be directly translated to English as the translation may not convey the intended meaning. For life skills education to be effective, they indicated that Xitsonga language should be used to avoid confusion, misinterpretation and misunderstanding of facts between what learners learn at school and what parents teach at home. Furthermore, they emphasised the issue of reading materials as one aspect to be considered in order to make life skills

education effective. It is interesting to mention that similar sentiments were espoused by both learners and life skills educators. This can therefore be viewed as a critical factor that needs immediate attention.

7.5.7 Stakeholders to be involved in the process of indigenising life skills education

Parents reiterated their need to be involved in the process of indigenising life skills education. This they felt should be done in collaboration with other stakeholders such as life skills educators (Department of Education), language practitioners, social workers (Department of Social Development) and African indigenous knowledge holders. Life skills educators (Department of Education) were regarded as very important because they have the responsibility to review the curriculum and develop policies which will give procedures on the development of intervention programmes and implementation thereof. Language practitioners would assist in developing and translating new concepts from English to Xitsonga whilst social workers (Department of Social Development) would ensure that indigenous life skills education is presented to learners and the Department of Social Development would develop policies which will give procedures on programmes which interface with learners in schools (school-linked programmes) and also the development of life skills education programmes and their implementation. African indigenous knowledge holders would assist or participate in the development of an indigenised life skills education curriculum.

Parents indicated that social workers can assist in indigenising life skills education because they deal with health and social pathologies from an individual, family and community levels and with that knowledge and exposure they could be of assistance. The trust, knowledge and experience social workers gain or acquire through working closely with individuals, families and communities could play an important role. Parents said that there is a need of

total involvement in the education of their children in agreement with their educators to jointly present life skills education. Their role will be to start educating their children at home and making sure that they instil the culture of respect, love belongingness and symbiosis within the young minds. They said that they cannot expect the schools alone to instil discipline in their children without their involvement. Good parenting forms a strong foundation on which learners can build their future. The researcher noted that there is a strong correlation of information amongst all stakeholders

7.6 Section D: Empirical responses from social workers

The data below was collected from individual interview (face-to-face interview) sessions held with social workers.

7.6.1 Social workers' view of life skills education

Due to the fact that life is full of challenges, which are sometimes difficult to handle if people are not equipped with the right knowledge and skills, life skills education comes handy. Social workers indicated that life skills education empowers learners with a conscious recognition of their abilities, and knowledge on how to face challenges of life. In support of the above, New Dictionary of Social Work (1995: 37), Barker (1999: 278) and Nolte and Delport (2004:103) define life skills education as the repertoire of competencies that enhance the capacity of the learners to successfully cope with the demands of daily living and the human environment interaction. It is through life skills education that life gratifications, realisation of values as well as the achievement of an adequate level of social functioning in specific life phases and circumstances are met. The researcher observed that social workers understand what life skills are and their

comprehension is based on their training as they use life skills in their prevention programmes.

7.6.2 Social workers' understanding of indigenising life skills education

Social workers were of the view that cultural values, norms, mores, customs and practices should be integrated into life skills education. As a means of indigenising life skills education, social workers further stated that life skills educators always should be cognisant of and give practical scenarios to the discussion of any particular topic they would be handling, be it substance abuse, HIV and AIDS or teenage pregnancy. They emphasised that though the reading materials are written by people who have little knowledge about cultural values of Vatsonga speaking people and sometimes do not have such knowledge, contextualisation of the learning material would help for learners to understand. To them indigenising life skills education is putting information under discussion in perspective and in the context of the culture.

7.6.3 Infusing cultural issues and giving cultural correct examples to learners whilst teaching life skills education

Due to the nature of their training, social workers present life skills education. Based on that, social workers indicated that it would be proper and beneficial for learners if those social workers who present life skills education could be coming from the same cultural group as of learners. The reason being that, they would have first hand knowledge and experiences about the cultural values, norms, customs and practices of the learners. However, the researcher realised that in terms of Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Section 23 (1) everyone has the right to fair labour practices meaning that no one should be discriminated

against in respect of employment based on his cultural background. Furthermore, Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 Section 6(1) state that

> *"No person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee, in any employment policy or practice, on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth".*

They said that it would be acceptable considering that the best way to teach anything is by beginning from what is known to the unknown. However, there would be challenges for those social workers who are from different cultural backgrounds as it would be difficult for them to integrate cultural issues whilst presenting lessons in life skills education. They emphasised that considering that life skills education is a life-long experience, the list of cultural issues that could be infused into the programme is endless. They also echoed the point that parents should be involved in the teaching of cultural norms and values. They emphasised the idea that the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills all begin in the family and in the larger community. Segall, Dasen, Berry and Poortinga (1990:5 and 6) and Chisholm, Buchner, Kruger and Brown (1990:19) state that human behaviour in relation to morality, habits, values and norms must be viewed and understood from the socio-cultural context in which it occurs which varies widely from area to area and from society to society.

Cyr-Delpe in Reid (1995:67) points out that cultural beliefs, customs and values are at the core of the struggle against health and social pathologies around the world and the hope for the future is anchored on the changing of attitudes and behaviour which is inclusive of personal, religious and social beliefs. In terms of

preparing learners for survival in life, social workers recommended the following in teaching of life skills education:

- *'Respect and love for humanity'*
- *'Importance of communication (for instance, understanding others, communicating feelings, beliefs and attitudes)'.*
- *'Communicating in various situations (for instance in the family, with peers and with significant others)'.*
- *'Factors influencing the effectiveness of communication (personality, attitudes, values)'.*
- *'Conflict resolution (common conflicts, ways of resolving conflict)'.*
- *'Acceptance of responsibilities (for instance, to express views and feelings appropriately, respect the feelings of others)'.*
- *'Rights in relationships (for instance, to have opinions and feelings, to make decisions about one's own body, equality)'.*
- *'Responsibilities and rights in sexual relationships'*

7.6.4 Methods of indigenising life skills education

Social workers mentioned various methods of indigenising life skills education and amongst others are the following:

- As one of the methods of indigenising life skills education, social workers emphasised the issue of local language usage in conveying life skills education.
- They further stated that presenters of life skills education, if possible, should be from the same cultural background as learners.
- They said that parents should also be involved.
- They were of a strong view that life skills education should be informal and not be examined.

- Move from Eurocentric approach to Afro-centric approach should be encouraged. This is similar to what learners, life skills educators and parents said. Social workers mentioned the tendency of current life skills education programmes to be largely Eurocentric with reading materials shaped by European paradigms, theories and perspectives. They were of the view that indigenising life skills education will be an initiative towards developing theories and models based on Afro-centric approach. According to Okrah (2003:8) and Stock (2004:299), the Western–oriented education alienated and continues to alienate students from their own culture and moved them towards a different new lifestyle.

7.6.5 Erosion of African cultural values, practices and tradition

Social workers were of the view that love, honesty, respect for life and respect for elders have been eroded amongst Africans. This correlate well with what was said by life skills educators and parents. They further said that the majority of young people are assailed by health and social pathologies and the most prominent is HIV and AIDS and violence. Violent behaviour engenders serious outcome for everyone and violence produces fears. Where there is fear there is the rejection of love, positive relationship and courtesy. In a violent realm there is hatred, mistrust and jealousy towards one another (Sacco, 1995: 111). In addition to the above, they alluded to the lack of respect which in their view was due to the misinterpretation of human rights. To the young people, human rights means doing anything at any time as they please, issues of accountability are not considered. They gave an example of a child who reports his parents to the police for having disciplined him as they regard discipline as human rights abuse.

7.6.6 Social workers' view on what renders available life skills education programmes effective or ineffective in schools

According to social workers, what renders life skills education ineffective include:

- Ignorance among life skills educators about the need for learners to be empowered with indigenous knowledge;
- Failure to communicate differently with the learners focusing on here and now instead of there and then whilst they were learners themselves;
- Failure by some life skills educators to contextualise lessons to give meaning to what is being taught;
- There is a mushrooming of programmes in schools which yield to conflict amongst them such as *Life Orientation, Girl Movement, Ke Moja – No thanks I am fine without drugs, Human Rights and HIV and AIDS and Life Skills Education* and they emphasise Eurocentric values amidst a predominantly African traditional atmosphere;
- Lack of commitment from the core departments (Education and Social Development); and
- Use of wrong language, which in this case is English or Afrikaans - Language is a hallmark that separates humans from the rest of the animal world and is vital in the process of teaching and learning. It is equally important that knowledge be imparted in the language of optimum comprehension by both life skills educators and learners.

The issue of language came up strongly from all respondents as a major factor towards indigenising life skills education.

On the effectiveness of current life skills education, social workers reiterated what was said by learners, life skills educators and parents. They stated that it is through life skills education that sex and sexuality can be discussed in class between life skills educators and learners. They further mentioned that new information and knowledge can be acquired to instil self control, decision making,

stress and anger management, awareness of self and others and to resist sexual abuse by indiscriminate parents, educators and significant others.

7.6.7 Contributions from the past to improve the social functioning of youth

As indicated by life skills educators and parents, social workers equally emphasised that love of humanity and practice of honesty, respect for life and respect for elders, among others, should be re-claimed and revived as ways to improve the social functioning of youth and address health and social pathologies.

They agreed that the idea of integrating indigenous issues in life skills education, which takes into account Afro-centric customs, norms, mores, practices and values has great potential in the alleviation of health and social pathologies and towards improving social functioning. The challenge posed was that current learners in schools are sandwiched between the two worlds, one of alien Western modernity and their average cultural traditionalist community. Regardless of that, the storehouse of indigenous knowledge bears testimony to a relatively safe and harmonious past, which was characterised by different code of norms, customs, mores, practices and values.

7.6.8 Stakeholders to be involved in the process of indigenising life skills education

Social workers confirmed what was said by learners, life skills educators and parents in identifying relevant stakeholders to be involved in the process of indigenising life skills education. Parents, traditional leaders, life skills educators and the community were equally emphasised. They stated the reason for the

inclusion of these stakeholders as pooling in expertise from different sources to create a rich and relevant programme.

They stated that an agreement at higher level between the Department of Education and the Department of Social development should be reached. Without serious commitment and buy-in from the policy makers in the above mentioned departments, indigenising life skills education can be difficult to implement.

Social workers indicated that they assume different roles in discharging different tasks and responsibilities. At the level of the researcher the social workers' role in indigenising life skills education should be able to highlight challenges, problems and needs such as:

- Incompetent indigenous life skills education presenters (implementers);
- A lack of appreciation for the importance of the local cultural contexts;
- Reluctance to apply theoretical approaches to be congruent to local empirical context (Brustein, 2007: 383 and 384);
- Teachers' beliefs should be studied within a framework that recognizes the influence of culture (Mansour, 2007:482, Kagan, 1992 and Pajares, 1992);
- On the part of life skills educators, the researcher should be cognisant of work overload; time restraints; and problems with child behaviour, working conditions, relationships with colleagues, lack of resources, children's needs, personal needs, parents' expectations, interpersonal relationships and the physical demands of teaching (Mansour, 2007:482; Borg, 1990; Borg, Riding and Falzon, 1991; and Kelly and Berthelsen,1995)

- Furthermore, the researcher should be able to highlight problems and challenges around student discipline, student apathy, student absences, inappropriate scheduling, large classes.

In addition, the researcher should assist to:

- Conduct needs analysis;
- Decide on relevant programme depending on the outcome of the needs analysis;
- Identify expertise needed and advisory capacity to ensure proper implementation of the programme;
- Implementation of the indigenous life skills education; and
- Review the implementation.

All the above-mentioned should be considered during policy development and implementation. At the level of collaboration, they saw their role as being that of collaborators ensuring that there are good working conditions from all stakeholders to indigenise life skills education. Moreover, since they work with all age groups and different client populations, they felt that they could lobby and advocate for indigenous knowledge to be integrated in life skills education.

Based on the above, the researcher is of the view that the professional role of social workers would be:

- Research development and implementation;

- Policy development and implementation; and

- Direct service through consultancy, advocacy and teaching.

7.7 Conclusion

For effective and successful implementation of indigenising life skills education, a cultural approach to life skills education is essential. The cultural approach is inclusive of all spheres of human behaviour starting from political, economic, religious and socio-cultural aspects. Without professionals who are well conversant with a specific culture in a specific environment, indigenising life skills education will become a futile exercise.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

In this final chapter the problem statement is re-stated as well as aim and objectives and the research questions of the study. Major findings are drawn based on analysis and interpretation of data from focus group discussions and individual interviews that were conducted with learners, life orientation educators, parents and social workers. Conclusions are drawn from both the literature and empirical findings of the study. This chapter is concluded with recommendations that have been made by the researcher drawn from the major findings and conclusions.

8.2 Re-statement of the problem

The heart of every research project is the problem and therefore, the research problem or question is the axial centre around which the whole research project is based (Leedy, 1997:45). The research problem originates out of the incomplete knowledge and/or flawed understanding of the situation. Prior to resolving the practical problems, a research problem should be resolved first as solutions to the research problem point a solution to the practical problems (Booth, Colomb and Williams, 1995:50 and 54 and Schoeman, 2004:11).

Ngwena (2003:191 -193) purports that current life skills education programmes are presented not in a culturally appropriate manner. As a result, skills, knowledge, attitudes and values do not represent the cultural specific realm of learners. This is due to the fact that the concept of life skills and the way it is presented is based on criteria imposed by the Europeans and Americans. Furthermore, current life skills education teaches western values and norms at the expense of local values (African values) and regard African values as those practiced by illiterates. If life skills education could be rendered in a manner that is culturally appropriate to a particular environment, it is hoped that it will have a positive effect on learners' self-esteem, acceptance, growth and development (Bender and Lombard, 2004: 87; Van Soest, 1994:19; King, 1994:22 and Freeman, 1994:71).

South Africa's young generation is faced with a number of health and social pathologies; top on the list is high levels of HIV and AIDS, despite sound level of knowledge about sexual health risks (Campbell and MacPhail, 2002:331). According to the Medical Research Council statistics (the fact sheets) many young people (learners) drop out of school, play truancy, indulge in alcohol and drugs, are de-motivated in life, indulge in early sexual activities without taking precautionary measures and get involved in criminal activities. This is irrespective of numerous prevention programmes like *Love Life, Ke Moja – No thanks I am fine without drugs, Girl Movements, and the Buddies*, amongst others, which are up and running in communities and schools to address challenges and problems affecting the youth. Notwithstanding these prevention programmes and their achievements, young people continue to indulge in anti-social behaviour as shown by the escalating statistics of substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, crime, teenage pregnancy and indiscriminate sexual behaviour.

Indigenous knowledge is one of the resources that could be used to alleviate health and social pathologies, help to maintain good relationships and healthy lives, share wealth, alleviate conflict, manage local affairs, and thus contribute to

global solutions. It is also the social capital of the poor, the main asset to invest in the struggle for survival, to maintain positive interaction in diversity and a tool to help young people achieve control of their own lives. Indigenous knowledge has contributed to building solidarity in communities affected by globalisation and shielded them against some of its negative impacts (Mkapa, 2004:1). Therefore, indigenising life skills education (integration of indigenous knowledge in life skills education programmes) could help to ameliorate most of the challenges and problems affecting learners. If the above statement is true it can be argued that most of the social ills affecting young people could be reduced to manageable levels. Seemingly, policy and programme developers have overlooked the potential of indigenous knowledge as a resource and have even further neglected the knowledge that women and men, families and communities had developed and maintained for centuries (Mkapa, 2004:2). This is also confirmed by Leautier (2004: 4) in indicating that rural communities not only have knowledge about indigenous practices, they also have knowledge of how to adapt to adverse environments, institutions, and policies.

Zeleza (2002:22); Mkabela (2005:178) and Ramolehe (2006:7) purport that the education system in South Africa is Eurocentric and places more emphasis on the cognitive and/or mental aspects of the learner. It attaches less value and disregards indigenous knowledge and other crucial aspects like moral development and social skills during the upbringing of the learners. The mere provision of education is not enough to achieve specific educational objectives, and therefore should be supplemented by social support services through life skills education (Kotze, 1995:183). For education to be effective as a developmental instrument, learning must holistically develop people, build the community and contribute to their general well being and relationships (Schenck and Louw, 1995:8). James and Gilliland (2001:521) contend that any school system, which operates in isolation without the inclusion of indigenous life skills education, faces the major risks of losing learners not just academically but

socially as well. It is therefore, significant that schools through the medium of indigenised life skills education play a central role in the socialisation and education of the learners who uphold different values from their parents. Educators and learners need to be equipped with indigenous life skills presented in home languages to allow for easier understanding of the subject matter conveyed and for it to be relevant to specific circumstances. Educators should be prepared for a variety of behavioural undulation effects amongst learners as participants in the learning process (James and Gilliland, 2001:517, Van Rooyen and Gray, 1995:88 and Schenck and Louw, 1995:9). The status quo in South Africa is such that life skills education programmes in rural areas are conducted in a foreign language and in some cases taught by educators who do not have knowledge of the local culture, traditions and norms of the communities they are serving. In most instances, the involvement of parents and communities is poor or ignored. In support of that, Easton, Capacci and Kane (2000:3) assert that parental and community involvement in the education of children is of outmost significance in passing down cultures, traditions and values. Life skills education cannot be in a value-free context or social-cultural vacuum. Learners should not be taught out of their community values and practices and be expected to manage and be able to address health and social pathologies successfully. It is expected that learners are educated so that they can fit into their communities. If attitudes and values cherished by the communities are neglected and undermined, the result can lead to disaster as the neglect destroys self-esteem and poor self-esteem results in wrong or bad choices. It is also noted that children/learners in rural areas face different challenges from their urban counterparts, yet are exposed to the same life skills education. It is these gaps and inconsistencies that propelled the researcher to undertake this study.

8.3 Re-statement of the Aim and Objectives of the study

8.3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the relevance of indigenising life skills education in alleviating health and social pathologies among learners in rural areas.

8.3.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To explore the learners', life skills educators', parents' and social workers' views about indigenising life skills education to address health and social pathologies.
- To assess the impact of Eurocentric life skills education on rural learners.
- To investigate the role of parents, social workers and life skills educators in indigenising life skills education.

8.4 Re-statement of Research Questions

Research questions refer to the specific query to be addressed by research. They set the parameters of the project, and suggest the method to be used for data gathering and analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:35). In support of this viewpoint, Schoeman (2004:11) states that research questions flow from the

research problem and are indeed a further refinement of the research problem. The study was guided by the following questions:

- What is indigenous life skills education?
- Can the provision of indigenous life skills education play a role in changing the attitudes and perceptions of learners towards their own culture?
- What renders available life skills programmes effective or ineffective in rural areas?
- What is the impact of Eurocentric life skills education in rural areas?
- What is the role of social workers in indigenising life skills education?
- What is the role of educators in indigenising life skills education?
- What role could parents play in the development and implementation of indigenised life skills education programmes for the learners?

8.5 Major findings of the study

A summary of major findings from this study is presented as follows:

8.5.1 Consensus on indigenising life skills education

There has been consensus by all respondents on indigenising life skills education. It was found that indigenising life skills education could help to inculcate respect, love and responsibility among learners. It was unanimously

agreed that it would enable learners to expand their cultural knowledge and instil and strengthen their cultural identity. Indigenising life skills education was identified as one method that could address social problems like lack of respect, abuse of the elderly, early sexual indulgence, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, HIV and AIDS and crimes such as bullying, assault of others and theft. It was further considered appropriate to revive family and community structures used to deal with health and social problems. With regard to moral story telling by parents and indigenous knowledge holders, it has been found that learners would enjoy listening to moral story telling by the elders. Moral story telling would enhance interaction between the youth and the old generation and thus reduce the cultural gap between generations Parents were very much aware that story telling and folklores could be some of the strategies to impart indigenous knowledge and wisdom to the younger generation. As such, parents showed much interest and enthusiasm in presenting moral story telling to learners as they themselves benefited from such and felt it was their obligation to get involved in the education of their children. In support of the findings Egbo (2000:62 and 65) and Okrah (2003:9) state that parents are correctly positioned and viewed as experts in transmitting indigenous knowledge through storytelling and other cultural practices.

8.5.2 Understanding of life skills education

The study revealed that all respondents including learners had a good understanding of what life skills education entails. Generally, research participants indicated that life skills education teaches about life holistically; is the kind of education which deals with the holistic development of learners from their early age of development; focuses mostly on development of self in society; enhances the application of learned principles of life in activities of everyday interactions and helps young person to live in terms of the dictates of acceptable standards.

Life skills education was viewed by respondents as a natural home of value education in the curriculum as it teaches learners to internalise knowledge, values and strategies to cope with day to day living. It empowers learners to make responsible choices in their lifetime as citizens of the country. In support of that, Malan (1997:16) and Pretorius (1999:29) state that the outcomes of learning should be formulated in terms of the roles, which shows competent, stable, learned, competent and responsible adults in the labour world. Life skills education empowers learners with a conscious recognition of their abilities, and the imparting of necessary knowledge in order to face all challenges. Life skills education is a repertoire of competencies that enhance the capacity of the learners to successfully cope with the demands of daily living and the human environment interaction. Pretorius (1999: xi) state that learning should place more emphasis on skills needed in everyday living and requirements of the world of work, but not on memorisation of learning material.

8.5.3 Current presentation of life skills education

It has been found that learners are not happy about the way life skills education is presented because they are taught in English and some of the words are not explicitly explained. It was discovered that there is little interaction between learners and the life skills educators as learners are not allowed to come up with topical issues for discussions. This was because life skills educators focused on completing the syllabus they are expected to follow. Life skills education currently implemented does not assist in alleviating health and social pathologies. This is proven by an ever increasing rate of HIV and AIDS, teenage pregnancy, suicide and substance abuse. The nature of presentation was found to be edu-centric, meaning that more emphasis is placed on the comprehension of the curriculum (cognitive and/or mental aspect of the learners) and takes learners away from understanding, correlating and manifesting the cultural values and norms learnt in their classrooms (socio-cultural aspects). It was agreed by all respondents that life skills education should not be examination focused but rather be more of a

practical subject as its main focus is on improving the psycho-social function of learners.

It has been revealed that South African education in general is Euro-centric. This approach is still encouraged and respected and as a result the Africanism of learners is not considered and enhanced. This implies that African customs, values and practices of learners are not taken into consideration in the teaching of life skills education. African learners, particularly those from historically disadvantaged communities, are learning information, values and skills different from the one's practiced in their homes due to the Euro-centric nature and approach of life skills education. This is supported by Okrah (2003:8) and Stock (2004:299) who state that the Western–oriented education alienated and continues to alienate learners from their culture and moved them toward a different new lifestyle.

8.5.4 The use of local language (mother tongue) in teaching of life skills education

It has been found that mother tongue is important in the teaching of life skills education as that will make the subject comprehensible. All respondents agreed that since life skills education is a practical learning area, it does not need one to learn practical things in foreign language as that may distort the meaning. It was revealed that parents at home have a tendency to encourage children to speak English. It was also found that the content of the life skills education curriculum and the teaching of life skills education is *'too much American'* and the language used is English and as a result, renders life skills education ineffective. In support of that, Kathard (1999) state that more than 80% of the population of South Africa is indigenous Black, African first language speakers. Due to that, teaching and learning should consider the use of African first languages to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

8.5.5 Examination of life skills education

It has been found that life skills education should be a non-examinable subject. The rationale being that it primarily aims at developing skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that empower learners to make informed decisions and also that it is guiding and preparing learners for life and its possibilities. It also aims at equipping learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society as well as developing learners holistically in the social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical growth. The major finding was that South African education system should shift away from Euro-centric to Afro-centric approach in education.

Furthermore, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) of the Department of Education (2002) state that life skills education should be assessed using outcomes-based framework methods. It states that assessment should provide indications of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner, and ensure that learners integrate and apply skills. If indeed, learners have to apply skills, knowledge, values and attitudes learnt in class, it is therefore unnecessary to formally assess this subject in class.

8.5.6 Indigenising life skills education reading materials

As the education system is Eurocentric, it was discovered that even the reading materials are Euro-centric and written in foreign languages such as English and Afrikaans. This led to the finding that life skills education reading materials need to be translated into local languages to enhance teaching and learning as well as comprehension of the subject matter. A need to involve traditional knowledge holders in the writing of books was revealed as this could help in the preservation of indigenous life skills education and subsequently indigenous knowledge through recording, classification, coding and storage of data.

8.5.7 Methods to be used in indigenising life skills education

The following methods were found to be appropriate in indigenising life skills education:

- Custodians, holders and vessels of cultural practices, values, beliefs and customs who are parents, community leaders and indigenous knowledge holders should in partnership with life skills educators be actively involved in presenting life skills education.

- At least once a month an elderly person who is well conversant with cultural practices, values, customs and practices should visit learners per class and engage them in topics which are pertinent in their lives to give advice and ways of solving challenges they face in life.

- The method of presentation of life skills education should provide dialogues in an open manner which is free of intimidation.

- There is a need for the adaptation of western models, theories, paradigms and materials to local conditions.

- The needs and realities of learners should always be taken into account when presenting life skills education.

- Learners must be made aware and should be taught how to respect cultural practices, customs and values.

- Changing and questioning perceptions that turn to vilify, undermine and disregard indigenous knowledge.

- Indigenous knowledge needs to be researched and be brought to school level

- Indigenous people, need to take pride in their indigenous knowledge, heritage and appreciate their culture and traditions as that will serve as a benchmark in indigenising life skills education.

- Documentation, storing, codifying, classification and recording for the preservation of data.

- During presentation of life skills education subject, parents should be involved to complement the life skills educators.

- There should be commitment of financial resources to ensure that indigenising life skills education becomes a success as it might involve visiting some places and may also involving traditional knowledge holders from different areas.

- Presenters of life skills education should understand cultural practices, customs and values of the learners.

8.5.8 Factors contributing to the failure of the current life skills education.

The following were found to be contributing to ineffectiveness or failure of life skills education:

- Life skills educators' sexual involvement with learners.

- Learners' performance appraisal on quantitative results and not on their participation and behavioural changes.

- Life skills education is Edu-centric and focus is on passing examinations and not on implementing what they learned for their future benefit.

- Lack of commitment from the core departments (Education and Social Development) to indigenise life skills education.

- Lack of appropriate reading materials on life skills education in the local language to improve learning and comprehension.

- Lack of resources such as persons knowledgeable in indigenous knowledge and libraries for learners and life skills educators to access information.

- Failure of current life skills education to positively shape the behaviour of learners as confirmed by the escalating health and social pathologies

- Life skills educators are Euro-centric as they were trained in Euro-centric systems. There are life skills educators who maintain Euro-centric education approach and tend to use euro-centric examples which are highly incomprehensible to learners.
- Life skills educators from a different cultural background as that of learners experience difficulties and challenges in terms of making life skills education interesting and comprehensible since they do not understand the customs, values and practices of the learners. This is confirmed by Assie-Lumumba (2006: 48 and 50) who argues that the colonial powers reshaped African education and Africans are often judged in European contexts and not in terms of their own. There is evidence of over-dependency on Western training methods and materials as well as the

use of strategies which are incongruent with indigenous values, norms and expectations (Mkabela, 2005:178, Rodwell, 1998:45 and Zeleza, 2002:12)

8.5.9 The contribution of indigenous life skills education in alleviating health and social pathologies and improving the social functioning amongst the youth

The study revealed that indigenising life skills education could assist in alleviating health and social pathologies in the following ways:

- Borrowing from the past what worked, for instance in addressing teenage pregnancy.
- Emphasising social protocols in issues of decision making.
- Encouraging issues of respect towards self and others to be recalled.
- Using taboos in protecting, promoting and preserving respect, integrity and dignity of individuals.
- Moral story telling to instil respect and love for humanity.
- Using folk media and indigenous organisations. There is a need to rejuvenate indigenous ways of communication such as folk media, indigenous organisations and traditional education as they are important aspects of culture which should be respected by outsiders.
- Encouraging the use of *'tsima'* – mutual self-help groups

- Reviving African cultural values, customs, traditions and practices such as reciprocity, belongingness, love for oneself and for humanity and respect for one another, shared heritage and welfare and symbiotic relationships and that could be realised through indigenous knowledge.

- Sensitivity to the various cultural community settings in order to instil respect and socio-cultural values like reciprocity amongst people.

- Active involvement of parents to teach acceptable ways of showing respect through the manner of greeting which is lost in the present generation. In the olden days children were taught ways of greeting elders using handshakes, bowing down on their knees.

- Young people were discouraged to openly display sexual behaviours such as fondling and kissing the opposite sex.

There was consensus on the rejuvenation of socio-cultural protocols such as:

- Young girls encouraged not to eat certain types of foods which are high in proteins as this could delay sexual desire and thus prevent early pregnancy.

- Girls and boys on reaching puberty are initiated into adulthood by receiving information from elders on how to maintain their virginity.

- Young persons prohibited from consuming alcohol until such time that he is given permission by elders on reaching a particular stage in life.

8.5.10 Stakeholders to be involved in indigenising life skills education

The study revealed that indigenising life skills education requires involvement of different stakeholders with different cultural experiences as indicated below. It has been found that not only life skills educators but parents, social workers, language practitioners, African indigenous knowledge holders, Department of Education, Department of Social development and community leaders should be involved in indigenising life skills education. It came out vividly that the Department of Education should drive the process of indigenising life skills education because of its role as a custodian of education and powers it possesses in developing intervention programmes. The Department of Social Development was specifically selected because it is where social workers are based and by virtue of their profession they convey life skills education to the youth in different schools.

8.5.11 Roles of parents and social workers in indigenising life skills education

With special reference to the role of parents in indigenising life skills education, they are viewed as custodians, holders and vessels of the cultural practices, values, beliefs and traditions, who by virtue of their positions should transmit such knowledge to their children and continuously encourage children to use their native languages and also to teach children cultural values which simultaneously would instil indigenous knowledge. At school, parents were found to be appropriate to present topical issues such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, gender based violence, sex and sexuality in the context of indigenous knowledge practices, values, mores and customs with a view of changing young peoples' perception towards health and social pathologies.

Social workers are expected as part of their professional role to frequently visit schools and present indigenous life skills education programmes and participate in designing the indigenous life skills education curriculum.

8.5.12 Impact of Euro-centric Education

Due to the Euro-centric nature and approach of life skills education, the culture of respect which is the foundation of Africanism has been eroded. Another major factor which contributed to the erosion of African values, practices and customs is that there is change and move towards nuclear families which automatically tends to exclude extended and compound families. Extended and compound families are no longer maintained and sustained and need to be revived if African renaissance is to be realised. As a result of Euro-centric education, people no longer reciprocate, share heritage and welfare, assisting each other in times of need and have lost a sense of belongingness which is paramount in African family and communal life.

8.5.13 Claiming back respect due to erosion of African basic cultural values, practices and tradition

The researcher found that respect as it used to be in the African context, as well as love and honesty have been eroded amongst Africans as learners are currently behaving in a non African way towards adults and peers. The real meaning of ubuntu is gradually disappearing. There is an urgent need to claim back respect as it is a basis for good relationship amongst people of diverse age, colour, creed and sex. Participants repeatedly mentioned that good morals, values, love for humanity, reciprocity, sense of identity and belongingness and shared commitment and welfare have been eroded and need to be re-claimed.

8.5 Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the above-mentioned findings:

It can be concluded that all research participants understood what life skills education is as they gave their views and examples on what is the content of the learning area is. There was an unanimous view that the teaching of life skills education in South Africa is in English and therefore Euro-centric, which was confirmed to be contributing to the ineffectiveness of the subject and consequently rendering the teaching and learning incomprehensible and difficult.

It is for this reason that there was a unanimous consensus as to the need for indigenising life skills education. It is conspicuous that current life skills education has not done much in changing the attitudes and perceptions of young people towards health and social pathologies. With this failure in mind, alternative strategies are called for. One such strategy could be linked to indigenising life skills education where learners are taught at an early stage to respect culture, traditions and socio-cultural protocols that would sensitise them to respect for self and for others. This is based on the rationale that indigenous knowledge has in the past protected lives and young people from behaving in an un-becoming manner. To successfully indigenise life skills education, the involvement of parents, life skills educators, social workers and traditional knowledge holders is important. Parents and traditional knowledge holders should be regarded as vessels, custodians and holders of cultural values, beliefs, practices and traditions.

It has been confirmed in the study that social problems like bullying, assault and theft could possibly be addressed by indigenising life skills education as learners would be taught cultural values like *'ubuntu'*, respect for oneself and others as

well as communal responsibility. There should be a revival of family and community structures used in the past as their focus was to deal with health and social pathologies. Moral story telling where parents and grand parents set with young people should be recalled.

There is an urgent need, as indicated above, to collaborate amongst various stakeholders as currently there is poor collaboration and partnership amongst various stakeholders such as parents, life skills educators, social workers and community leaders who have interest in the indigenous education of children. This will counteract the status quo of learners being subjected to western methods, paradigms, theories, perspectives and models of learning which are more edu-centric and Euro-centric. Emphasis on edu-centric and Euro-centric approaches contributed to poor documentation, storing, codifying, classification and recording of indigenous knowledge data for the purpose of preservation and easy referencing. This therefore calls for research in different aspects of indigenous knowledge in order to create reading materials to supplement the practical teaching of indigenous life skills education

Buying in of key government departments like Education and Social Development was considered necessary for the provision of financial and human resources. These departments are vital as indigenising life skills education will require restructuring of the curriculum to suit different cultures specifically in rural areas. This is based on the general finding that life skills education needs to be taught in mother tongue and not be examinable.

8.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn in this study the following recommendations are made:

- There is a need to indigenous life skills education to address the attitudes and perceptions of learners towards health and social pathologies

- The teaching of life skills education should be in mother tongue to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

- Indigenous life skills education reading materials must be developed to complement the use of mother tongue.

- Parents, indigenous knowledge holders, traditional leaders and the community at large must be involved in the designing and teaching of life skills education. This is based on the rationale that they are vessels, custodians and holders of cultural values, beliefs, practices and traditions.

- Western methods, paradigms, theories, perspectives and models should be adapted to fit the local conditions of people.

- Indigenous life skills education should further be researched and be brought to the school level

- There is a need for the documentation, storing, codifying, classification and recording of data for the purpose of preservation

- There should be financial and human resources commitment for the realisation of indigenous life skills education, hence the need for political buy-in.

- There is a need for a paradigm shift from edu-centric and Eurocentric methods of teaching and learning to Afro-centric methods of teaching and learning as the latter stresses on learner-centredness and is oriented with equal emphasis on social cultural knowledge on the total up-bringing of children.

- Life skills education should be non-examinable as it teaches values, norms and customs, more emphasis should be on the practical interactive type of learning.

- Presenters of life skills education should understand cultural practices, customs and values of the learners in order to give relevant and appropriate examples.

- Reciprocity, shared heritage and welfare, love for humanity, sense of identity and belongingness, symbiotic relationship and commitment should be claimed back as they are currently eroded.

- Social workers by virtue of their professional role, be allowed to present life skills education programmes in schools and help in designing indigenous life skills education reading materials

- Further research study need to be conducted to establish how families and communities embraced, nurtured and sustained reciprocity, shared heritage and welfare, love for humanity, sense of identity and belongingness, symbiotic relationship and commitment.

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ANNEXURE A

Interview Schedules to Learners, Life Skills Educators, parents and Social Workers

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Department of Social Work
North West University
Mafikeng Campus

Dear Learners

I am Mr. Jabulani Makhubele. I am the Doctoral student (PhD) in social work at North West University – Mafikeng Campus. The research study is for me and for career persuasions. As part of the research study, I am expected to collect information from identified participants of this study of which you are one of them. I have chosen you to participate in the study because of your knowledge of and/or involvement in life skills education. After the completion of the research study, I will provide a copy of the results to the schools involved. The information that you provide will be kept confidential and will not be provided to anyone. **Your identification particulars like surnames and initials will be kept securely in my office and thereafter the list will be destroyed.** Only me and my supervisor will have access to collected data (unlinked information). I further reassure you

the participants that you will be protected from any kind of harm, be it physical, psychological and emotional.

The sessions will take approximately one (1) hour. You are requested to be open and honest as possible as you can in answering questions. You are also requested to give answers freely and provide information to the best of your abilities. Confidentiality will be preserved at all cost by the researcher. It should also be noted that there are no right and/or wrong answers. The researcher will be extremely vigilant in respecting your rights to privacy and self-determination. You have:

- The right to refuse to be interviewed
- The right to refuse to answer any question
- Not be interviewed during mealtimes
- Not be interviewed for long periods

Thanking you in anticipation.

Jabulani Calvin Makhubele
PhD Candidate (Researcher)

Date

CONSENT FORM

I hereby append my surname and initials in the list provided as a way of agreeing to participate in the research study. I am solely convinced that the information provided will not be divulged to others to the detriment of my life, health, reputation, etc.

Surname and Initials	Signature

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TO LEARNERS

(Focus group discussions)

1. Learners' understanding of life skills education

2. Presentation of life skills education

3. The use of mother tongue in teaching of life skills education

4. The importance of indigenising life skills education

5. Methods to be used in indigenising life skills education

6. Learners' views about the role of parents, social workers and life skills educators in indigenising life skills education

7. Effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of life skills education programmes in schools and the relevance of language in indigenising life skills education.

8. The contribution of indigenous life skills education in alleviating health and social pathologies and improving the social functioning amongst the youth

9. Cultural issues to be discussed or included in an indigenised life skills education

10. The competence of life skills educators in local cultural customs, values and practices

11. Stakeholders to be involved in the process of indigenising life skills education

12. Learners' interest in listening to moral story telling from old people or community knowledge holders

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thanks for your time and information provided

_____ _____

Makhubele JC Date

PhD Candidate

Social Work Lecturer

North-West University – Mafikeng Campus

Department of Social Work
North West University
Mafikeng Campus

Dear Parents (SGB)

I am Mr. Jabulani Makhubele. I am the Doctoral student (PhD) in social work at North West University – Mafikeng Campus. The research study is for me and for career persuasions. As part of the research study, I am expected to collect information from identified participants of this study of which you are one of them. I have chosen you to participate in the study because of your knowledge of and/or involvement in learner's affairs. After the completion of the research study, I will provide a copy of the results to the schools involved. The information that you provide will be kept confidential and will not be provided to anyone. **Your identification particulars like surnames and initials will be kept securely in my office and thereafter the list will be destroyed.** Only me and my supervisor will have access to collected data (unlinked information).

I further reassure the participants that they will be protected from any kind of harm, be it physical, psychological and emotional.

The session will take approximately one (1) hour. You are requested to be open and honest as possible as you can in answering questions. You are also requested to give answers freely and provide information to the best of your abilities. Confidentiality will be preserved at all cost by the researcher. It should

also be noted that there are no right and/or wrong answers. The researcher will be extremely vigilant in respecting your rights to privacy and self-determination. You have:

- The right to refuse to be interviewed
- The right to refuse to answer any question
- Not be interviewed during mealtimes
- Not be interviewed for long periods

Thanking you in anticipation.

Jabulani Calvin Makhubele	Date
PhD Candidate (Researcher)	

CONSENT FORM

I hereby append my surname and initials in the list provided as a way of agreeing to participate in the research study. I am solely convinced that the information provided will not be divulged to others to the detriment of my life, health, reputation, etc.

Surname and Initials	Signature

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TO PARENTS (MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES)

(Focus group discussions)

1. Language preference in the teaching of life skills education

2. Parents' willingness in expounding moral story telling and folklores to learners.

3. Methods of indigenising life skills education

4. Contribution from the past as a way of improving the social functioning of youth

5. Erosion of African basic values

6. Effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of life skills education programmes in schools

7. Stakeholders to be involved in the process of indigenising life skills education

Thanks for your time and information provided

Makhubele JC

PhD Candidate

Social Work Lecturer

North-West University – Mafikeng Campus

Date

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Department of Social Work
North West University
Mafikeng Campus

Dear Social Workers

I am Mr. Jabulani Makhubele. I am the Doctoral student (PhD) in social work at North West University – Mafikeng Campus. The research study is for me and for career persuasions. As part of the research study, I am expected to collect information from identified participants of this study of which you are one of them. I have chosen you to participate in the study because of your knowledge of and/or involvement in learner development. After the completion of the research study, I will provide a copy of the results to the schools involved. The information that you provide will be kept confidential and will not be provided to anyone. **Your identification particulars like surnames and initials will be kept securely in my office and thereafter the list will be destroyed.** Only me and my supervisor will have access to collected data (unlinked information).

I further reassure the participants that they will be protected from any kind of harm, be it physical, psychological and emotional.

The session will take approximately one (1) hour. You are requested to be open and honest as possible as you can in answering questions. You are also requested to give answers freely and provide information to the best of your abilities. Confidentiality will be preserved at all cost by the researcher. It should

also be noted that there are no right and/or wrong answers. The researcher will be extremely vigilant in respecting your rights to privacy and self-determination. You have:

- The right to refuse to be interviewed
- The right to refuse to answer any question
- Not be interviewed during mealtimes
- Not be interviewed for long periods

Thanking you in anticipation.

Jabulani Calvin Makhubele	Date
PhD Candidate (Researcher)	

CONSENT FORM

I hereby append my surname and initials in the list provided as a way of agreeing to participate in the research study. I am solely convinced that the information provided will not be divulged to others to the detriment of my life, health, reputation, etc.

Surname and Initials	Signature

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TO SOCIAL WORKERS

Individual Interviews (Face-to-face interview)

1. Social workers' view of life skills education

2. Social workers' understanding of indigenising life skills education

3. Infusing cultural issues and giving cultural correct examples to learners whilst teaching life skills education

4. Methods of indigenising life skills education

5. Erosion of African cultural values, practices and tradition

6. Social workers' view on what renders available life skills education programmes effective or ineffective in schools

7. Contributions from the past to improve the social functioning of youth

8. Stakeholders to be involved in the process of indigenising life skills education

Thanks for your time and information provided

Makhubele JC

PhD Candidate

Social Work Lecturer

North-West University – Mafikeng Campus

Date

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Department of Social Work
North West University
Mafikeng Campus

Dear Life Orientation Educator

I am Mr. Jabulani Makhubele. I am the Doctoral student (PhD) in social work at North West University – Mafikeng Campus. The research study is for me and for career persuasions. As part of the research study, I am expected to collect information from identified participants of this study of which you are one of them. I have chosen you to participate in the study because of your knowledge of and/or involvement in life skills education. After the completion of the research study, I will provide a copy of the results to the schools involved. The information that you provide will be kept confidential and will not be provided to anyone. **Your identification particulars like surnames and initials will be kept securely in my office and thereafter the list will be destroyed.** Only me and my supervisor will have access to collected data (unlinked information).

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The session will take approximately one (1) hour. You are requested to be open and honest as possible as you can in answering questions. You are also requested to give answers freely and provide information to the best of your abilities. Confidentiality will be preserved at all cost by the researcher. It should also be noted that there are no right and/or wrong answers. The researcher will

be extremely vigilant in respecting your rights to privacy and self-determination. You have:

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- The right to refuse to answer any question
- Not be interviewed during mealtimes
- Not be interviewed for long periods

Thanking you in anticipation.

_____ _____

Jabulani Calvin Makhubele Date

PhD Candidate (Researcher)

CONSENT FORM

I hereby append my surname and initials in the list provided as a way of agreeing to participate in the research study. I am solely convinced that the information provided will not be divulged to others to the detriment of my life, health, reputation, etc.

Surname and Initials	Signature

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TO LIFE OREINTATION EDUCATORS

Individual Interviews (Face-to-face interview)

1. Life skills educators' understanding of life skills education

2. Life skills educators' view about indigenising life skills education

3. Methods of indigenising life skills education

4. Infusing cultural issues and giving cultural correct examples to learners whilst teaching life skills education

5. Cultural background of life skills educators

6. Life skills educators' view on the nature and approach to life skills education

7. Impact of Euro-centric Education

8. Effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of life skills education programmes in schools

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9. The contribution of indigenous knowledge in alleviating health and social pathologies and improving the social functioning of the youth

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10. Stakeholders to be involved in indigenising life skills education

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Thanks for your time and information provided

_____ _____

Makhubele JC Date

PhD Candidate

Social Work Lecturer

North-West University – Mafikeng Campus

ANNEXURE B: Maps

Map 1: Limpopo Province

Source: Statistics South Africa

Map 2: Thulamela Local Municipality

Source: Statistics South Africa