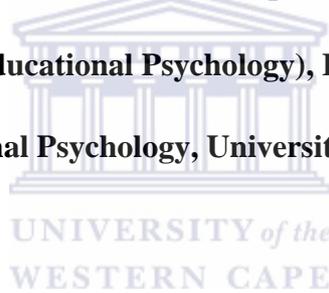


**THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN SUPPORTING TEACHING AND  
LEARNING IN SCHOOLS OF SKILLS IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

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**Full Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of  
Masters of Education (Educational Psychology), Faculty of Education,  
Department of Educational Psychology, University of the Western Cape**



**November 2013**

**Supervisor: Dr. Nadeen Moolla**

# THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOLS OF SKILLS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

## KEYWORDS

Education Support

Educational Psychologist

Learner Development

Learning Support

Roles

School Counsellor

School Development

School Psychologist

Student Development

Teacher Development

Teaching and Learning



## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOLS OF SKILLS IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

Current debates in education and education support focus on the importance of schools needing to facilitate the holistic development of learners and also ensuring the achievement of educational objectives. This study focused on the need for counsellors to support teaching and learning in Schools of Skills and investigated challenges that emerged when school counsellors facilitate school development.

The research question which framed this study was, what is the role school counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning and school development?

A mixed methods approach that employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques was adopted in an attempt to construct a rich and meaningful picture of school counselling practice within School of Skills. Participants included principals, counsellors and educators at four schools of skills situated in the Western Cape. The data collection process included interviews and questionnaires. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the four principals and the four school counsellors and questionnaires including both open-ended and closed questions were completed by educators.

The findings illuminate the psycho-social barriers experienced by learners and how school counsellors can support learners. Roles of school counsellors are varied and involve the provision of support to various members of the school community in addition to teaching and administration. Challenges faced by school counsellors were highlighted as lack of human resources, lack of support and workload. The recommendations are presented as suggestions for consideration at various levels in the system, from micro (level of the individual) to macro (level of the state).

## DECLARATION

I declare that *The Role of School Counsellors in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools of Skills in the Western Cape* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Nov 2013

Signed.....

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

DBST - District Based Support Team

DEC – Department of Education and Culture

DoE – Department of Education

ELSEN - Education of Learners with Special Educational Needs

ESS – Education Support Services

EST - Education Support Team

ILST - Institution Level Support Team

NEPI – National Educational Policy Institute

NCESS – National Council for Education Support Services

NCSNET – National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training

SADTU – South African Democratic Teacher's Union

SBST - School Based Support Team

SMT - School Management Team

TST - Teacher Support Team

WCED - Western Cape Education Department

EWP6 – Education White Paper 6

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the need for counsellors to support and facilitate the holistic development of the learner towards the achievement of broad and specific educational goals in schools as well as developing the school as a whole. The central focus being the unveiling the role school counsellors could play in supporting teaching and learning and school development in relation to what benefit can emerge from having a school counsellor based on site at school. To come up with any tangible results from the investigation, the study employed a qualitative approach in an attempt to understand the role of school counsellors with regard to how they support teaching and learning and school development. A mixed methods approach was applied in this study, however, primarily qualitative but drawing on quantitative techniques in phase three of the study as a triangulation strategy to qualify and deepen descriptions (details chapter three). A questionnaire was administered to the educators as a technique to provide insight and sketched the background and context of schools of skills. Interviews were also carried out with principals and some school counsellors. Prior to any discussions, a brief knowledge of background to the research study is provided as an enlightenment technique, and how school counselling has evolved. Given this context, it is necessary to understand how Schools of Skills emerged. This is then followed by the problem statement, research aim, objectives and questions. The research paradigm, research design and methodology that form part of the study are discussed in chapter three. To conclude chapter one, an overview of the thesis will be provided.

### 1.1. Background

Current debates in education and education support focus on the importance of schools needing to facilitate the holistic development of learners and to ensure the achievement of educational objectives. As mentioned above the study focuses on the need for counsellors to support and facilitate the holistic development of the learner towards the achievement of broad and specific educational goals in schools as well as developing the school as a whole. The Department of Education and Culture's (DEC) objective was to provide for the maximum development of each

learner with his/her particular aptitudes, abilities, interests and personality by giving guidance and counselling as an education method (NEPI, 1992).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, guidance was designed to be an integral part of the curriculum of South African public schools. 'Guidance' referred to a subject that formed part of the curriculum and was reviewed over the last decade and now is referred to as Life Skills (taught in the Foundation Phase) and Life Orientation (taught in the Intermediate, Senior and Further Education Phases of Education). At high schools, it catered for, amongst others, the psychological or emotional and social needs of learners in all grades (then standards). Schools generally employed a specialist guidance teacher who had a psychology background in their training. Besides teaching the prescribed syllabus to the various grades, guidance teachers also had the crucial role of counselling learners with problems of a psychological nature (Stelzer, 2003).

The National Education Policy Investigation report (NEPI, 1992) defined guidance and counselling as two different approaches and responsibilities of personnel. Guidance entailed curriculum activities, whereas counselling was a separate service that was provided to learners outside the curriculum, such as individual counselling, trauma interventions, and parent support and guidance. NEPI's report intended to gather data and make policy recommendations for a potential new litigation (ie. post-Apartheid). However, confusion was created amongst service providers due to fragmentation and lack of co-ordination, even when services were available. Thus, it was not always clear how to access these services and this had far reaching implications where the majority of children could not get access to support services even outside the education system. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1992) explained that guidance and counselling services were clearly viewed as a necessary part of general education services at policy level; few resources were however available to ensure proper implementation of policy in this area. This was further exacerbated by the few support services which existed and which were not proportionally distributed among all South African children. De Jong and Lazarus (1992), in the same report argued that the biggest obstacle to providing support services for all children of school going age was the limited number of professionals available and the

unequal employment of these limited human resources in South Africa. They also argued that the number of trained people that provided support services needed to be increased substantially.

The consequence to this limited human resources issue, prompted the Department of Education and Culture (House of Assembly) recommend a ratio of one teacher-psychologist to 300 students, while the DEC (House of Representatives) recommended a guidance teacher - student ratio of one to 250 (NEPI, 1997). At the time, 106 psychologists were employed by the Department of Education and Culture (House of Delegates) and each one of them was assisted by two or three guidance counsellors. Most secondary schools then, had a guidance counsellor on site. This scenario however, changed in the post-1994 period. It was also claimed that administrators reduced counseling positions due to budgetary reductions (Lambie and Williams 2004).

Still in relation to this limited resources issue, Fourie (2007) professed that one of the responsibilities of the Department of Education was school guidance programmes in South Africa but these programmes were hampered by financial constraints and low teacher-learner ratios (Motala, 2001). In addition to this, Fourie (2007) asserted that school counsellors had to assist learners with career decision-making. According to Van Niekerk (2002) only a few schools had qualified full-time counsellors who specialised in guidance counselling. Guidance counselling here focused on the counselling of individuals or groups of learners, who presented with similar concerns, e.g. lack of clarity regarding subject choice towards further study.

Much of the literature pertaining to school counselling, focuses on mainstream schools. This thesis however focuses particularly on school counselling in Schools of Skills. Therefore, it is necessary to sketch the context of Schools of Skills.

## **1.2 The Context of the Schools of Skills**

According to Eksteen (2009), , there were a few schools of industry in the Western Cape which served as rehabilitation centers for the education, development, protection and training of

children. These schools were specifically established to cater for learners presenting with emotional and also behavioural challenges, sentenced and placed by the order of the Children's Court section 15(1) (d) of the Child Care Act. 1983 (Eksteen, 2009).

These schools later became schools of skills in 1999 and were assigned the role of taking care of learners with special needs thus selected as special schools. These schools initially admitted only grade seven learners presenting with learning barriers, from mainstream schools (South African National Association for Specialised Education (SANASE), 2002). These intellectually challenged learners presented with poor scholastic abilities such as reading, writing and mathematics literacy. Additionally these learners also lacked interest in study, the ability to cope academically, suffered from low self-esteem and poor self-concept. Sands, Kozleski & French, 2000 cited that learners presenting with learning barriers or any specific need were assessed, “labelled with a deficit” and placed in “special” schools reason being as was believed that they could not cope in the mainstream

Consequence of this, a decision was made between the Department of Education (DOE) and South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) that schools, serving learners with special educational needs (LSEN) should develop their own learning programme because Curriculum 2005 did not make provision for vocational training (Eksteen, 2009). A one to three year technical training programme was initiated in these schools with the intention of preparing learners for the labour market. The programme consists of 50% academic and 50% vocational training (practical) in learning year one (SOS1), two (SOS2) and three (SOS3). However, the fourth year's (SOS4) programme consist of 40% academics and 60% vocational training. The academic programme include basic numeracy, literacy and life skills orientation and the vocational training programme includes cooking, welding, hairdressing, carpentry, tiling, etc.

In the Western Cape, learners that present with learning barriers and struggle to cope in the mainstream are referred to Schools of Skills by the district psychologist and learning support team. The school counsellor forms part of the school-based support team, identifying and referring learners to various schools.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Research into post-apartheid South African schools is of paramount importance and research of this nature has grown exponentially since 1994. One of such schools as already mentioned above, (schools of skills) was created to function in training young people for a specific skill in the workplace. It also has to deal with learners who are either struggling with intellectual, psycho-social or systemic barriers to learning. A careful examination of the procedures set up by the school to address these barriers, revealed that a referral form had to be completed and sent off to the district psychologist; and the latter could assist only after scheduling a visit to the school. This scheduled visit only takes place on the availability of the district psychologist who has to service up to 40 schools in a prescribed circuit in a district. Though learners are given the option to see a psychologist, there is often a long waiting period.

Since schools of skills admits only learners with behavioral problems with both scholastic barriers and other psycho-social issues, there are school counsellors placed at these schools with the training and qualification to support these learners, given their nature. Many of them drop out along the way due to no or little support for the reason that the intention of schools of skills is to support learners with barriers to learning so that they can be placed back into the mainstream schools. The question is: what kind of support is a school counsellor supposed to provide to these learners in these schools? With them in teaching posts, this entails teaching life orientation and life skills. The question is, when do school counsellors provide support and how can this be optimized?

Now that posts are being created and training of counselors continues in the Departments of Psychology and Education at various Universities, the question of roles, functions and the nature of support being provided come to the fore. It is important to gain deeper understanding of what counsellors have to contribute and how they are able to support teaching and learning within challenging conflicts such as these. Thus, questions pertaining to how these learners are helped and how and what these counsellors contribute to the support system of teaching and learning in these skill schools will be investigated and answered here.

## **1.4 Research aim, objectives and questions**

The intention of the study is to investigate the role school counsellors could play in supporting teaching and learning and school development in relation to what benefit can emerge from having a school counsellor based on site at school. The research is aimed at clarifying the role these counsellors play in support of teaching and learning in schools of skills. With this in mind, the following research questions came to the fore: Main research question: What role can school counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning and school development in Schools of Skills?

My subsidiary questions are:

1. What are the barriers to learning that are responsible for the need for counsellors to support teaching and learning in Schools of Skills?
2. What role do school counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning in Schools of Skills?
3. What role do counsellors play in supporting school development?
4. What challenges do school counsellors face in Schools of Skills?

Recently, the Western Cape Education Department created posts for the school counsellors in Schools of Skills. This study investigated the roles these individuals are playing and if school counsellors are doing what they supposed to be doing – supporting the learner.

## **1.5. Significance**

This research will contribute to the understanding of how schools can benefit from having a school counsellor based on site. The study provides evidence that learners placed at schools of skills are exposed to many psycho-social and emotional barriers. Some cases are so severe that learners need immediate attention.

This study would hopefully shed light on the pivotal role school counsellors can play in supporting the individual learner or teacher, as well as the school as a whole.

## **1.6 Rationale**

Psycho-social issues in school always have been and will always be part of our educational system. As an educator for almost 10 years, I have lived through these experiences with learners and more often, there is an outcry for help and the need is increasing daily. My school day experiences put us in situations where we specialized in guidance teachers and I was a living example of a learner with lots of issues to deal with both at school and at home. As a consequence of living through those experiences, my guidance teacher remains my 'hero' and mentor because I could go to speak with him and let out my feelings and feel good after a session with him.

Thus, my argument is, school counsellors are trained and registered professionals that should take up their rightful places and be used to the best of the learners needs, particularly in relation to what is happening now at schools. For example, gangsterism, bullying, murder, rape and drugs. These professionals are skilled to support learners at school. Though the Western Cape Education Department created posts for the school counsellors in Schools of Skills, some schools are still without these pivotal individuals. Moreover, are these individuals used optimally in the system? My study intends to delve into the roles played by these individuals in schools and a recommendation that there is a need for them in each school especially with our recent history of apartheid coupled with high dropout rates.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

This thesis was guided by a theoretical framework embedded in Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model which has relevance for understanding the impact of multiple factors influencing the education of the individual. This theory explains how key areas of an investigation are identified when attempting to understand how support at different levels could

be implemented in order to effectively facilitate child development. In addition, the revised Bio-Ecological Model of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1992) influenced and shaped the understanding of how an individual develops in different systems that forms part of his or her environment. This theory speaks about how change can be brought about within the individual's social context when working with the different levels of the system.

In a nutshell, factors that contribute to an individual's learning and development can be intrinsic, which are known as the 'bio', or extrinsic, referring to environmental factors and social changes. Consequently, the bio-ecological approach explains that the individual and the environment cannot be separated because each 'layer' affects the development of the individual as a whole Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1992). To go between all these layers and resolve issues pose by the study, a mixed method and qualitative approach was chosen as design and methodology of the study.



## **1.8 Research Design and Methodology**

A research design is a plan that is used to carry out the research process (Mouton, 2001). The research paradigm which frames this study is an interpretive constructivist paradigm, which allows for deeper understanding through human interaction and how world experiences make sense to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Designed along the qualitative paradigm, this study uses the mixed method approach. Reason being, multiple techniques are employed although it is primarily qualitative in its design and implementation. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argued that a multi method design involves the mixing of methodologies. The methods employed to triangulate the findings are questionnaires and interviews. Triangulation as one process involved in corroboration can either be the utilization of multiple data sources or methodological triangulation as was the case with this study. Multiple source methodology was employed here and multiple methods. Interviews

as qualitative research tools seek to describe and delve deep into the life of the respondent; their responses are crucial to the progress of the research. Both data collection and analytical tools used were in accordance to the method and the aim of the research. The study encompassed three phases of data collection wherein two different methods of data collection were employed.

Interviews were conducted in the first phase with the four school principals of the schools that participated in the study. In the second phase, the school counsellors were interviewed. Phase three constituted the completion of a questionnaire by the educators at the four schools. The questionnaire was composed of both open- and closed-ended questions, which generated both qualitative and quantitative data.

A combination of two analytical approaches was applied in this study, given varied data collection techniques. Qualitative data that emerged from the first two phases of data collection were systematically organized, coded, analyzed and categorized to give meaning to the raw data. The content analysis focused on identifying broad categories and, within these, key themes. This analysis aided in the interpretation of the raw data to formulate an insightful, meaningful and comprehensive response to the research questions. The closed-ended questions in the questionnaire provided biographical data and feedback regarding roles of school counsellors in supporting teaching and learning, school development, and challenges experienced by these professionals. This quantitative analysis facilitated the presentation of descriptive data with frequencies and percentages being used in the presentation thereof.

As already mentioned above, trustworthiness of the sources and research as a whole was ensured through triangulation, which incorporated the inclusion of multiple sources and multiple methods. Ethical aspects were considered and built into the study to ensure the credibility of the study. These aspects included permission for research, recording to name but a few was obtained in writing. Details of the research methodology are provided in Chapter 3.

## 1.9 Chapter outline of the study

*Chapter one* provides insight into the background and the theoretical framework of the study. A statement of the problem is articulated, with its related research aim, objectives and questions. A rationale for the study is presented followed by the significance of the study and then a presentation of the research paradigm, research design and methodology that were employed.

*Chapter two* discusses the literature that provides the conceptual framework for the study. This enables the reader to understand the pivotal role school counsellors play. The literature review focuses on the history of school counselling in South Africa and how policies influenced the development thereof. Chapter two also presents an overview of school counselling practice nationally and internationally. It also includes particular challenges that are faced by school counsellors in supporting teaching and learning. Since there is very little research on Schools of Skills in South African context, documents that explain these institutions were used as a source to provide a contextual framework for the study.

*Chapter three* frames the design and methodology of this study. The paradigm within which the research was conducted is outlined and the approach adopted in this study is explained. The research aim, objectives and questions are reiterated and the details of the design portrayed. Research methods and instruments employed are described in detail and their appropriateness for the study illuminated. The framework used for data analysis is outlined in accordance with issues related to the trustworthiness and ethics of the research.

*Chapter four* presents the findings that emerged in the study. Particular emphasis is placed on the roles played by school counsellors in Schools of Skills relative to the support of teaching and learning and school development. The results of the findings suggest school counsellors face a number of challenges in their attempt to support teaching and learning and school development.

*Chapter five* presents the discussion of the literature and findings of the roles of school counsellors, in their role of supporting teaching and learning, school development and the

challenges they face. The need for further researched are emphasized. Specific recommendations were also put forward.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAME OF THE STUDY**

This study sought to investigate what role school counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning and school development in Schools of Skills. Chapter one highlighted the background, objectives, problem statement and the theoretical framework of the study. This chapter provides an overview of the literature relevant to the study and guided my thinking of the methodology that would be applicable to the study. This then shaped the theoretical framework as well as the conceptual framework that was implemented in the research and to the role school counsellors could play in supporting Schools of Skills.

Relevant bodies of literature were reviewed and include school development, teaching and learning and school counselling. However, since literature focusing on Schools of Skills is unavailable in South African context, a review of draft departmental policy documents was engaged in to assist in presenting a clear picture of the context of the study. The history of school counselling, training of school counsellors and influence educational policies has on the roles of school counsellors in South Africa follows. Another body of literature reviewed includes how school counsellors can support teaching and learning and how their support can bring change to barriers to learning as well as school development. Additionally, global, international and national experiences and perspectives on the role of school counsellors were also reviewed. The literature concludes with challenges these professionals are facing within schools of skills.

The theoretical framework of the study will be explored next and insight will be given into how the revised bio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner will deepen the understanding of how the different systems play a role in the development of the learner. This will be depicted in fig. 2.1.

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical approach can be viewed as the frame which guides our thinking, actions and practices (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). This study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model which has relevance for understanding the impact of multiple factors influencing the

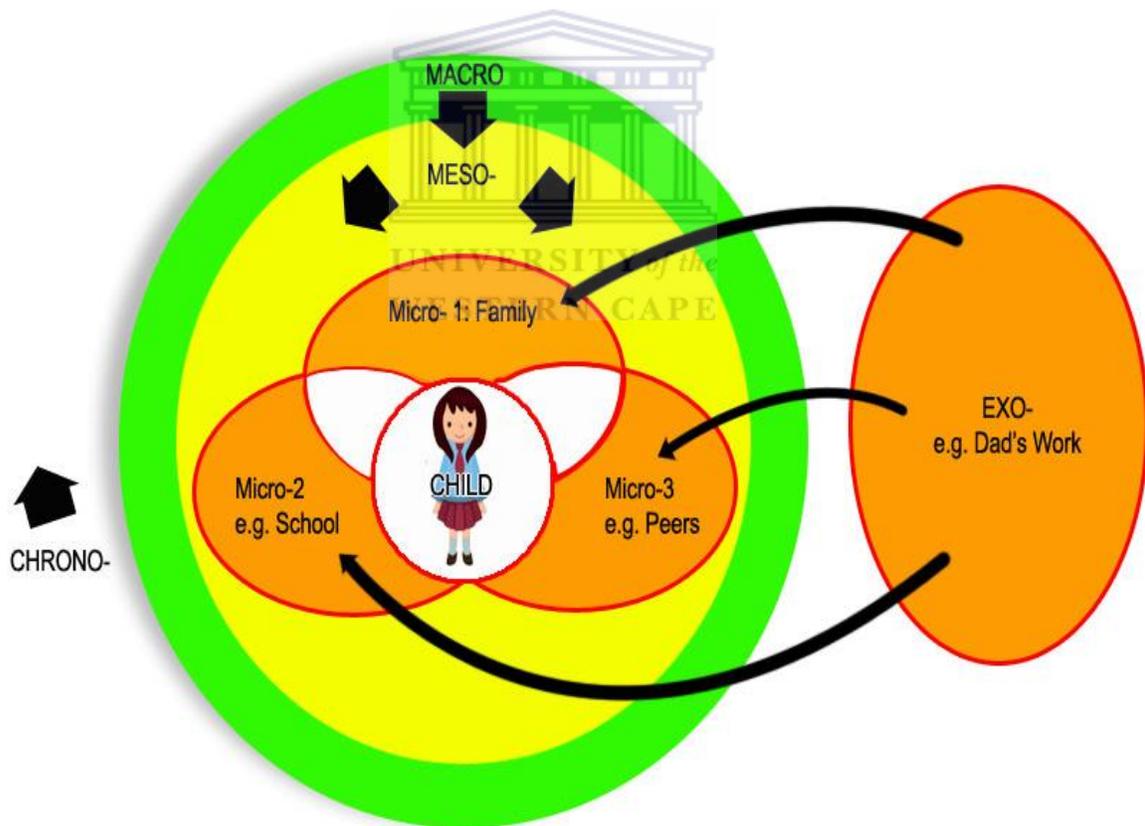
development of the individual. The revised bio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1992) deepens our understanding of how an individual develops within the different levels. This theory speaks about how change can be brought about within the individual's social context and so influences the individual. The school is one of these systems; hence this study focuses on support provision to learners through school counsellors. Therefore, within the context of this study, the "Person" and "Context" in Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model are of central importance. The study emphasises the importance of understanding the individual learners' (Person) needs and explores the extent to which the school as a microsystem (Context), through the school counsellor is able to address those needs.

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model has four major components consisting of: process, person, context and time factors that interact with the individual. Khrishnan (2010) referred to process as the ongoing interaction between the individual and the person or objects in the immediate environment and "Person" in the PPCT model refers to the influences of those who come into contact with the child. This can be the family, peers, caregivers and educators that could largely contribute and affect the development of the child. Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield and Karnik (2009) argues that Bronfenbrenner's "Person" in the PPCT model recognizes the significance of the biological and genetic characteristics of the person. These characteristics are further divided into personal stimulus called 'demand characteristics'. It is argued that such characteristics are inherent in the individual (age, gender, etc), but may influence the interaction people and expectations are therefore influenced by it. Another characteristic relates to 'mental and emotional resources', such as access to housing, food and education. The final characteristic is known as 'force characteristics' which relate to the persons disposition, being determined by the drive to want to succeed or not, and may include motivation, perseverance and personal choice.

Referring to the 'Context', is the best known component to the environment in which the individual is constantly interacting, whether it is social interaction, physical interaction or economic interaction. In Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems, the context constitutes four distinct systems known as the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem that has an indirect or direct influence on the individual. The ecological model views the

whole system and highlights the interconnectedness between the different systems in its quest to support all learners. However, the focus of this study will be on the microsystem which constitutes the school within which children develop.

The school as a focus of analysis is due to the fact that children spend more than half their day and for almost sixteen years of their life at school. They interact with their peers, the educators and extracurricular staff of the school. This interaction can either have a positive or negative effect on their well-being. Thus, the school counsellor is part of the microsystem and plays a pivotal role in supporting teaching and learning and the development of the school. The individual are therefore influenced and affected by school counsellors.



**Figure 2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model**

The micro system has the most immediate and earliest influence on the child and involves relationships and interactions that influence the individual (learner) directly. These types of interactions or relationships include family, school and neighbourhood Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005) cited in Pillay (2011). Interactions in the microsystem are referred to as continuous social interaction which occurs face-to-face. Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) term the relationship as bi-directional since the child's family can influence his or her behavior and vice versa.

The development of relationships between the microsystems is referred to as the mesosystem. It focuses on the connection between different microsystems such as the interaction that takes place between home and school. For example, if anything negative has happened at home it will spill over in the playground or at school and vice versa. Therefore, counselling services at school should be available for the child in times of need because it can also influence the mesosystem.

The macro system includes socio-economic status, poverty, ethnicity, values, beliefs, practices and customs and legal systems which may be considered as the outermost layer of the individual's environment (Landsberg, Kruger, & Nel, 2005). The values mentioned above might for example, include being polite and greet. These values will influence the proximal interaction in the individual's microsystems and also the individual's mesosystem.

On the other hand the chronosystem which involves the transition over time affects the interactions between the systems as well as the influence on the developing time of the individual (Donald, Lazarus, Lolwana, 2010). An example here pinpoints the fact that the changes that occur in the systems over time affects and interacts with the development of the individual.

Finally the exosystem describes the larger community systems with which the individual does not interact directly but may influence the proximal relationships with the individual in the microsystems (Donald, et. al. 2010). In the context of the school, the policies and decisions that are made at a wider level can also indirectly impact the child. Alterations occurring on one level have the potential to affect the entire system (Bronfenbrenner 1979). For example, if a child's

parents have to work shifts and parents cannot get time off to attend a parent-teacher meeting; this adversely influences the development of the child.

Different theories that relates to human development including the ecological theory, emphasizes the role environmental factors play. The ecological system can bring a holistic understanding of the learner experiencing barriers to learning and development. Landsberg (2005) argues that the ecological model contributes significantly towards the interactive role of the individual's development and in the systems social medium. Research shows that the systems can have a negative or positive impact on one another.

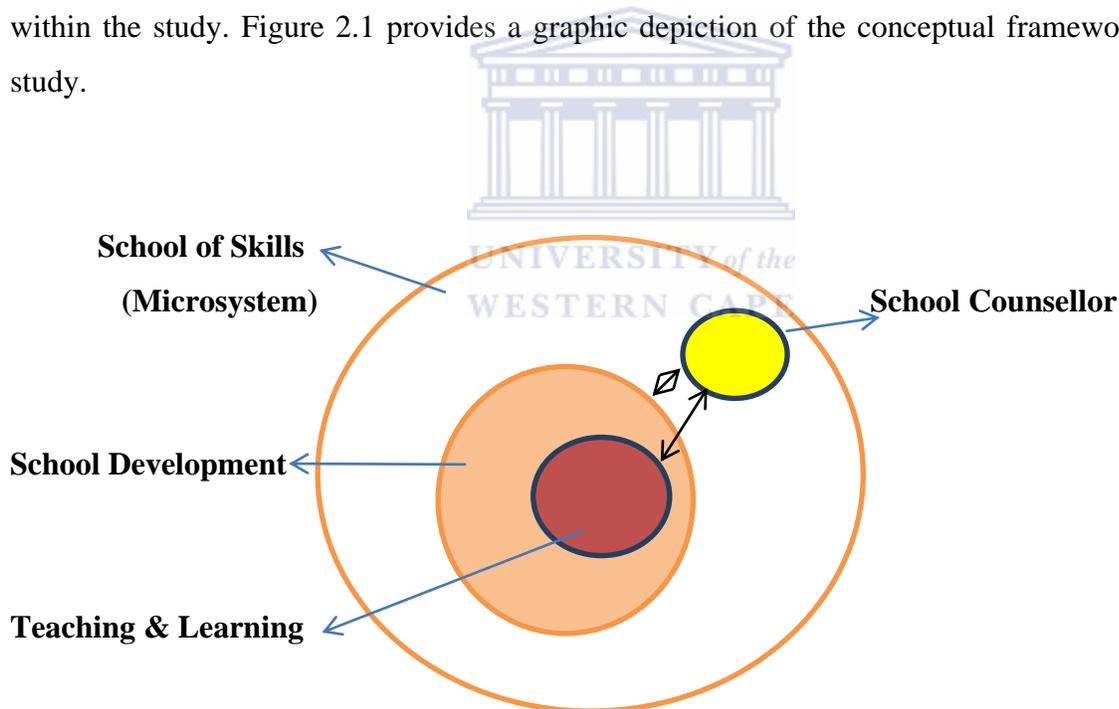
Given the complexity of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, it is important as this study hones in on the support provided at school which is an important microsystem in the life of a developing child. School counsellors work within the ecosystem, that is, the school, the family, the community, institutions, and other subsystems that interact within the school. As such, school counsellors form a pivotal role in the individual's development and support and the different systems that they are connected to according to (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010; Landsberg & Nel, 2005). Prilleltensky & Nelson, (2002) cited in Pillay (2011) explained that the ecological systems theory has some implications for school counsellors in South Africa. School counsellors are required to work within the microsystem in order to improve the school. Their roles include supporting and developing the various systems that learners are engaged in. They should be strong individuals with creativity and the ability to adapt to the environment as learners are faced with many psycho-social barriers at schools of skills. Given the context of the school and the learner, school counsellors should also be able to work in a multicultural as well as multilingual context, and they should be able to use internal as well as external networks for mutual benefit.

One can draw a conclusion from this study that the interaction between all the systems such as the school, the individual, the family, education and broader social context can cause learning barriers and development can be hampered. This study explores the school as a supportive space in which development and learning is facilitated by school counsellors on site.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is an essential part of locating and situating research (Moolla, 2011). She pursues that researchers must show the significance of their work by describing the main ideas in a study and the links between them, citing (Plakhotnik, 2009). Cresswell (2003) is of the opinion that the conceptual framework links the literature, the aim of the study and the research question(s).

In this study, the key concepts being investigated are, the school counsellor, teaching and learning and school development. The foundation for this study was based on a conceptual framework that laid the foundation of the problem statement and research questions. A conceptual framework according to Moolla (2011) forms a base from which the researcher can engage in data collection and analysis because it makes the researcher aware of what to look for within the study. Figure 2.1 provides a graphic depiction of the conceptual framework for this study.



**Figure 2.2 Conceptual Framework Related to the Role School Counsellors Play**

The conceptual framework, as depicted in figure 2.2, foregrounds four key aspects of the study. The four key aspects consist of school of skills, school counsellors, school development and teaching and learning. These four aspects form the basis of this study into the pivotal role that school counsellors can play at schools of skills. Within the School of Skills, it is hypothesized that school counsellors ought to play a role in teaching and learning as well as school development. The study therefore explores the school counsellor's role, the relationship between school development and teaching and learning, and how they are influenced and affected by school counsellors. The next aspect will deal with each of the concepts set out in the conceptual framework.

### **2.2.1 School of Skills**

School of skills, sometimes referred to as special schools, caters for learners who are intellectually challenged (South African National Association for Specialised Education (SANASE), 2001). These learners do not possess the basic writing, reading and arithmetic abilities. They need to be motivated to improve their self-esteem, gain self-respect and excel academically. Schools of skills (SOS) offer an adapted curriculum programme where learners can follow a technical programme. This technical programme consists of 50% academic and 50% technical curriculum over a four year period and is intended to prepare learners for the labour market. The learner profile placed in a (SOS) offering an adapted curriculum could incorporate the following:

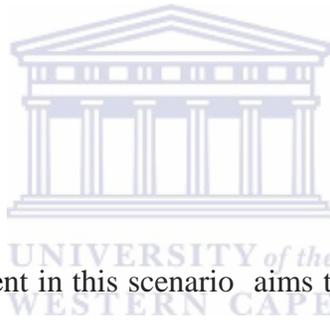
The learner:

- must be between 14 or 15 years old and should have received extensive, documented support in the mainstream school
- is experiencing moderate cognitive barriers to learning which cause very poor scholastic progress. The learner's lack of progress may be so severe that he/she will only be able cope on a Foundation Phase level.
- is not severely or profoundly intellectually disabled and does not experience serious

behavioural learning barriers

- may experience a short attention span, may have a very poor reading ability and attends school regularly, but does not reap the benefits of the curriculum in spite of support efforts
- may have spent more time in both Foundation and Intermediate Phase, without showing significant improvement.
- is usually functioning 2 years and more below his/her age cohort and is seriously at risk of leaving school early, without attaining skills to enter the world of work successfully
- will benefit by a vocational / practical approach to the curriculum.
- will develop skills in order to be able to enter the job market.

(WCED Draft on Curriculum and Assessment Adaptation for Access to Skills Development, 2011, p. 4)



### **2.2.2 School Development**

The emphasis in school development in this scenario aims to ensure that most facets of school life effectively contributes to the teaching and learning so that learners develop optimally as individuals and make a positive contribution to society (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010). School development has been described as an activity that focuses on formal and informal changes and procedures that take place within the school as an organisation (Moolla, 2011); Schmuck and Runckel, 1994). School development moves beyond the focus of the individual. It includes the expanded roles for school counsellors in collaboration with other partners. One could then say that school development entails policy development and systemic programmes at the level of the organization which are often sacrificed or ignored. Noguera (2010) reiterated that forming partnerships with families and other external organizations such as NGO's, clinics and extra curricula programmes, put school counsellors at an advantage to address learners' needs.

### **2.2.3 Teaching and Learning**

Hedegaard and Chaiklin (2005) alleged that the focus of teaching and learning through education can contribute towards the development of the learner. A study carried out by Naidoo and Naidoo (2007) describes the effectiveness of different teaching strategies and techniques in building learning skills. They also reiterated that even though there are various teaching techniques that could be used within the classroom, it seldom occur due to the struggle between maintaining classroom control and teaching. The findings revealed that deep rooted cultural issues need to be addressed so that poor learner performance and teacher burn-out be eradicated. Hence, poor learner performance was not due to the subject that was taught but rather of motivation, self-definition, and the will to partake in learning (Naidoo & Naidoo, 2007).

Lunenburg and Irby's (2011) study on teacher behaviors, characteristics and teaching strategies explained that teachers can use a number of teaching instructions such as verbal and nonverbal cues to keep learners attention because they lose interest easily due to their short attention spans. In addition to this, teachers should diverge learning activities so that learners' attention does not deviate and this teaching style could make a difference with regard to how the learner progress.



### **2.2.4 School Counselling**

It has been professed that school counselling involves the provision of support to facilitate academic as well as the social and personal development of learner (Paisley and McMahon 2001). They pursue that this balanced approach to counselling includes individual counselling, group counselling, with focus on intervening in classroom, teachers/ parents consultation and also to involve NGO's and whole school development activities (Paisley and McMahon , 2001).

### **2.3 History of School Counselling in South Africa**

South Africa has a rich history pertaining to counselling and its development and evolution. The De Lange report (1981) stated that counsellors, psychologists and psychometrics play a pivotal role in education. Bernard, Pringle and Ahmed (1997) affirmed that guidance as a service, failed to gain ascendancy although South Africa's education system indicated guidance in schools. Although guidance, given the recognition by the education regime, not much was done to increase the role it played within the school system. Hence, the lack of personnel and sufficient time were allocated to counselling. The NEPI report (1992) concurs. This point is reiterated by Lindhard (1981:39) who quotes Bernard and Pringle (1997) "that it is essential that counselling and guidance be considered a priority..."

The point that further exacerbates matters was the fact that the education system adopted the medical perspective and learners were categorized according to their physical, sensory and cognitive barriers. This 'model' of categorization located the deficit in the learner as the primary issue. Learners with these challenges were placed in special schools due to their needs (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001). The various reports from the Department of Education (1997), the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee for Education Support Services professed that the curriculum will always challenge the education and broader systems due to frequently changing needs of learners. Thus, the term barriers to learning and development are considered more appropriate rather than special needs.

Paisley and McMahon (2001), on the other hand affirmed that collaborative school counseling programme we know today, were more focused on vocational and ethical development in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Societal effects that influenced vocations and families after World War II, such as the breakdown of families as a consequence of divorce, standardized testing to gain entrance to college, and a changing world, generated an increased need for career guidance counselling. More emphasis was placed on psychological testing and a new focus on career guidance emerged in the school system.

There was an up cry that government reduced the number of teachers through its rationalisation programme, resulting in South Africa embarking on a voluntary structural adjustment programme (Motala and Pampallis, 2001). This meant that schools lost a number of teachers. Many of the experienced teachers accepted the voluntary severance packages, yet schools were still overstaffed which meant that they had to identify additional teachers who had to exit the system. Most schools decided to do away with the non-exam subjects like school guidance, physical education, library and religious instruction. Schools were thus drained of these specialist teachers (Motala & Pampallis, 2001). This marked the mass exodus of counsellors from the education system.

Another point raised by Du Preez and Roos (2008) in Pillay (2011), highlighted the fact that most schools in a democratic South Africa are desegregated and this is reflected in the demographics of race, culture and language that reflect a multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual school population. Consequently, this changing school context is presenting new challenges for school counsellors since South Africa has a high predominance of social problems that are often carried over to schools by learners from diverse backgrounds. Thus, some arguments from the likes of Pretorius-Heuchert and Ahmed (2001) in the same reading explains that there are “too many people with psychological problems and a limited number of people who could help. The scenario is aggravated by the fact that most schools do not have school counsellors (Professional Board for Psychology, 2007).

However, Maree (2006) and Ebersohn (2004) upholds in the same reading that there is an escalating need for professional counselling due to the HIV pandemic that is affecting family structures, child mortality, poverty, productivity and public services. Additionally, the government’s fiscal policy does not cater for the employment of school counsellors. Nevertheless, some schools attempt to overcome this issue by employing teachers who also take on the role of school counsellors. Yet, many of the formerly white schools that used to be called Model C schools are able to employ school counsellors because of the high school fees that are charged. This has resulted in a very imbalanced situation where the schools that need

counselling' services most, have to do without them. Policies influencing school counselling will be looked at in the section that follows.

## **2.4 School Counselling in South Africa**

This section explores the development of school counselling in South Africa, the current status of school counselling, the definition, role school counsellors are playing, the history, the policy, the training, school development as well as illuminating the challenges that school counsellors face in schools of skills.

### **2.4.1 Defining School Counselling**

'School Guidance' has been described as simply a shortened form of the term 'School Guidance and Counselling' (Roberts, 1993). Generally, the 'guidance' aspect as interpreted in the past, involved a focus on life skills where the teacher dealt with relevant issues and topics pertaining to the young adolescent. This was known as a subject or method taught in schools. These topics formed part of the curriculum and guidance are either in groups or as a whole class. Counselling are aspects that involve individual therapy with a strong focus on crisis intervention, or special attention and referrals to learners with particular needs. This we literature has proven goes against the original designs of of school guidance for it was originally designed to be an integral part of the curriculum of South African public schools prior to 1994 (Paiseley and McMohan, 2001). It catered for the needs of all high school learners including the psychological, emotional and their social needs. Besides focusing on career and moral development, school counselling has evolved to today's programs that include comprehensive school counselling programs, developmental counselling programs and collaborative school counselling programmes

Counsellors have been described by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (2005) as psychological workers who perform psychological screening and basic assessment and technically limited psychological interventions with a range of people, aiming at enhancing personal functioning in a variety of contexts including school, work, sport and community. In

relation to the history of school counselling, Campbell and Dahir (1997), in Paiseley and McMohan (2001), explained the evolvement of school counselling in such a manner that a balanced approach to counselling was adopted which includes support for student development. This balanced approach includes three areas, namely careers, academics and personal or social development. Thus, there are several intervention strategies that are based on the National Standards for School Counselling that could be appropriate for crisis intervention or promote healthy development. These include individual and group counselling, consultation with teachers, parents, outside agencies and whole school development.

Moreover, the school counsellors' roles focused on developing the individual, incorporating the molding of student attitudes and behaviours (Stelzer, 2003). Therefore, a school counsellor is regarded as a special kind of teacher that had training in this role (Alutu & Etiobhio, 2006). Arguments from some sectors uphold that the category, Registered Counsellor, was a professional category that was inaugurated by the law of the South African Minister of Health launched in December 2003 (Elkonin & Sandson, 2006; Abel & Louw, 2009). These professionals are expected to provide psychological services to the community that was previously disadvantaged. However, these services will be based on a primary level.

Training for these professionals is also a requirement and must be monitored by a registered psychologist. The following section describes the training programme school counsellors undergo during their practicum.

#### **2.4.2 Training of School Counsellors in South Africa**

In South Africa, school counsellors require an Honours degree in education with psychology as a major. Modules for the Honours degree include counselling practice, psychometrics, psychological assessment, counselling theory, development and learning, special needs and support, life skills and health education and educational psychology research project. On completion of a six months practicum and a board exam thereafter, registration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) is acquired. The practicum entails doing

individual and group work and programme interventions with learners at a school, which were supervised by a registered psychologist. The HPCSA also require that counsellors be skilled in specific area or practice domain (at least two) for example, School Counselling, Career Counselling, Family Counselling, Primary Mental Health, Trauma Counselling, HIV/AIDS Counselling, Pastoral Counselling, Employee Well-Being, Sport Counselling and Human Resources. A national board examination in addition to the university's examination is written to assess the applied intervention and ethical professional competencies of the counsellor. Thereafter, registration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa is required.

According to the Health Professional Counselling Board for Psychology (2005), registered counsellors core focus involves assessments in terms of intellectual and/or scholastic barriers, aptitude tests, personality profiling and career placements. Addition to this, counsellors may do referrals, short term interventions such as supportive counselling which includes psycho-education, promoting psychosocial wellbeing. School counsellors are specialists then, specifically trained at universities in this area.

Brott and Myers (1999) upholds this opinion in Paisley & McMahon (2001), that professional development is considered as a lifelong learning process and school counsellors must receive the necessary supervision in addition to enhance their skill-building. Supervision can aid them to recognize school-wide issues and help in the planning and developed to address these apprehensions. Professional development can include anything from specific to personal such as cultural competency training, understanding diagnostic classifications, presenting issues such as sexual orientation or indirect related development that could assist with making the job easier such as utilizing technology as well as assistance in alleviating job stress and fight burnout.

### **2.4.3 Roles and Functions of School Counsellors**

This study is investigating the pivotal role that school counsellors play in supporting the learner as a whole as well as contributing to school development. Drawing on the theory that frames this study, the assertion is that school counsellors ought to be working in collaboration with the

principal, educators, parents and the Institution Level Support Team. Burnham and Jackson (2000) argue that school counsellors roles have been redefined and broadened through the years and the major functions have been categorized under three areas namely, counselling, consultation and coordination. But contrarily to this they address various societal issues which adversely affect learners of all ages.

Career programmes and the development of counselling programs are seen as an essential part of the school counsellors' roles (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Herr, 2001). There has been a shift over the years from their focus on learners' career and moral development to a current focus that is comprehensive, developmental, and collaborative in nature Paisley & McMahon (2001). This shift is largely a response to psycho-social, political and economic issues facing learners, schools, communities and families.

The responsibilities of counsellors should involve supporting student development not only in academic and career matters but also with personal and social concerns (Fitch & Marshall, 2004; Nastasi (2000) in Pillay (2011). This includes the personal and social domain that warrants the need for counsellors to work with a variety of stakeholders within the school context that include teachers, parents, and community organizations. This further endorses the ecological systems approach outlined earlier in this chapter.

However, there are disagreements from Elkonin and Sandison (2006) and Abel and Louw (2009) stating that the role of school counsellors should include working with individuals on a one-on-one basis, doing group counselling which includes support; sexuality, anger management, self-esteem development and psycho-education which cover life skills for example, study methods, wellness, HIV/AIDS and health behaviour. Counsellors also assist with training regarding psychological issues for example, discipline in children's homes.

The study on school guidance and counselling in Zimbabwe discovered that both school counsellors and learners viewed school guidance and counselling services as a beneficial part of education and developing the learner holistically (Chireshe, 2006).

Alutu and Etiobhio (2006) try to sum up that the major role of school counsellors is to assist individuals to cope with challenges pertaining to their psychological development, education vocational needs and facilitate the learning process of learners. Boyer (2004) includes advising learners about college and universities to their role, processing college applications, keeping records of dropouts, giving support and comfort to abused children, and providing interventions to learners who are going through crisis and conflict.

As already mentioned above, it can easily be pointed out here that counseling in school play a fundamental role in meeting the needs of learners by providing educational, emotional and social support. This is accomplished through academic counselling, personal and social counselling and career counselling. Thus, school counselling is for all learners and not only for those presenting with barriers (Dodson, 2009). Preventative work is thus their brief as well. It has also been mentioned severally the role these counsellors play and Stellenberg (2008) argues they have also always played a crucial leadership role in supporting learning outcomes for all students and improving students' achievement. They envisage the integration of academic standards into the school counselling curriculum focusing on more specific techniques for closing achievement gaps.

A number of studies have been undertaken on the role of counselling in schools; Lapan and Harrington (2010) explored the role of school counsellors in promoting college readiness and changeover from eighth grade into high school as well as students' academic achievement. The authors reported that the learners were more positive when professional school counsellors were empowered to use their skills to work directly with them. Meanwhile, Barnett's (2010) qualitative study conducted showed that there were three distinct factors that emerged on the roles of school counsellors. These factors included providing academic services to learners; these include scheduling academic counselling and coordinating standardized testing programs, providing mental health services as an essential part of school counselling and assisting in other areas of need within the school district such as disciplinary hearings.

Additionally, Steen and Noguera (2010), argue that school counsellors play a pivotal role in schools. School counsellors are often consulted by parents on how to meet the needs of the learners, learners with behavioural problems and academic barriers. These learners are often referred to them and other schools and community leaders seeking feedback regarding solutions to problems. With so much to tackle as far as learner problems are concerned, Prilleltensky and Nelson (2002) in Pillay (2011), proposes that creativity and being adaptive to the environment should be some strong points with the counsellors so as to be able to use internal as well as external networks for mutual benefit.

According to the Government Gazette (2011) “registered counsellors require providing:

- psychological screening
- primary mental status screening
- basic assessment and psychological interventions with individuals aiming at enhancing personal functioning
- perform psychological assessment excluding projective
- neuropsychological and diagnostic tests
- enhancing personal functioning
- performing supportive, compensatory and routine psychological interventions
- identifying clients requiring more sophisticated or advanced psychological assessment and referring such clients to appropriate professionals
- participating in policy formulation based on various aspects of psychological theory and research

- participating in the design, management, and evaluation of psychologically-based programmes in the organisations including but not limited to health, education, labour, and correctional services training, and supervising other registered counsellors and practitioners
- conducting psychological practice and research in accordance with the Ethical Rules of Conduct for Practitioners registered under the Health Professions Act, 1974
- adhering to the scope of practice of registered counsellors; conducting, and reporting on research projects and
- providing expert evidence and/or opinions”.

The roles and responsibilities of school counsellors in South Africa are clearly very broad. There are several social barriers that are most prominent in South Africa and include poverty, various forms of abuse, violence in schools, various forms of discrimination, sexism, xenophobia, high crime rates, HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies. These social problems place additional demands on those practicing in South African schools. They play a fundamental role in the development of the learner and supporting learners throughout their academic career

#### **2.4.4 Policy influencing School Counselling in South Africa**

The National Education Policy Investigation’s (NEPI) report (1992) explained that guidance and counselling services were clearly viewed as a necessary part of general education services at policy level. However, few resources were available to ensure proper implementation of the policy in this area. This was further exacerbated by the few support services which existed which were not proportionally distributed among all South African children. The report also claim that confusion was created due to fragmentation and lack of co-ordination, even when school counselling services were available. Thus, it was not always clear how schools could access

these services and this had far reaching implications where the majority of children could not get access to support services.

South Africa was a signatory of the SALAMANCA (1994) report in which it was professed that learners with special needs and barriers to learning should be supported through extra-curricular programmes to provide minimal help in the regular classrooms. Assistance should also be provided to these learners by various support groups that specialise in special needs for example, specialised teachers, external agencies, departments and institutions, advisory teachers, educational psychologists, counsellors, speech and occupational therapists.

Within the context of the above, the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) (DoE, 2001) obligates the South African government to reinforce education support services. Support services at national and provincial levels are provided and the key support functions are to provide a policy and management framework to provide direct and indirect services to schools and education institutes. EWP6 (Doe, 2001) specified that support professionals should include, school counsellors, school psychologists, school social workers, learning support educators (LSE), learning support advisors and curriculum advisors. EWP6 outlines the need for structures to be established in order to facilitate the provision of support to schools. This notion is supported by NEPI (1992), stating that there should be a support system that would support the learner holistically.

The National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications (DoE, 2007) requires support programmes to be developed to accommodate those learners who are presenting with learning barriers and these decisions should involve partnerships between teachers, parents and educational support services (ESS). NCSNET/ NCESS (1995) promote a systemic approach which implies that, the lens through which the problem is looked a systemic one. The problems which are manifested are understood not only in terms of the individual but the environment as well.

The lack of implementation of the policy is the result of what is happening in schools today regarding school counsellors supporting teaching and learning. However, this is not the case set

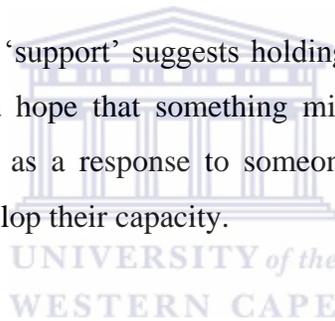
out in the literature review because they are not taking up the position they have been trained for. One of the aspects of a school counsellor is to support teaching and learning.

## **2.5 Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and learning and education support cannot be seen as different or separate. Support in education is crucial to ensure that learners develop to their full potential. One need to look at what ‘support’ means in general, what it means within education and how crucial support is in terms of education to ensure that learners develop to their full potential.

### **2.5.1 School Counsellors Supporting Teaching & Learning**

According to Loebenstein (2005), ‘support’ suggests holding up of something that might be in danger of collapsing, providing a hope that something might be improved upon. Therefore, support in education can be seen as a response to someone who needs help, mentoring and guidance with the intention to develop their capacity.



DoE (2005) defined learner support as the school’s responses to the various needs of the learners to increase the capacity of learners through activities. Learner needs could encompass psychological needs, physical needs, social needs and learning barriers. Education support includes all material and human resources that are available to support and address the diverse needs of the learner. This include school counsellors, educational psychologists, therapists, learning support staff, special educators and mainstream educators, including supporting learners not only academically but socially and emotionally as well. This notion is supported by Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) and NEPI. Furthermore, a three-tier level of support services is proposed and includes:

- (i) The Institutional Level Support Team (ILST)
- (ii) The District Based Support Team (DBST)

(iii) Intersectoral Collaboration between the different Government Departments is recommended.

However, the level which is explored is school counsellors identifying and addressing barriers to learning in local school contexts.

Hanley (2003) emphasized that development cannot be separated from learning due to the interrelationship between academic learning and social-emotional learning. Problems that often have a negative effect on youth are substance abuse, family discord and bereavement, pregnancies and bullying. Many of the social emotional issues mentioned above not only disrupt school life but also impacts on teaching and learning (Butler, 2007) school counsellors in partnership with families, NGO's, the community, clinics and after-school programs are in a better position to provide services that address the barriers and needs of learners (Noguera 2010).

The following section will provide insight into the influence counselling have on teaching and learning and the effectiveness of it.

### **2.5.2 The Influence of Counselling on Teaching and Learning**

Existing literature identifies barriers such as emotional and social challenges experienced by learners, affecting their learning. This suggests that there is a need for counselling of some sort that could be relevant to support learners.

Stamp and Loewenthal's (2008) study on counselling/ psychotherapy explores how counselling/psychotherapy could be of relevance to individuals that experience barriers to learning. Their study revealed that counselling and/or psychotherapy of specific nature are helpful assisting learners to build self-esteem and inspiring the learner to experience specific learning barriers by providing them space. Meanwhile Target and Fonagy (1996) in Stamp & Loewenthal (2008) testifies to the fact that that studies on psychological interventions provided to individuals with developmental and learning barriers portrayed that, individuals presenting with reading barriers were offered counselling/ psychotherapy weekly for one to four sessions over a period of two year. These counseling sessions showed a major improvement in the

learners' levels of education. A follow-up after one year indicated that progress continued due to frequent therapy sessions.

Within the context of above, it clearly provide evidence that counselling / or psychotherapy can be of relevance to support the learner that experience barriers to learning.

### **2.5.3 Barriers to Teaching Learning**

Schools as site of learning should create conditions for learners to succeed in addressing learning barriers and this can only be accomplished through support structures (Holz & Lessing, 2002). Much of the existing literature focus on learning barriers and the effect it has on the individuals, underscoring the high occurrence of psychological barriers including those presenting with symptoms of depression. (Stamp & Loewenthal, 2008). Other barriers also cited in Stamp and Lowenthal (2008) were barriers that could be understood as anxiety and panic, low self-esteem and stress. These barriers intensify prevailing challenge within academics which leads to the individual not interested in learning and gaining new experiences. This is the kind of learner counsellors should support. Thus, McLoughlin et. al., (2002) in Stamp and Loewenthal (2008), asserts “educational models for counselling are more suitable than therapeutic models” (p.350).

According to Atmore et. al. (2012), an analysis of the South African government early childhood development (ECD) policy and programme reports, found that approximately 3,8 million children (59,2%) live in poverty. There is evidence from results that majority of children have been impacted negatively by social and economic inequalities in South Africa, resulting in inadequate education, social, and health care services, as well as inadequate nutritional services provided by the government (Atmore et al, 2012). Moreover, the authors argue that children from poor communities are exposed to limited access in order for them to meet their basic needs such as education, nutrition, healthcare services and a safe environment which is closely connected to fiscal poverty.

Access to better services is of importance here because, there is belief that malnutrition and hunger do not only affect a child's ability to concentrate and perform academic tasks at school but also hamper their developmental and learning ability Wildeman and Mbebethlo (2005) citing Atmore et al (2012). Malnutrition also causes irreversible damage such as impaired behaviour, impaired learning abilities and educational achievements due to lack of nutrients to the brain.

## **2.6 School Counsellors Supporting School Development**

School development's objective is to ensure that all facets of school life are aiming towards promoting teaching and learning that are effective so that learners develop optimally as individuals and make a positive contribution to society (Donald et al, 2010). School development has been described by (Moolla, 2011; Schmuck and Runcke, 1994) as an activity that focuses on formal and informal changes and procedures that take place within the school as an organisation. They adamantly stick to their opinion that the goal of school development should focus both on improving the quality of life of the individual as well as the organization, directly and indirectly. The focus must be on educational issues. Therefore, school development moves beyond the focus on the individual. Its emphasis is on the expanded roles for school counsellors in collaboration with other partners.

Dahir and Stone (2003) highlighted seven steps that support school counsellors in their determination to broaden their programmes and sphere of influence to support students to be successful learners. The authors identified an acronym that captures seven steps, called

**M.E.A.S.U.R.E.** Each step forms part of a broader process:

- **Mission** of the school – School counsellors should play a fundamental role in the mission and improvement plan of the school.. Additionally, counselling programmes of the school should be in alignment with the school mission. The focus should be on preparing all learners to graduate from high school and be skilled to contribute in society or the world of work.

- **Elements** that are part of the schools' reports – School counsellors can play a pivotal role in collecting information with regard to the learners' school attendance pattern such as the course they are enrolled or school attendance pattern that could relate to the learner's achievement.
- **Analysis** of the data to see which intervention programme can impact positively – School counsellors can help identify barriers to accessing postsecondary options that can contribute to or impact student goals.
- **Stakeholders** who need to be identified internally and externally and who can elaborate to influence the data – School counsellors can play a pivotal role in encouraging collaboration between all members involved in addressing school improvement issues by facilitating the process.
- **Unity** with the stakeholders to collaborate and assign intervention strategies – School counsellors doing teambuilding with other stakeholders and share accountability so that isolated resolutions can be avoided.
- **Reanalyze** strategies to determine which should be replicated – Irrespective of what they have accomplished, they should reanalyse it because it assist to scrutinize what is feasible or not.
- **Educate** many as to how the programme benefit moving critical data elements – Results of school counselling programs should be publicized to demonstrate the positive impact on learner success and the shift in school counselling.

The seven steps above are regarded as a school development initiative. School counsellors roles are thus fundamental in supporting the learner and the school to develop to their full potential. As a result school counsellors would need to work with the system for this multi-level change to be achieved.

## 2.7 Challenges Facing School Counsellors

Challenges facing school counsellors emerge from educational expectations, changes in society, policy and curriculum. School counselors always encounter a series of challenges (Paisley & McMahon, 2001) which might include national agendas that focus on achieving academically as well as violence within the school which leads to school counsellors being pro-active. These situations prove them to question the focus of school counselling programs.

De Jong and Lazarus (1992) are of the opinion that the biggest obstacle to providing support services for all children of school going age is the limited number of professionals available and the unequal employment of these limited human resources in South Africa. The numbers of trained people that provide support services needed to be increased substantially due to the increased psycho-social problems learners are facing. Paisley and McMahon (2001) put forward that the major challenge that face school counsellors is the continuing debate around their roles. They are placed in unrealistic positions and not utilized in the best interest of the learners'.

Another challenge school counsellors are facing that statistics has revealed is that there are inconsistencies alongside racial and ethnic lines when it comes to academic achievement, Education Trust 1996 in (Paisley and McMahon, 2001). They need to be skilled when addressing learners along racial and ethnic lines. However, great improvement has been made within multiculturalism within schools. School counselling interventions need to be adapted to meet the changing needs of society and should be within the scope of their mission (Herr, 2001) cited in Paisley & McMahon, 2001).

In a study carried out by Chireshe (2006) in a secondary school in Zimbabwe, findings revealed that the Zimbabwean counselling services were not always planned for at the beginning of each year. She also reiterated that the effectiveness of the Zimbabwean Secondary School guidance and counselling services was negatively affected by lack of resources and training and non-counselling duties performed by school counsellors. And relating to this it has also been affirmed

that school counsellors spend a great deal of time engaging in clerical and administrative tasks that hamper direct engagement with students (Lapan and Harrington, 2010).

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The global trends of counselling support provide a useful basis through which the South African school counselling practices could be explored. Comparing school counselling globally, to the situation in South Africa, highlights the fact that school counselling is not seen as an essential part of education and the development of the learner. Despite the educational changes that are occurring in South Africa, there seems to be a gap between policies around support structures and the implementation of policies within schools.

Problems arise when counsellors do not engage in expected roles but rather in other roles such as teaching, administration work for example maintaining attendance records and filing papers, participate in disciplinary hearings or doing hall duties. School counsellors play a pivotal role in the holistic development of individuals, which includes dealing with challenges in relation to learners developmental, educational and vocational needs. Moreover, the goal of a counsellor is to foster the psychological development and facilitate the learning process of learners.

Therefore, the literature review explored in this chapter represents evidence that school counsellors are the primary object of study in this research. The discussions of the literature review in this study depict the roles school counsellors are supposed to play within schools.

The chapter which follow describe the methodology that is employed in the study. These four concepts are linked to school counselling as was depicted in the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.2).

The next chapter outlines the research design, methodology of this study, describe the participants, the instruments and the procedures employed for data collection and analysis. Issues of triangulation as a means to ensure trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations that were applied are also discussed.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology of this study. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the research design and then describes the participants, the instruments and the different procedures employed for data collection and analysis. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) advance that the research methodology expands on the design of the study and provides insight into the sampling methods employed, the data collection procedures, the research instruments and the data analysis techniques to be applied. Issues of triangulation as a means to ensure trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations that were applied are also discussed.

### 3.1 Research Aim and Research Questions

The main aim of this study is to provide insight into the role school counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning at schools of skills. Research questions which framed this study include:

1. What are the barriers to learning that are responsible for the need for counsellors to support teaching and learning in schools of skills?
2. What role does school Counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning in schools of skills?
3. What role do school counsellors play in supporting school development in schools of skills?
4. What challenges do school counsellors face in schools of skills?

### 3.2 Research Design

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) postulates that a research design indicates how the research is executed, what happens to the subjects and what methods of data collection are used. It is the framework on which the research draws in order to show how all the major components of the research project work together to address the research question (Troachim, 2006). Therefore, the study design is the end result of the decision made by the researcher concerning the methods implemented.

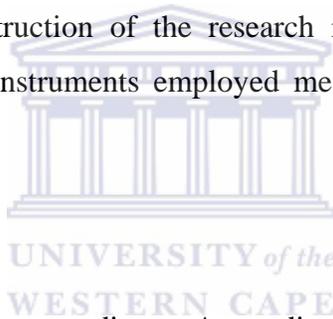
A mixed methods approach was applied in this study, however, it is primarily qualitative drawing on quantitative techniques in phase three of the study as a triangulation strategy to qualify and deepen descriptions. A mixed method design involves the mixing of methodologies (Creswell, 2005; Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002). This mix method involves a questionnaire that was drawn up for the educators, falling under the qualitative paradigm which provided insight and sketched the background and context of schools of skills. Another qualitative methods technique that quantified and deepened the study was the interviews with the principals and school counsellors.

This study employed a qualitative approach in an attempt to understand the role of school counsellors with regard to how they support teaching and learning and school development. De Vos, Fouche and Delport (2002) refer to qualitative research, in its broadest sense, as something that elicits the participants' account of meaning, experience and perceptions. It produces descriptive data that is written or spoken by the participants themselves. According to Neuman (2003), qualitative data is empirical and collected in the form of words or pictures, rather than numbers. This involves documenting real events, recording what people have to say, observing specific behaviours and studying written documents. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) on the other hand views it as an activity that is done in its natural setting, attempting to make sense of the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to it.

Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, describes and analyses themes, and conducts the

inquiry in a subjective manner (Creswell, 2005). Additionally, Durrheim (2006) upholds qualitative research is often naturalistic, less concerned with statistical accuracy, allowing the researcher to do in-depth investigations and be flexible and interactive. Small samples are commonly used in qualitative research. A limitation of qualitative research is that data collection, data analysis and interpretation can be time consuming and demanding due to the volume of data collected. Firstly data need to be organized by sorting, filing, and breaking it down into smaller parts. Then the data have to be checked several times, noting possible categories. The following step would then be to identify themes and patterns that emerge within the data collected. The data is then summarised and synthesized.

Questionnaires are a quantitative research method which was employed in this study. The data in quantitative research make use of numerical measurements and can be condensed by using statistics (Babbie, 2010). Reconstruction of the research instruments ensure validity of the research and emphasise that the instruments employed measure what it supposed to (Patton, 2002).



### **3.3 Research Paradigm**

This study is based on an interpretive paradigm. A paradigm is a set of beliefs and assumptions that guides thinking and shapes the research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2005). Different researchers professes different views of this concept; Denscombe (2003) explains that an interpretive paradigm is a process of seeking to understand a phenomenon or worldviews of people meanwhile De Vos (2005) explains that paradigms help researchers to organise their observations and shape the way in which they gain knowledge about the world. This, however, is based on beliefs and assumptions about the rapport concerning the researcher and the research being conducted, values in society, and the process of the research itself. Furthermore, a research paradigm guides the questions that are asked and give an indication of where to look for answers.

This study falling under the interpretive paradigm then, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) asserts that an interpretive study is a broad description of a phenomenon that is experienced at first hand and

seen through the eyes of people. This process of engagement allows the researcher to explore the practices of participants involved which is based on a conception of reality (ontology) as constructed through their interactions. Therefore, the intention of an interpretivist approach is to discover the meaning of the world as it is experienced by the individual (Mertens, 2005). Additionally, an interpretivist approach seeks to understand actions and behaviours, to learn to know why things are seen as they are seen; it is a search for explanations for phenomena.

### **3.4 Research Sites**

There are eighteen schools of skill in the Western Cape. Twelve of these schools are situated in and around Cape Town metropole and the remaining six schools are situated outside of the cape metropole. Of the twelve schools situated within cape metropole, six of these schools employ a registered school counsellor. It was decided to include one school of skill, which had a registered school counsellor based on site, from each district within the cape metropole. The table below presents, schools of skills within the cape metropole. The qualification of individuals holding positions as school counselors has not been included due to confidentiality. Not all schools within the cape metropole have school counsellors. Some are registered psychologist as well as psychometrist.

| <b>DISTRICT</b>   | <b>NAME OF SCHOOL AND AREA</b>  |
|-------------------|---|
| Metropole Central | Batavia (Claremont)<br>De Grendal (Milnerton)   |
| Metropole South   | Siviwe (Gugulethu)<br>Mitchells Plain (Mitchells Plain)   |
| Metropole East    | West Cliff (Parow)<br>Faure (Faure)<br>Noluthando (Khayelitsha)<br>Lathi Tha (Khayelitsha)                          |
| Metropole North   | Bishops (Bishop-Lavis)<br>Beth-AI (Kuilsriver)<br>Athlone School for the Blind (Glenhaven)<br>Florida (Ruitervaght) |

**Table 3.1: Schools of Skills in the Cape metropole**

Schools of skills are schools that cater specifically for learners aged 14 years and older, presenting with learning barriers and cannot cope in the mainstream. Learners in schools of skills are taught on levels and not grades as in the mainstream. School of skills only have 4 levels, level one refers to the first year when they enter school of skills at the age 14 or 15 years. A learner placed in a school of skills is understood to have received extensive support which was documented, in the mainstream school. This record serves as evidence that the learner is experiencing moderate cognitive barriers to learning which results in very poor scholastic progress. Therefore, Schools of Skills offer an adapted curriculum that may benefit the learner by

developing skills in order to be able to enter the job market. Each skills course is based on defined concepts and skills to provide learners with a passport to life-long work and citizenship. Examples of vocational training include tilling, basket weaving, upholstery, welding and gardening. There is however a lack of consistency across schools regarding curriculum offerings because not all schools have enough resources to train learners.

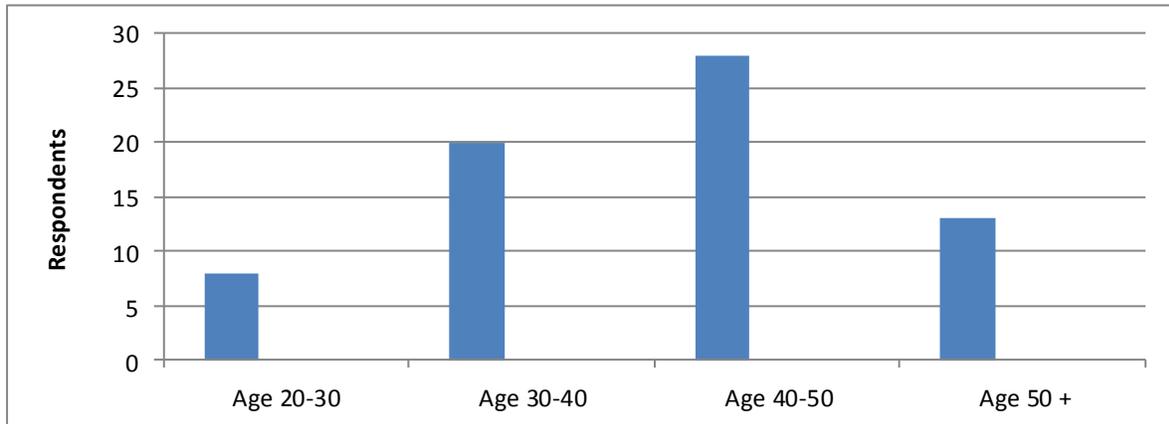
### **3.5 Participants**

Data collection and analysis require a lot of ethical consideration because it is not feasible to collect data from every participant in a particular population (Mertens 2005). It requires therefore that samples be taken. Sampling refers to the method and process of selecting a given number of people from the population (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; Mertens, 2005). Blurtit (2009) argues that convenience sampling is often a preferred option to other methods because it is relatively inexpensive and allows the researcher to get a gross estimate of the results.

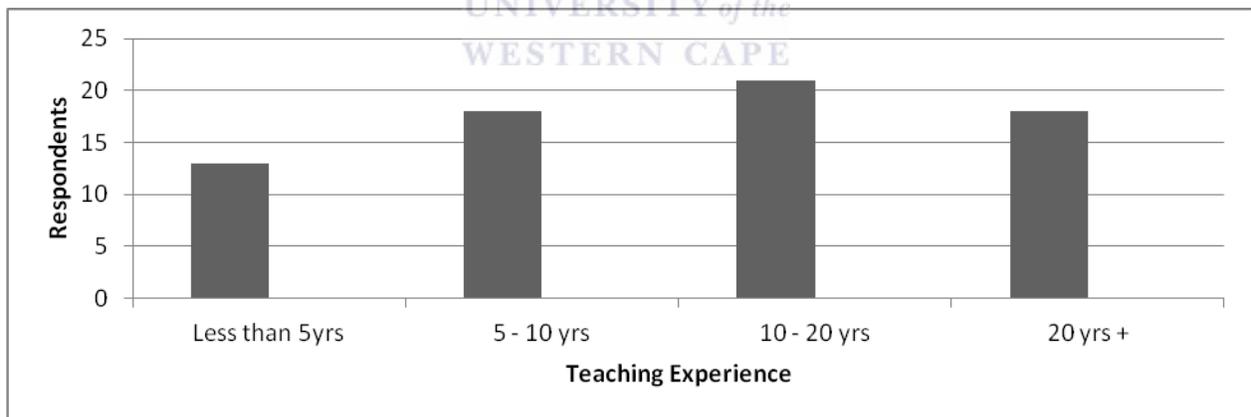
The study included four schools of skills with registered school counsellors based on site. All of which are situated in the Cape metropole. The principals, school counsellors and educators at each school participated in the study. The school counsellors were central participants in the study as they are the key role players in the initiation, development and implementation of learning support programmes and materials to support learners. The principals were approached to participate in the study because as head of the school, their opinion and perspective on the roles of the school counsellor is important to the study. The teachers' knowledge, skills and experience in working with learners and working closely with the school counsellor are also central to this research.

Questionnaires were completed by educators and individual interviews were conducted with three principals, one vice principal and the four registered school counsellors. One hundred and eleven educators were approached to participate in the study; however, only sixty eight completed questionnaires were received. The biographical data (fig. 3.1) depicts that the majority of the respondents were aged between 40 years and 50 years old. It emerged from the study that most of the educators have ten to twenty years of teaching experience (fig. 3.2). Figure (3.3)

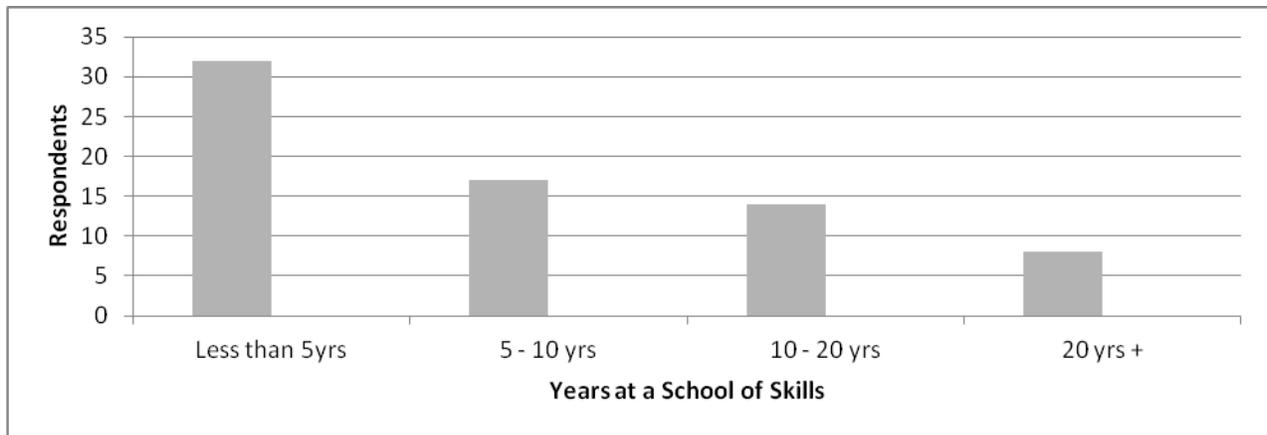
indicates that the majority of respondents are teaching for less than 5 years at the school of skills. It emerged from the study that 40 respondents are teaching level 3 learners (fig. 3.4).



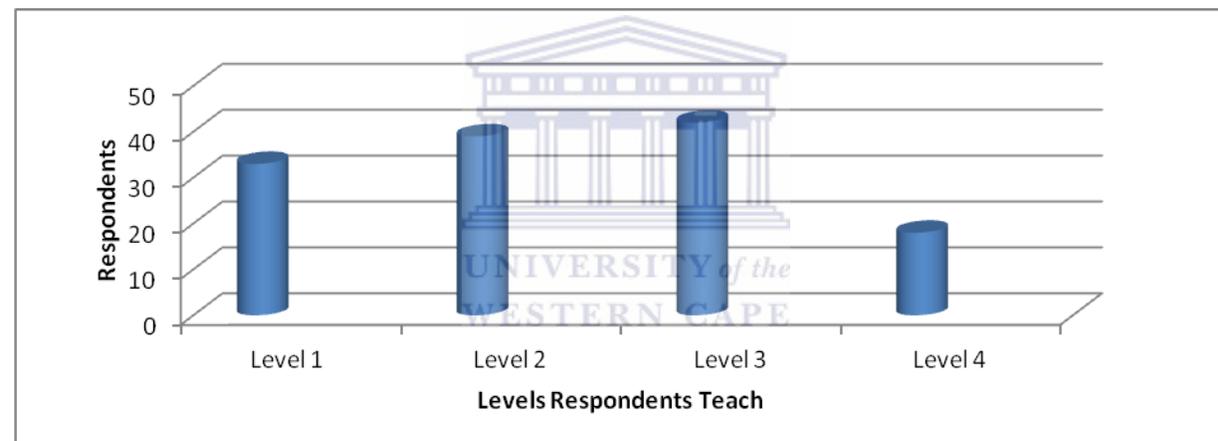
**Figure 3.1 Age of Respondents**



**Figure 3.2 Number of years of teaching experience of the educators**



**Figure 3.3 – Number of years that educator are at the school**



**Figure 3.4 Levels being taught by educators**

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedure

This section describes the methods that were used in the study and how the procedures were followed. According to Lankshear and Knoble (2004), the researcher should consider the following aspects when collecting data:

- the kind of data that is required to answer the research question
- which tools and methods will be required to collect various types of data
- how each set of data collected will help to answer the research question and
- who will provide the data that needs to be collected.

These aspects have been taken into consideration as presented in this chapter.

Mertens (2005) explained that the purpose of data collection is to learn something about people and things. The data collection process is however always selective, as the researcher cannot collect everything (Lankshear & Knoble, 2004). The data collection methods that were used are individual interviews (appendix x & ix) and questionnaires (appendix viii).

### **3.6.1 Interviews**

An interview is defined as a form of conversation between two people, however the interviewer restricts himself/herself to posing questions to the interviewee concerning behaviours, ideas, attitudes and experiences with regard to social phenomena being studied Maso, 1987 cited in Boeije (2010). Interviews are thus guided and directed by the research questions. Parker and Greef (2005) agree that interviews offer a versatile and flexible way of collecting data to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs or perceptions and will enable respondents to verbalise concerns, problems, solutions and recommendations. Moreover, interviews provide information, which will ensure comparability of data (Bless & Higson- Smith, 2000).

Variety of views has been forwarded on the role of interviews in the research process; Woods (2006) professes that interviews tap into the depths of the reality of a situation, discovering meaning and understanding. This makes it essential for the researcher to develop rapport with the interviewees and win their confidence. The interviewer should also be unobtrusive in order not to impose his/her own influence on the interviewee. A weakness of interviews is that the interviewee's memory may be imperfect (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000).

In making use of interviews as a tool of research, the researcher developed a set of questions pertaining to the topic of focus. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gather information directly from the participants. Semi-structured interviews were formulated for individual interviews with the four principals of the schools as well as for each of the school counsellors that participated in the research. Care was taken in the development of the questions. Questions were linked to the specific research questions to ensure that the focus of the study was maintained and that all the questions posed were relevant to the research. The interviews were face-to-face and in-depth focusing on the experiences and perspectives of both the school counsellors and the principals regarding the topic. The interviews often developed into a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. During the dialogue, more probing questions could be asked which allowed the interviewee to delve deeper into matters pertaining to the study. The interviews were conducted in English predominantly although some of the questions had to be rephrased due to language barriers to avoid misunderstanding of the questions. These questions appear in brackets on the interview schedule attached (appendix ix).

### **3.6.2 Questionnaires**

A well-structured questionnaire as a data collection tool permits collection of reliable and reasonably valid data in a simple, inexpensive and timely manner (Anderson and Arsenault, 2001). Respondents are sometimes reluctant to report controversial attitudes in interviews but are willing to respond to an anonymous self-administered questionnaire (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). According to Mertens (2005) questionnaires are used as a quick and easy way to get lots of information in a non-threatening way from the participants. Questionnaires are also easy to administer, easy to compare and analyse and a method for obtaining a large amount of data. In a well-structured questionnaire, questions should be carefully sequenced in the most logical order and carefully constructed to illicit an appropriate response (Leedy, 2005).

Questionnaires designed for the study was made up of a combination of both open-ended and closed questions for educators. A section on the participants' biographical information formed

part of the questionnaire eliciting information about age, teaching experience and qualifications. Open-ended questions ascertained feelings, knowledge, thoughts and ideas around the role of the school counsellor.

Gall and Borg (2005) suggest that questionnaires should be evaluated taking the following in consideration:

- Was the questionnaire pretested?
- Does the questionnaire include any leading questions?
- Are any psychologically threatening questions included in the questionnaire?
- Are the individuals who receive the questionnaire likely to know the answers to the questions?

The individuals who participated in the pilot study were offered the opportunity to suggest changes to the instruments. The pilot questionnaire responses were analysed and questions were refined but no items were eliminated. A few columns were added to tick boxes as was suggested by the participants. These changes enhanced the questionnaire and gave a clearer understanding of what the objective of the questions are, thereby increasing the reliability and validity of the study. These factors were considered in the development of the questionnaire. Sieber (1973) cited in Moolla (2012) said that interviews leading the questionnaires generated valuable information about the receptivity of the participants' knowledge. The viewpoint heightened the complexity of the questionnaire. It also assisted to improve rapport.

### **3.6.3 Data Collection Process**

After obtaining ethical clearance from The University of the Western Cape and permission from Western Cape Education Department, the researcher made appointments to see the principals personally to introduce the study. During the appointment, an explanation of the nature of the study and the purpose of the investigation was provided to the principals and the staff of the respective schools. The interviewees were approached in writing to participate in the interview.

Advanced notification of the conditions and focus of the interview were included in the invitation to be interviewed. These were followed by a telephonic confirmation of the interview and allowed the interviewee to ask questions regarding the interview. The oral evidence was collected by recording the interviewees on audio tapes.

Data were collected over a period of two months, from April to June 2012. Data were collected in three phases. The first phase of the data collection consisted of tape recorded in-depth interviews with the principals, the second phase with the school counsellors and in the third phase the questionnaires were administered with the educators. The questionnaires allowed for valuable information to be generated. Times and dates were scheduled in advance and meetings were confirmed a day prior to the visits.

- Phase one:

This entailed interviews with the principals of each school to gain information regarding the role that the school counsellors play at their schools. The interviews took place in the privacy of each principal's office at the school. The interview was in English and lasted approximately half an hour. The principal at one school was not comfortable to have the interview recorded; therefore no verbatim quotes are incorporated into the findings. The essence of the responses to the questions was however woven into the data analysis process.

- Phase two:

This phase involved interviews with the school counsellors. The purpose of this phase was to determine which activities are considered to be part of the role of a school counsellor, what type of support a school counsellor renders to the school as a whole and what challenges school counsellors face in fulfilling their role at the school. One of the school counsellors did not want to be recorded and requested to respond to questions in writing. Her answers were however very comprehensive. All the other interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The interviews took place at each of the schools,

in the privacy of each school counsellors' office. Interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes.

- Phase three

A questionnaire (appendix viii) was handed out to educators at each school. Each section was explained to the participants. Unfortunately some educators were not available and three of the school counsellors offered to collect the questionnaires when educators had completed them. This was only after they (school counsellors) sat with me and went through the questions so that all possible misunderstandings of the questionnaire could be clarified. One of the principals collected questionnaires from the educators since some of them had to attend another meeting.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Data analysis allows the researcher to make sense of the data by examining, categorizing, reducing and interpreting information. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) define data analysis as a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Anderson, Lankshear and Knobel (2004) concur in the definition of data analysis as a process of organizing themes, concepts and beliefs, interpreting them systematically and identifying their key features or relationships.

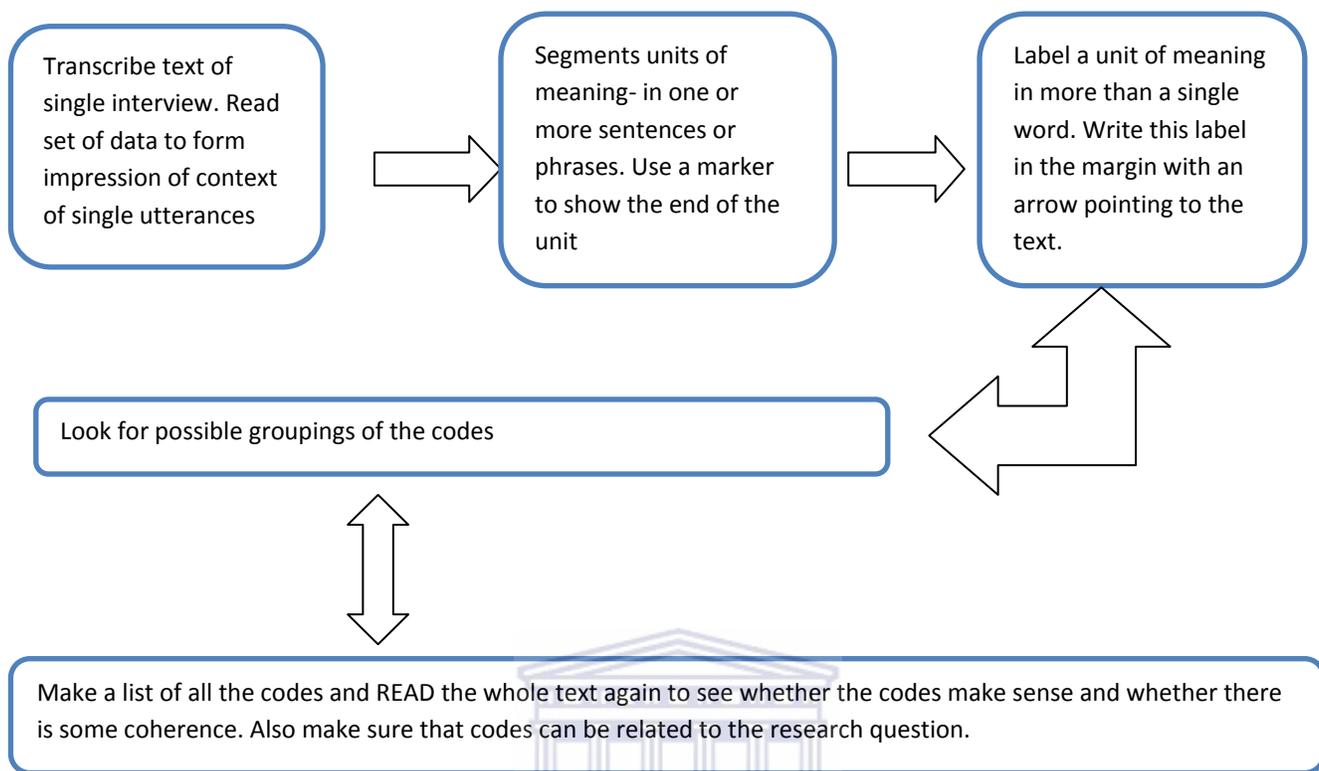
Qualitative data analysis is a process which pursues the reliability of the descriptive data and explores the different opinions and meanings (themes) entrenched in the data (Durrheim, 2006). Waldorf (2005) argues that the real strength of qualitative research is to identify patterns and trends in relation to a specific phenomenon. This lies in the fact that quoting from the participants provided insight and humanity to the analysis. The advantage of qualitative research is the in-depth and detailed examination of research being done. Data interpretation in qualitative research gives meaning to the raw data and also provides the reader with reasonable insights that

may not have been obvious at first glance. This usually means that the spoken data must be transcribed into written text.

As depicted in Table 4.1, poverty, disruptive behaviour, aggression, substance abuse, disrespect for educators, bully, absenteeism and emotional abuse are the foremost psycho-social barriers affecting teaching and learning in schools of skills.

Interviews were audio- recorded and then transcribed. The recordings provided an opportunity to recall details by listening and re-listening to facilitate transcription and analysis. The data collected from the interviews were suitably prepared and organized before it could be analysed. The aim of data analysis was to look for trends and patterns that reappear within the data (Greeff, 2005). The researcher employed a framework to illustrate how analysis of data occurred (Henning, 2004, see figure 3.5). The data were organized under the thematic headings in ways that attempt to do justice to the key elements of the research questions (appendix x).

Procedures that were applied to analysis of the data were consistent however one question on the questionnaire were not ticked off as expected. Instead of ticking off all three boxes they only ticket off one. Only the biographical data relating to school counsellors were formulated to determine quantitative findings. Graphs were compiled that are relevant to the research questions, facilitating data analysis and the presentation of key findings.



Source: Henning (2004, p.104.)

**Figure 3.5 Data Analysis Procedure**

Each of the interview transcripts was carefully interpreted and the researcher looked for ideas that appeared to be more similar, more frequent and related to each other. Transcribed data were thus analysed according to themes by using the research questions as a framework. A coding key was developed to facilitate the process of analysis. A list of all the codes in the text was made to see whether there is coherence. The whole text was read again.

### 3.8. Reflexivity

Given my immersion in the context, since I am employed as a teacher in a school of skills, it was important to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and interpretations of the challenges within

schools of skills and in particular psychological support provision in these institutions. Holding the position of researcher, and remaining objective was a crucial element in the move towards ensuring the trustworthiness of the research. I continuously questioned my own biases and remained critically reflective. I made use of opportunities to debrief regularly with my supervisor and my peers to maximize my objectivity.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness of the data**

Data analysis has been professed to rely heavily on a triangulation process (Arsenault, 2001). Babbie and Mouton (2004) argued that the key principle of good qualitative research according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) are found in the notion of trustworthiness. The rigour of a qualitative methodology is judged according to credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Data transcription and credibility is a show of whether or not the research findings represent a plausible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants (Lincoln & Guba 1985) cited in Mouton & Babbie, 2004).

Babbie & Mouton (2004) defined credibility as something being compatible between the constructed realities that existed in the minds of the respondents and those that are attributed. Thus multiple sources such as interviews with the principals and school counsellors and questionnaires that were completed by the educators established the credibility of the study, creating a rich and more complete reality (Patton, 1990).

Transferability as another component of trustworthiness is the degree to which the systematic findings of this research can apply beyond the bounds of the speculation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The accessibility will give the researcher the ability to transfer the findings and conclusion of the inquiry to other cases. Babbie and Mouton (2004), claim transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents. The finding in this study can be transferred to other schools because of the similarity issues that transpire at other educational institutions.

Additionally dependability is a review of the quality of the processes involved in the research by showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Guba (1985) cited in Cresswell, 2007). The fact that data are sourced from different sources satisfies the triangulation component that is advocated as an element that potentially increases trustworthiness in qualitative research.

Lastly conformability the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the enquiry and not the biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) elucidate that conformability is a measure of how well the research findings are supported by the data collected. In this study the researcher achieved conformability through member checking where participants were contacted to judge if the findings reflect their views on the questions being investigated in the study.

Triangulation addresses the issue of internal validity by using more than one method of data collection to answer a research question (Barbour, 2001). Methods in this study included individual interviews and questionnaires. So far we have seen different perspectives on triangulation; O'Donoghue and Punch (2003) referred to it as a method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for irregularities in the research data while De Vos (2005) views it as accessing various forms and sources of data to eliminate bias by employing multiple methods. Triangulation by multiple methods contributes considerably to the rigor and trustworthiness of the data. Triangulation was achieved since various groups of respondents provided descriptions and perceptions of the same occurrences in response to the same questions.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

The investigation was conducted in an ethical manner at all times, following the ethical guidelines of the University of the Western Cape. Within the realm of educational research, ethics is concerned with ensuring that the interests and well-being of people are not harmed as a result of the research being done (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

The following ethical aspects were taken into consideration:

- Voluntary participation – participants were assured that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Possible harm to participants – participants were assured that they would not be harmed in anyway, psychologically or physically.
- Anonymity – participants’ names did not appear on the questionnaires and are not mentioned in the writing up of the findings.
- Confidentiality – participant’s identities were kept confidential. Participants were assured that questionnaires and interviews would be stored in a safe place for 5 years after which it will be destroyed.
- Informed consent – participants were informed how procedures would be followed during the investigation and the extent of their involvement. Participation was therefore voluntary and all participants signed a consent form before participating in the study.
- Dissemination – participants have the right to the information and will be notified of the conclusion of the study and its key findings.

Permission was granted by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to do the research and all research was completed during the time that was stipulated and agreed upon by WCED (appendix I). The schools involved, agreed to participate after receiving notification from WCED. All participants received a letter, clarifying the research study, the rationale of the study as well as the data collection methods which would be employed during the research period. All participants signed a consent form after carefully reading the content before participating in the research. They were informed about issues of confidentiality and anonymity.

No participants received direct benefit from participating in the study. However, the information obtained could help the Western Cape Education Department to explore employing school counsellors at school and develop clear job descriptions.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the research paradigm, the research design that framed this study and the participants who took part in the different phases of data collection. The data analysis processes allowed the findings to emerge and being explored. Trustworthiness and ethical consideration were considered during the research. The chapter that follows presents the findings that emerged from the research process.



## CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter presents an analysis of the research findings. The findings are based on the responses captured in the questionnaires and interviews. The methodology used, were a mixed method approach a result of the qualitative data and quantitative data. Qualitative data consist of interview and quantitative data, questionnaires. Following the ethical conditions listed above, pseudonyms will be used to protect participants; thus the vice principal will be referred to as a principal for confidentiality purposes therefore codes being used for confidentiality reasons. Research ethics were being taken into consideration every step of the way. Upper case letters indicate codes that were allowed for each school, that is school A, school B, school C and school D. The lower case letters indicate (p) for principal and (sc) for school counsellor. Educators who were involved in phase 3 of the study completed a questionnaire and were coded numerically. Therefore, educators at school A are A1, A2, A3 to A9, school B are numbered B1 to B19, school C are numbered C1 to C 22 and school D are numbered D1 to D18.

The research was aimed at clarifying the role of school counsellors at schools of skills. Research questions which framed this study included:

1. What are the learning barriers that are responsible for the need for school counsellors to support teaching and learning in schools of skills?
2. What roles do school counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning in schools of skills?
3. What roles do school counsellors play in supporting school development in schools of skills?
4. What challenges do school counsellors face in schools of skills?

The findings are discussed using the research questions as a framework for this chapter. The categories under which the themes will be examined are: Firstly, psycho-social barriers impacting on teaching and learning, secondly, the role of school counsellors in teaching and

learning, thirdly, the role of school counsellors in school development and finally, the challenges that are facing school counsellors in schools of skills.

#### **4.1 Barriers to learning that are responsible for the need for school counsellors to support teaching and learning**

##### **4.1.1 Psycho-social barriers facing learners at Schools of Skills (SOS)**

Within the questionnaire, educators were required to indicate which psycho-social barriers impact on teaching and learning at school and whether these psycho-social barriers are experienced by a few learners, many learner or all learners. This provides insight into the school context that school counsellors are working in, and why there is a need for school counsellors in schools of skills.

Majority of the learners that are experiencing barriers to learning in primary and high school are placed at schools of skills. These learners follow an adapted and differentiated curriculum to achieve their academic goals. Presenting the context of this section is essential for the reader to understand the nature of psycho-social barriers that impact on teaching and learning. As already mention din the progress of the study, these psycho-social barriers include social, emotional and behavioural issues. The table below illustrates the psycho-social barriers that learners at schools of skills are experiencing on a daily basis.

The educators were asked to indicate which psycho-social barriers impacted on teaching and learning at their schools. Sixty eight questionnaires were completed and the respondents indicated an additional four barriers which were not on the questionnaire. These include death, gangsterism and delinquency. Barriers which were identified by more than 50% of the respondents were considered for discussion. The main objective was to make the reader aware of the nature of psycho-social barriers that learners experience which disrupt school life and hinder learning. This is what school counsellors are expected to deal with.

| <b>Which of the following psycho-social barriers affect teaching and learning at your school?</b> | <b>Respondents</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---|--------------------|----------|
| 1. Poverty  | 52                 | 76%      |
| 2. Disruptive behaviour   | 49                 | 72%      |
| 3. Aggression   | 44                 | 65%      |
| 4. Substance abuse  | 40                 | 59%      |
| 5. Disrespect for educators   | 39                 | 57%      |
| 6. Bullying   | 39                 | 57%      |
| 7. Truancy  | 39                 | 57%      |
| 8. Absenteeism  | 36                 | 53%      |
| 9. Emotional abuse  | 36                 | 53%      |
| 10. Domestic violence   | 27                 | 40%      |
| 11. Tiredness   | 25                 | 38%      |
| 12. Mood swings   | 20                 | 29%      |

**Table 4.1.1: Psycho-social Barriers Affecting Teaching and Learning in SOS**

An analysis of the psycho-social barriers presenting in learners at schools of skills has revealed three key themes. These themes emerged in responses from the educators as well as the principals and school Counsellors. The responses of the participants were categorised and the following key themes emerged: social problems, behavioural problems, and scholastic problems.

#### **4.1.1.1 Social Barriers**

Social barriers include poverty, violence, substance abuse, emotional abuse and environmental problems. These factors play a major role in schools and affect many learners at home and in school. The social barriers discussed are those emerging in the context of the school and the learner. The most profound psycho-social barriers identified by the respondents were poverty

and substance abuse. Poverty and substance abuse will be defined in the section that follow and what respondents views.

#### **4.1.1.2 Poverty**

According to Malherbe (2007), poverty can be defines as the lack of adequate means to live comfortable and needs that are indispensable to life. The result of poverty, Donald, Lasarus and Lolwana (2002) argue, may result in specific physical, intellectual, neurological and sensory issues associated with barriers in learning. About 75% teachers referred to poverty as one of the major barriers that affects learners and influences on teaching and learning. Interviewees explained that poverty influence the behavior of learners negatively as well as their achievements in school.

*They (learners) are hungry when they come to school. This can lead to fatigue and poor concentration. This is why they fall asleep. (B1)*

*Poverty causes learners to be hungry and causes learners to stay away from school. (D8)*

*I think the main issue is poverty. (Cp)*

Other factors that are clearly impacting on teaching and learning, noted by the respondents are: aggression, substance abuse disrespect and bullying. The findings reflected in Table 4.1 are presented in greater detail in the section that follows.

#### **4.1.1.3 Substance Abuse**

The diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-IV- TR) (2005) describes substance abuse as a reoccurring pattern of substance use. Hence, features of substance abuse

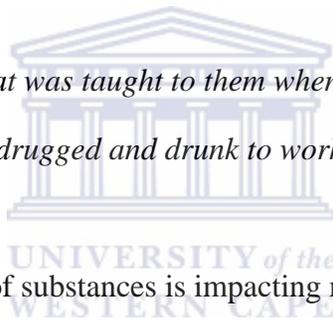
include related problems that reoccur socially and interpersonal problems that persist over a period of 12 months. A learner might be suspended from school or have substance related absences. Participants reported that alcohol, marijuana and sniffing of glue are the most prevalent forms of substance that are used at school.

Fifty nine percent educators expressed their concern about learners arriving intoxicated at school because drugs alter the brain's functioning by making it difficult to focus for long periods of time. Educators also mentioned that many learners drop out of school because they lose interest in school due to substance abuse.

*Some learners are unable to concentrate in class because they are under the influence of a substance. (B15)*

*Learners do not remember what was taught to them when they use drugs. (C1)*

*..... they come to school too drugged and drunk to work. (D12)*



One could then say that the abuse of substances is impacting negatively on teaching and learning. Therefore, policing and physical searches on learners before entering school grounds are prompted by principals. Additionally, learners give in or succumb to peer pressure to make use of drugs to feel accepted within their groups.

#### **4.1.2 Behavioural Problems**

Behavioural problems defined by Adams (2003) are abnormal child behaviour that portrays patterns such as cognitive or physical symptoms that is marked by distress, disability and increased risk of suffering death, pain and disability. The DSM-IV-RT (2005) describes behavioural problems as the repetitive disruption and disorderly behaviour that impacts negatively on fellow learners. This pattern of behaviour is present in a variety of settings such as the home, school or community. Often bullying, intimidation and threatening behaviour is

prevalent in learners that has behavioural barriers. The tendency to be cruel to animals and revert to lying and malice is some of the characteristics that are displayed by many learners, emphasizing the lack of parental supervision in many circumstances.

Sixty five percent educators are concerned about the aggressive behavior of learners towards their peers and others. They mentioned that aggressive behaviour could possibly be due to drugs, emotional abuse and other social issues. As depicted in table 4.1, aggression in schools is the third highest psycho-social barrier that impact on teaching and learning.

*.....learners threaten teachers. (A2)*

*They (learners) become aggressive and bully. (B9)*

*...learners' aggressive behavior impacts on the atmosphere in the class. (C13)*

Behavioural problems can be caused by internal or external factors. Some external factors are affiliated with gansterism which gives learners a false sense of untouchability. In that way teachers are threatened and fellow learners are intimidated. It has now become common place for gangsters to rule on school grounds. This has a huge impact on learner safety and intimidation of learners joining gangs.

#### **4.1.2.1 Disruptive Behaviour**

The prevalence of disruptive behaviors in schools impacts on educational progress, therefore cannot be successful (Rossouw, 2003). Thus, a lack of discipline hampers teaching and learning. Teachers mentioned that teaching and learning are influenced by learners' behaviour in class especially when it distracts those who are interested in learning. They maintained that some learners have no interest in school or school work and this influences the pass rate negatively. There is a general feeling amongst teachers that they use more than half the lesson time to

maintain order in class. Thus, teaching cannot take place due to negative impact of learners being bullied in class.

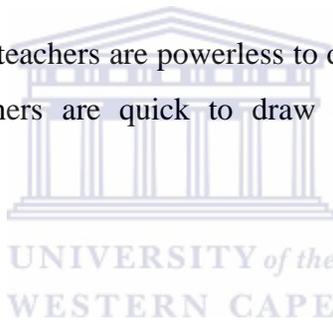
Seventy two percent of educators expressed their frustration about learners' disruptive behavior in class. They claimed that:

*learners tend to display unacceptable behaviour and disrupt teaching and learning throughout the school. (B8)*

*No teaching takes place when learners are disruptive. Those that want to work are distracted. (D11)*

*Teachers have to instill discipline most of the time. (Bp)*

As depicted above, it prevails that teachers are powerless to discipline learners due to the law on punishment and discipline. Learners are quick to draw on their rights which nullify the educators' authority.



### **4.1.3 Scholastic Barriers**

Scholastic barriers are the absence of written expression that put the learner at an academic disadvantage (DSM-IV-RT, 2005). This, together with a weak mathematical ability interferes significantly on the development of the learner. As a result of such an impediment, the linguistic skills fall behind and recording numbers and the numeric symbols cannot be negotiated.

#### **4.1.3.1 Academics**

The fact that academic proficiency in SOS is not very high, place great challenges on educators. They tend to steer more towards the practical because of learners academic short comings. Literacy and numeracy is found to be a huge challenge and cannot be ignored to the importance of everyday life use. Learners struggle in the subsequent years if they have missed on on the

basics in early learning of numeracy. A weak numeric and literacy ability of learner make them favour and almost develop an aversion to academics. It is this phenomenon that leads to the notion that handwork is their strong point and this should be concentrated on. The neglect of academics show through in learners annual pass rate. A principal mentioned that assumptions are made that learners attending schools of skills are only taught practical skills and do not have to do any academic work at all. He said that learners still need to be able to read and write to do the practical part of the curriculum.

*Our learners have learning barriers. (C8)*

*Ability to reason and certain concepts cannot be grasped. (C22)*

*..... the main problem is literacy and numeracy. (Ap)*

*many times I will read and write for the learner because the learner cannot read nor write. (Asc)*

There are concerns in the educational arena about the fact that learners are taken from the mainstream particularly of their low functioning and placed in a school of skills. However, it is expected that learners should perform equally academically as well as practically in schools of skills. Respondents also stated that it cannot be assumed that learners at schools of skills are only going to work with their hands. Examples are: if cooking is taught, the learner still has to be able to read the recipe and follow instructions. In woodwork for instance they also have to be able to read the instructions given to them on paper and the same goes for plumbing, welding or any other practical subject.

#### **4.1.3.2 Absenteeism**

Absenteeism according the DSM-IV-RT (2005) is a phenomenon that became common in schools and impact on learners immensely. Absenteeism by way of truancy often leads to other social ills such as frequenting drug dens and “shebeens” (illegal dens where alcohol are being sold) during school hours. In addition to this, teen pregnancy then becomes more common.

Learners are also recruited to become members of juvenile gangs and are a haven for learners that stay absent frequently.

Respondents reported that social circumstances has changed and learners take full advantage of the fact that parents leave for work early in the morning which leave no supervision or someone to check on their school attendance. Parents trust that children attend school and with no notification from school authorities to parents, these problems persist unabatedly. Many learners have to look after their siblings because parents cannot afford to send the child to a day care centre. Some learners have the tendency to attend school irregularly due to loss of interest in school or financial problems that persist at home.

*Absenteeism is also a major obstacle. (C13)*

*We can't always adhere to planned lessons because of absenteeism. (D10)*

*Absenteeism is another factor that impacts negatively on teaching and learning. (Bp)*

As a result of absenteeism, many programmes that educators embark upon get hampered. This has an influence on progression at the end of the year which impacts on the moral of educators. A positive of absenteeism is that it has been acknowledge by authorities and police are playing a more active role in curbing the scourge. They participate by rounding up learners that roam the streets as well as doing home calls. Gang violence also impacts negatively on learners where they refrain from attending school than to face gang interaction on their way to school and back.

#### **4.2. The roles School Counsellors are currently playing at School of Skills.**

Regarding the role school counsellors currently at schools of skills, it was depicted that school counsellors exceed the scope of practice outlined by the HPCSA. There were fourteen roles and

three additional roles were added by the respondents. These include teaching, outreach programmes and NGO's visiting the school.

| <b>WHAT ROLES DO SCHOOL COUNSELLOR CURRENTLY PLAY AT THE SCHOOL OF SKILLS</b> |  | <b>Total Respondents</b> | <b>How often</b>    |                    |
|---|--|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|   |  |                          | <b>Twice a week</b> | <b>Once a week</b> |
| 1   | Counselling learners individually                    | 55 – 81%                 | 15                  | 22                 |
| 2   | Referrals to other support services.                 | 50 – 74%                 | 4                   | 8                  |
| 3   | Assessing learners / Administer diagnostic tests     | 41 – 60%                 | 11                  | 19                 |
| 4   | Administering new applications for school            | 40 – 59%                 | 2                   | 5                  |
| 5   | Group counselling with learners                      | 39 – 57%                 | 10                  | 9                  |
| 6   | Assist with school administration                    | 37 – 54%                 | 10                  | 12                 |
| 7   | Supporting learners with academic skills development | 36 – 53%                 | 8                   | 12                 |
| 8   | Supporting Life Orientation educators                | 34 – 50%                 | 9                   | 10                 |
| 9   | Provide career guidance                              | 30 – 44%                 | 8                   | 12                 |
| 10  | Assist with classroom management interventions       | 29 – 43%                 | 10                  | 9                  |
| 11  | Assist with progression and promotion of learners    | 27 – 40%                 | 6                   | 9                  |
| 12  | Facilitating workshops with educators                | 19 – 30%                 | 10                  | 11                 |
| 13  | Group counselling with educators                     | 14 – 21%                 | 8                   | 12                 |
| 14  | Counselling educators individually                   | 12 – 18%                 | 5                   | 8                  |

**Table 4.2 - Roles of School Counsellors at Schools of Skills**

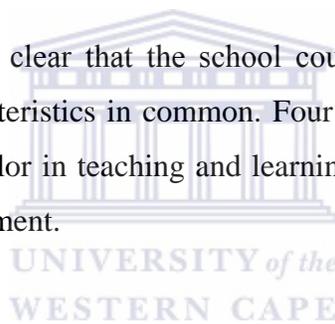
Findings indicate that teachers regard counselling learners individually as a priority and referrals to other support services are the second most prioritised. As illustrated in Table 4.2, it is very clear that they play important roles in supporting the learners at school. The majority of the respondents highlighted that the main roles of the school counsellor are supporting the learner

and then teacher. The interviewees clearly indicate that school counsellors introduce programmes to learners with the help of NGO's and also collaborate with rehabilitation centres that provide support and drug abuse programmes. Findings indicate that school counsellors play significant roles in supporting and providing services to address the emotional, behavioural and social needs of the learner.

In the section that follows, the researcher will unpack the role of the school counsellor in schools of skills in more depth, present the findings linked to teaching and learning and school counselling.

The participants were asked what their understanding of the role of a school counsellor in their school and the responses went to prove the major role of school counsellors is to assist individuals to cope with developmental needs as well as educational and vocational activities.

In reviewing the data, it became clear that the school counsellors, principals and educators' responses had a number of characteristics in common. Four categories emerged in the findings under the role of a school counsellor in teaching and learning: learner support, teacher support, parent support and school development.



#### **4.2.1 Learner Support**

Learner support involves the provision of on-going emotional and psychological support by school counsellors. The following quotes were highlighted by the respondents on the role of school counsellors in supporting learners.

*To assist learners facing emotional barriers to learning. (D16)*

*The role of the school counsellor is to provide on-going psychological support to learner. (Dsc)*

*..... the person will be playing a supportive role to students*

*.e.g. refer to the relevant structures or the psychologist..... (Bp)*

*School counsellors have to create support structures for the*

*learners to address their barriers to learning as well as any other challenge they may experience.(Cp)*

Participants agreed that school counsellors should conduct assessments, diagnostic tests and provide therapeutic interventions:

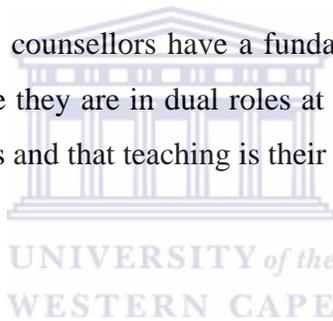
*Assessing learners' learning ability. (A7)*

*Administer diagnostic tests. (D2)*

*Do basic screening, basic therapy skills. (Asc)*

*Diagnostic Assessment of learners if required. (Dsc)*

These findings suggest that school counsellors have a fundamental role to play within schools. Yet, this cannot take place because they are in dual roles at school. Teachers are of the opinion that they are not trained counsellors and that teaching is their primary function.



#### **4.2.2 Teacher Support**

The role of the school counsellors went beyond the scope of practice stated by the HPCSA Board. These professionals are expected to teach life skills, guidance and life orientation and assist educators with difficult cases in the classroom.

*Offering guidance and support to educators. (D16)*

*A school counsellor should be there to support educators when they need to deal with difficult cases... (Csc)*

*Must help the educators with social problems, behaviour problems, even in general with life skills and life orientation. (Cp)*

*She makes educators aware of certain problems those learners*

*may experience as well as the individual needs of the learner. (Ap)*

Duties laid onto school counsellors is a result of default due to shortage of educators to teach life skills, guidance and life orientation which now fall under the duties of the school counsellor. This now impacts on the role that they are supposed to play as mentioned by the respondents.

#### **4.2.3 Parent Support**

School counsellors roles are broad and consultation forms part of the spectrum which includes parental support. Respondents stated that

*The role of a school counsellor is to assist and support parents where there are personal problems. (A8)*

*A school counsellor should do consultation with parents... (Csc)*

*Provide guidance, counselling and support to parents. (Dsc)*

The findings clearly depict that parental support forms part of the school counsellor's role. However, school counsellors hardly have time to support learners due to their duties as educators. Time constraints make it so much more difficult to make parents the support they need to help deal with challenges they face with their children.

#### **4.2.4 School Development**

The findings illustrate that although support is provided to individual learners, teachers, parents and smaller groups of learners; it appears that very little time is invested in school development. School development includes activities such as the development and implementation of policy, structures and procedures, systemic / school-based programmes that are targeted at the level of the organization, rather than only the individual. The roles played by School counsellors' are rather broad in the sense that they support both teaching and learning skills. However, the primary role of the school counsellor was learner development and support which happens either

directly or indirectly targeting learners, educators and even parents. It is evident in the findings that they play a pivotal role supporting teaching and learning. School development includes monitoring and evaluation of the school, its infrastructure, policies, support provision, structures and procedures. One of the respondents stated that she has to:

*Design curriculums to support the learner and assist with policy development for the school. (Csc)*

School counsellors are supportive in different ways; they run intervention programmes for the whole school and these programmes provide opportunities for students to develop personal, social, and pre-vocational skills. The programmes also educate the staff around issues such as how to attend to the personal needs of learners. Respondents reported that the school counsellor:

*Do programmes with learners. (D4)*

*The school counsellor is there to run programmes on character building, focus on health promotion, wellness..... (Asc)*

*The role of the school counsellor is to provide psychological intervention strategies as required (Dsc)*

*She is in constant contact with the District Base Support Team (DBST), the psychologist and social worker to support our learners. She also helps to find people outside the school to assist with rehabilitation programmes. (Ap)*

The primary role of the school counsellor is direct service delivery to the learners and indirect service delivery to parents and educators that is also provided when needed. Furthermore, school counsellors support teachers in order to support the learner, the parent and the school so the learner benefits in the long run. Below is a run down on insightful challenges that school counsellors face in schools of skills.

### 4.3 Challenges facing School Counsellors in Schools of Skills

Data generated from the interviews as well as the questionnaires suggest that school counsellors face a number of challenges in their attempt to fulfill their roles. The challenges they encounter exist on multiple levels. Educators had to complete the table below by indicating the challenges that they think school counsellors are facing at their school. Four or three themes emerged from the responses of the participants. These include lack of time, lack of support, lack of financial resources and workload.

|   | <b>Challenges School Counsellors Face in Supporting Teaching and Learning</b> | <b>Respondents</b> |     |
|---|---|--------------------|-----|
| 1 | Lack of time  | 48                 | 71% |
| 2 | Lack of human resources   | 48                 | 71% |
| 3 | Counsellors cannot support teaching due to work load                          | 37                 | 54% |
| 4 | Counsellors cannot support learning due to work load                          | 33                 | 49% |
| 5 | Lack of financial resources   | 30                 | 44% |
| 6 | Learners are not cooperative  | 29                 | 43% |
| 7 | Groups are too large during group work  | 25                 | 37% |

**Table 4.3 Educators perceptions of the challenges School Counsellors face at School of Skills**

### 4.3.1 Human resources

#### 4.3.1.1 Lack of Counselling Time

Respondents in the interviews mentioned that the school counsellor plays a major role in assisting with the smooth running of their school on a daily basis. One of the main challenges that they are facing is the workload which impacts negatively on their ability to dedicate more time to the learners especially those in need.

*Following up with learners is difficult because of time. (Asc)*

*The progress of referrals and follow-ups are slow. (Dsc)*

Despite the fact that it is their responsibility in assisting learners with their social challenges, the school counsellors need support from all role players to be able to assist the school to function and run smoothly. Additionally, principals voiced concern about the staff establishment at school as this has an impact on time for counselling. Counselling cannot take place frequently due to the fact that the school counsellors must also teach. The principals maintained that school counsellors should be there to support learners who experience learning barriers. They should implement possible planned support strategies to address the learners' needs. However, this is not possible due to their workload placed on them also to educate. A principal stated:

*My concern is that she (school counsellor), is overwhelmed with teaching. She is becoming more and more a teacher rather than the school counsellor we employed. (Ap)*

There seems to be a general feeling that school counselling has taken a backseat to teaching. This allows less counselling time because counsellors have to fill in as educators. The lack of supervision allows the status quo to prevail.

#### **4.4 Supervision**

##### **4.4.1 Lack of Support from District and Senior Management**

As mentioned above, school counselors encounter numerous challenges and some of them include lack of support, referrals and following up. Most of them argued that if they had more support from district and senior management at district office, they would be able to do their work more effectively. Respondents reported

*What I would like to see is that somebody from the district department should come and pay a visit to the counsellor. (Ap)*

*I never had support or supervision from day one. (Asc)*

*I have a lack of support from relevant role players. (Dsc)*

*Referrals to the department, it takes time for those officials to come back and come and render their services. (Bsc)*

The respondents feel that the absence of support from district and senior management complicates and impacts on the role that school counsellors ought to play. If there were support and assistance from supervisors, they would then understand the challenges school counsellors experience while trying to perform their duties.

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

The findings relate to the research questions on the role of the school counsellor in schools of skills. Firstly, psychosocial barriers had to be discussed in order to gain insight into the context of schools of skills. These challenges learners are facing calls for the need of school counsellors to be present in particular at schools of skills. The participants' perception of school counsellors' roles were described and how these professionals engage with the time spent at school and supporting the smooth running thereof. Challenges were discussed by respondents and how support from district office could assist to provide better service to the learners. The final chapter opens with an overview of the study, after which findings are presented that emerged in the research. Recommendations arising from the findings of this study are presented and suggestions for further research.



## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main aim of this study was to provide insight into the role of school counsellors in schools of skills and the contribution these professionals could make to teaching and learning and school development. In the previous chapter that data was analysed while this final chapter discussed the results and integrates with the literature and previous research in the areas of focus of the study.

Research questions which framed this study included: 1) what are the learning barriers that are responsible for the need for school counsellors to support teaching and learning in schools of skills? 2) what role do school counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning in schools of skills, 3) what role do school counsellors play in supporting school development in schools of skills and 4) what are the challenges that school counsellors face in schools of skills. The psycho-social barriers experienced by learners also form part of the discussion as it provides the background to issues counsellors and educators need to deal with on a daily basis. The limitations of the research are discussed and the chapter concludes with a set of recommendations.

The study explored the two research questions that are the most prominent and that is the role school counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning in schools of skills and the challenges they are facing in these schools. The psycho-social barriers experienced by learners give insight into the context and background as to why there is a need for school counsellors at schools.

### **5.1 Psycho-social Barriers Experienced by Learners in Schools of Skills**

The significant diversity in the psycho-social barriers that are prevalent at schools of skills has revealed a number of distinct factors that impact on teaching and learning. These include behavioural problems, social problems and scholastic problems. The study indicated that psycho-social barriers play a major role in teaching and learning as depicted in Table 4.1 on psycho-

social barriers affecting teaching and learning. Additionally, it also highlights the fact that many children have been affected negatively by social and economic inequalities in South Africa, resulting in inadequate education services, inadequate social services and inadequate access to health care services and inadequate nutritional services (Atmore, Van Niekerk & Cooper, 2012). The authors argue that children from poor communities have limited access to support services that can meet their basic needs such as education, nutrition, healthcare services and their safety (a safe environment).

The environment plays a central role here because the lens through which the eco-system is viewed is understood not only in terms of the individual but the environment as well. The theory that frames this study is based on ecology of human development of Bronfenbrenner (1992, 2004) which highlights the importance of understanding the influence of systems on an individuals' development. He argues that human beings do not develop in isolation but in relation to their family, home, neighbourhood and school. The school is a microsystem in which the individual engages directly with others. The direct interactions that occur on a daily basis consequently shape and facilitate the development of the learner. Learners spend a great deal of time at school, and what they experience in the classroom and in the school, as a whole, has an influence on them. In the context of above, it is apparent in the findings that psycho-social barriers impact negatively on the learners' ability to learn in school. This implies that in order to facilitate positive development, it is imperative that the school, as a microsystem, is developed and supported too. These aspects all work in an interdependent way to entrench the barriers experienced by learners in the different contexts of this study. The findings exhibited consistency with the scope of practice for school counsellors which includes dealing with a variety of psycho-social issues such learning barriers, behavioural, social and emotional issues.

The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) report of 1992 identified emotional, behavioural, learning and socioeconomic barriers that put learners at risk for undernourishment, violence and ineffective developmental transitions (Engelbrecht, 2004). The study also revealed that the psycho-social issues presenting at schools, such as drug and alcohol related issues, violence and gangsterism also impact on learners' ability to focus at school. There seems then to

be high prevalence of psycho- social problems that learners carry over to schools due to their diverse backgrounds.

### **5.1.1 Social Barriers**

The findings reveal that poverty is the most prominent psycho-social barrier affecting teaching and learning in schools of skills. This concurs with Education White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001) and the National Committee for Education Needs and Training (NCSNET, 1997) that identified socio-economic, poverty, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse as barriers that influence teaching and learning. This is explained in the policy documents, children living in poverty are a global condition and that this extends beyond the lack of income. One could say that children living in poverty are more susceptible to influences from their environment that plays a significant role in their development. These factors would include poor housing, poor nutrition, unemployment in the family and domestic violence. According to Bronfenbrenner, the microsystem, involves the most immediate and earliest influence on the child such as the direct relationships and interactions that influence the individual (learner) directly in systems they engage in on a regular basis. These types of interactions or relationships include family, school and neighbourhood (Landsberg, Kruger, & Nel, 2005). Interactions in the microsystem are referred to as continuous social interaction which occurs face-to-face. Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) term the relationship as bi-directional since the child's family can influence his or her behavior and vice versa.

The development of relationships between the microsystems is referred to as the mesosystem. It focuses on the connection between different microsystems such as the interaction that takes place between home and school. For example, if anything negative has happened at home it will spill over in the playground or at school and vice versa. Therefore, counselling services at school should be available for the child in times of need because it can also influence the mesosystem.

According to Engelbrecht (2004), undernourishment is one of the environmental challenges that put learners at risks for academic, behavioural and emotional barriers. Wildeman and Mbebethlo

(2005) cited in Atmore et al., Van Niekerk and Cooper (2012), stating that malnutrition and hunger do not only affect a child's ability to concentrate and perform task but also hamper their development and learning ability.

Maree (2006) and Ebersohn (2004) cited in Jacobus van der Westhuizen (2011) upholds that there is an escalating need for professional counselling due to the HIV pandemic that is affecting family structures, child mortality, poverty, productivity and public services. Thus, some arguments from the likes of Pretorius-Heuchert and Ahmed (2001) in Pillay (2011), that there are too many people with psychological problems and a limited number of people who could help. The scenario is aggravated by the fact that most schools do not have school counsellors (Professional Board for Psychology, 2007).

To sum it up, it seems that children from poor background are significantly more likely than children from middle-class background to experience high levels of behavioural difficulties, higher rates of school absenteeism and school drop-out, developmental difficulties, anxiety and depression. This could be the consequence of both parents working or vice versa, or being a single working parent, leaving the child unsupervised from early in the morning to late at night. School counsellors then can support families by teaming up with a group of educators that are interested in the welfare of the learners by starting a family resource centre. These parents would then form an indirect part of their child's education. With this information supplied, other instructional activities could be designed for parents to assist their child at home. Hence development and learning not only take place at school but also at home, but incorporating the curricula to strengthen the child's learning barrier. This improves the health and well-being the of learner, thus leading to learners being less involved in health risk behaviours such as drinking, smoking and attend school on a regular basis so that they can achieve academically (Stacey, 2009).

### **5.1.2 Behavioural Barriers**

The second prominent psycho-social barrier affecting teaching and learning are learners' disruptive behaviour. The findings revealed that parents seek assistance and advice from school counsellors about their children's lack of discipline, drug abuse and loss of interest in school. During adolescence, learners experience great changes and experience many challenges academically and socially. Bronfenbrenner's concept of "person" in his PPCT is what is focused upon here, where demand, and force characteristics emerge as central to our understanding of learners who present with differences at a very individual level. Therefore, having a school counsellor on site to support learners that are facing these challenges are less likely to engage in health risk behaviors. The department of education should consider school counsellors taking up their rightful place within schools because they have been trained specifically to support learners presenting psycho-social barriers. Thus, it is evident in schools that there is a need for professionals with such expertise.

The findings are supported by Fitch and Marshall (2004) and Nastasi (2000) cited in Pillay (2011) that school counsellors should support student development not only in academic and career matters but also with personal/social concerns. Additionally, a counsellor is in the capacity where he or she can provide support to learner's long-term aspiration for higher education or vocation.

### **5.1.3 Scholastic Barriers**

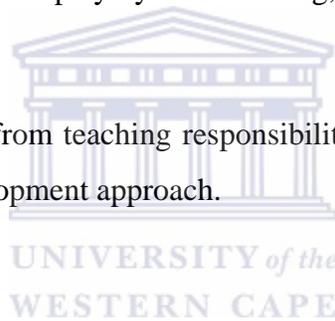
From the interviews and questionnaires, participants revealed that learners find it difficult to read and write and show little interest in school work. Moreover, learners hardly pay attention and therefore they find concepts difficult to understand and the ability to read and write is very weak. Simple calculations are found to be difficult to do. Findings on various barriers that impact on teaching and learning, contributes to increased emotional, social and cognitive difficulties in adolescence. Many of these issues mentioned above not only disrupt school life but also hinder teaching and learning (Butler, 2007). Bronfenbrenner's resource characteristic which is not

immediately obvious but is stimulated by the demand characteristics, relates to the individual's mental and emotional resources that relates partially to past experiences and developed skills, but also to access to support in the form of education. Previous schooling experiences and access to academic support is of crucial importance here.

From the current study it can be seen that learners are at risk due to the nature of psycho-social barriers that impact on their development as well as their learning. Findings indicate how school counsellors can support and provide services to address these psycho-social barriers. They can play a preventative role in high-risk behaviours by early assessments. Clearly, identifying their responsibilities and roles in terms of addressing student high-risk behavior, is a key dimension of defining employment expectations.

The dual role that counsellors have to play by also teaching, do not leave them enough scope to deal with learners challenges.

There should be a shift of focus from teaching responsibilities to the well-being of the learner and adopting a whole school development approach.



## **5.2 The Roles School Counsellors are currently playing in Schools of Skills.**

The general conclusion from most of the participants assumes that school counsellors are not doing what they are trained to do and that is supporting learners and the school as a whole. They spend most of their time in teaching positions or administrative duties. Therefore, support and interventions with learners cannot occur on a regular basis or does not happen at all. Harrington (2010) agreed that school counsellors spend a great deal of time engaging in clerical and administrative tasks that pull them away from direct engagement with students.

Some participants' professed their confusion with regard to the role that the counsellors should play at school and assumed their only role should be the teaching of Life Skills and Life

Orientation, with some counselling being done. Although this expectation is not problematic in itself since teaching Life Skills and Life Orientation can be seen to be part of the preventative work done by a school counsellor, the argument is for the need for balance in the roles performed. According to the participants teaching takes up too much time and too little time is spent with individual counselling. Also, one participant specifically said he has never seen a document explaining the role school counsellors should play within schools. The findings of Dahir (2004) emphasize the confusion that still persists as to what the role, function and purpose of counsellors in schools should be. In addition to this, the role of a counsellor supporting learners at school becomes imperative.

The findings (table 4A) of the current study can be as a guide, providing evidence, in support of the pivotal role a school counsellor can play in supporting the learner at school. Thus, school counselling has expanded as a profession and became part of the support team which assist with development and growth of learners. The need of school counsellors to support learners at school has then become most important. The role a school counsellors' also includes advising learners about college and universities, processing college applications, keeping records of dropouts, giving aid and comfort to abuse learners, and providing interventions to learners who are going through crisis and conflict. In addition to this, they also have to support communities, homes, family separations and divorce but also do referrals for families and learners within the local community (Boyer, 2004).

The findings of this study specify that the majority of the participants regarded counselling of learners individually as a priority, thereafter, referrals, assessments and diagnostic tests, group counselling and school development. The findings are consistent with the scope of practice for school counsellors as defined by the The Professional Board for Psychology (2007). HPCSA asserted registered school counsellors' main responsibilities involve assessments of intellectual and/or scholastic barriers, aptitude test, personality profiling and career placements. In addition, school counsellors may do referrals, short term interventions such as supportive counselling which includes psycho-education and promoting the psycho-social wellbeing of learners.

The findings indicate that that individual counselling of learners individually is of high priority and then group counselling. Elkonin and Sandison (2006) and Abel and Louw (2009) supports the notion that the role of school counsellors includes working with individuals on a one-on-one basis and doing group counselling focusing on sexuality, anger management, self-esteem development and psycho-education which covers life skills.

### **5.3 The Role of the School Counsellors in Supporting Teaching and Learning.**

The participants maintained that school counsellors should be there for means of support for learners with learning barriers. Moreover, participant reported that support and interventions such as assessments, diagnosing and therapy is crucial for the learner to develop and function optimally. Lambie and Wiliamson (2004) argued that professional school counsellors should deliver comprehensive school counselling programmes where all students are encouraged academically, in career choices and personal or social development as well as helping all students to develop to their maximum potential.

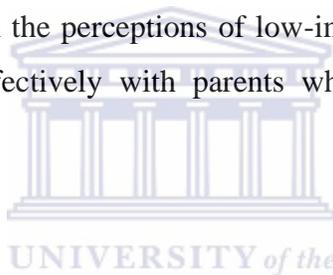
According to DoE (2005), learner support includes activities which assist the school to support to the needs of all learners. Learner needs could encompass emotional needs, psychological needs, physical needs, social needs and learning barriers. Support must be organized in such a way that a range of barriers is uncovered and addressed (DoE, 2001). Education Support refers to roles that educational psychologists, school counsellors, therapists and special educators play in addressing the various needs of learners (Booth, 2000).

Bouwer cited in Landsberg (2005) explains that the approach of learning support is constructivist and flexible. Learner support should reduce, address and even remove barriers to achieve maximum learning independence and development. Participants reported that school counsellors should implement support strategies such as programmes and intervention to address the learners' needs. This is supported by Frydenburg et al (2004). These authors argue that there is a need for school-based programmes due to the increase of psycho-social problems. The authors claim that these programmes should involve ongoing interventions by psychologically trained school counsellors with educators. Support in education can therefore be seen as a response

towards someone who needs help, mentoring and guidance with the intention to develop their capacity.

Schellenberg (2008) argues that school counsellors have always played a crucial leadership role in supporting learning outcomes for all students and improving students' achievement. School counsellors envisaged the integration of academic standards into the school counselling curriculum focusing on more specific techniques for closing achievement gaps. One could then say that guidance and the curriculum are closely related because they share the same goal of helping individuals achieve their maximum potential within schools, classrooms and the broader society.

School counsellors are trained to view the world in terms of alternative perspectives by assisting educators in designing lesson plans for more effective learning in class. Teachers can also consult with school counsellors on the perceptions of low-income learners and family behavior and how to collaborate more effectively with parents when solving problems and making decisions that best suits the child.



#### **5.4 The Role of the School Counsellor in School Development**

According to Moolla (2011), school development refers to the transformation of all stakeholders involved in learning and development in the school such as learners, educators, parents, management personnel plus the physical environment, the psychological and social climate that surrounds the school. The findings indicate that very little time is invested in school development. This could be due to workload of school counsellors and the lack of training. Yet, Sun and Hui (2007) argue that it is vitally important to have support at school because it fosters adolescent psychological health, especially when their family and peer structures are dysfunctional. They suggest enrichment programmes such as family relationship to be administered at schools to provide learners and their parents with skills that are effective for communication and conflict resolution.

Thus the school counsellor's ability to offer a direct and indirect service to the learner and the school are influenced by the teaching roles they have been placed in. Apart from the programme development and implementation, it appears that very little time is invested in school development as depicted in the findings. This could be due to school counsellors theoretical frame work that does not deal with school development or due to lack of training and workload. School counsellors major function is to work with learners individually or in groups and to conduct assessments.

### **5.5 Challenges Facing School Counsellors in Schools of Skill**

Participants voiced concern about counselling and support that cannot take place effectively due to the fact that school counsellors are teaching or busy with administrative duties other than what they are trained to do. Thus, counselling only occurs if the school counsellor is available. Lambie and Williams (2004) agree that school counsellors are allocated to inappropriate duties at school and should be should be reassigned. School counsellors should thus devote their time to appropriate duties such as direct services to learners, parents and staff. These duties are within the scope of the HPCSA.

Participants also feel there is a lack of supervision. This was provoked by the fact that training was provided, yet no supervisory person from district office came to school to support and listen to the needs of these counsellors. Respondents in the interviews mentioned that the school counsellor plays a major role in assisting with the smooth running of their school on a daily basis. However, school counsellors need support from all role players to be able to assist the school to function and run smoothly.

The majority of the school counsellors argued that if they had more support from district and senior management, they would be able to do their work more effectively. According to Lambie and Williams (2004), support the notion that school counsellors need on-going clinical supervision to assist them to enhance their skills and how to dissolve potential challenging situations pertaining to learner issues and perform their duties ethically.

Since the findings provide strong evidence that there is not enough time allocated to counselling it can be argued that counselling and guidance is still not receiving any status. There is escalating need for professional counselling due to the HIV pandemic that is affecting family structures, child mortality, poverty, productivity and public services (Ebersohn, 2006 cited in Jacobus and Westhuizen, 2011). The findings of the current study stipulate that this is hampered by teaching, which ought not to form part of these professionals' responsibilities. Thus, counselling interventions cannot take place due to workload as educators.

## **6. Limitations of the study**

The first limitation with regard to the research methodology of this study was the small sample. There are twelve school of skills situated within Cape metropole, however, only six of these schools have registered school counsellors. The study included four of these but it could be argued that if all six had been included in the study, the results could have provided a better distribution of the findings across schools of skills in the Western Cape. This would then have provided more evidence that school counsellors could play a pivotal role in school but they are in roles other than what they have trained for.

Time constraint was one of the limitations of the study. Interviews with counselors did not last for more than twenty minutes because of their tight schedules. The data collection process was tainted because school counsellors sometimes had to excuse themselves in the middle of an interview to tend to urgent cases. One school counsellor did not have time to be interviewed and completed the answers on a typed out sheet that I had to collect the following day.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

As mentioned before Schools of Skills accommodate learners with learning barriers from the ages of fourteen for a period of four years where they are trained in practical fields such as welding, carpentry, plumbing, catering and hairdressing after which they receive a certificate for

employment in the adult world (Donald et al, 2002). There have been few studies on schools of skills, and the role of the school counsellors play in these institutions of learning. Many studies are on the role of school counsellor/psychologist in mainstream schools and colleges, while the main aim of this study was to provide insight into the role school counsellors play in supporting teaching and learning at schools of skills.

Barriers impacting on teaching and learning have been highlighted by the researcher to be more prevalent in schools of skills. Yet, school counselling and guidance services seem to remain marginalized. Thus, Bernard et al (1997) argued that not much were done to increase the role this pivotal service played in the education system and NEPI's report (1992) concurs. Failure to consolidate left a deficit regarding school counsellor supporting teaching and learning. In addition to this, Government's rationalization programme forced many professional guidance educators into various other posts such as administration and teaching posts which meant that schools were drained of these specialist teachers (Motala & Pampallis, 2001). Even though the Delange report (1981) affirms the key role that school counselors played in education.

The findings clearly provide evidence that time allocation to counselling are insufficient, one could say that counselling and guidance is still not receiving any prominence. School counsellors can be seen as vehicles of support not only for the learner but also for the school as a whole. Therefore, all schools should have a school counsellor employed on site so that barriers as mentioned in the study could be eradicated so that learners at risk can be supported in advance to avoid implications such as school dropout, teen pregnancy, learners having barriers to learning, etc.

Multiculturalism was not mentioned by the respondents so as to multilingualism and multiracialism to be a challenge even though this is prominent at schools, given the diverse background of learners attending schools. This means that school counsellors should then be skilled in indigenous knowledge because most counsellors are exposed to western training models which were then appropriate.

Given the fact there are enough training facilities for school counsellors to be trained in, it is still surprising the big shortage of school counsellors. The phasing out of the old guidance teachers left a void which are the result of the programme that was supposed to be implemented by schools according to EWP6, not to be successful as expected because the study provide evidence that learners need ongoing support at schools and it is not readily available due to scarce human resources such as school counsellors teaching and being in administration post other than what they have been trained for.

School development also came to the fore as not one of the roles the school counsellor should play. School development has been described by (Moolla, 2011; Schmuck and Runcke, 1994) as an activity that focuses on formal and informal changes and procedures that take place within the school as an organisation. Therefore, school development moves beyond the focus on the individual. Its emphasis is on the expanded roles for school counsellors in collaboration with other partners.

As the result of study findings, school counseling can benefit by recommendations such as:

1. Provision should be made for support as well as supervision from the district office to guide school counsellors.
2. Teaching load should be removed so that school counsellors can support learners as stated in policies.
3. The preferred role of school counsellors should be clearly illuminated in terms of preventative measures, assessment, and intervention with learners presenting high-risk behavior.
4. Acknowledging value of a need for counselling support as captured in Europe and employing one at each school.
5. Societal changes necessitate the need for training and the functioning of school counselors. Beesley (2004) is of the opinion that the departments of education should keep track with program training brought about by the demands of societal changes

## **8. Suggestions for Further Research**

- It would be interesting to investigate teachers' perception of the impact of counselling on learners behaviour and/ or academic performance.
- A quantitative study that compares academic results of learners before and after they have received counselling over a long term.
- An investigation into district officials' perspectives on how school counsellors can best be employed in the provision of support to learners and schools.



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## APPENDIX I



[Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za)

tel: +27 021 476 9272  
Fax: 0865902282  
Private Bag x9114,  
Cape Town, 8000  
WCED.wcape.gov.za

**REFERENCE:** 20120315-0011

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Mrs Diane Daniels  
Educational Psychology  
Education Faculty  
UWC

**Dear Mrs Diane Daniels**

### **RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOLS OF SKILLS**

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

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Approval for projects should be confirmed by the District Director of the schools where the project will be conducted.
5. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
6. The Study is to be conducted from **01 March 2012 till 30 June 2012**
7. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
9. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
10. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
11. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
12. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard  
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**  
**DATE: 19 March 2012**

## APPENDIX II

### Letters for principals

Athlone School for the Blind  
Athlone Street, Glenhaven  
Bellville South, 7530  
Ph: 021951 2234  
Fax: 021 951 5118/ 0865351724  
Cell: 0828167855  
Email: danielsdiane@gmail.com

Dear Sir/ Madam

#### **RE: Education Research**

My name is Diane Daniels and I am an educator at Athlone School for the Blind. I am currently doing my master's thesis at the University of the Western Cape. My topic is: "The Role of School Counsellors in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Skills Schools". My aim is to investigate the role of school counsellors and the contribution they make to teaching and learning. The findings of this study will hopefully contribute to a shift in policy around the employment of school counsellors and how each school could benefit from having a school counsellor based on site.

You are invited to participate in an interview framed by the following research questions:

1. What is the role of school counsellors in supporting teaching?
2. What is the role of school counsellors in supporting learning?
3. What is the role of the school counsellors in supporting the development of the school as an organization?
4. What are the challenges that face school counsellors in supporting teaching and learning?

The research activities will include a semi-structured interview for principals and school counsellors and questionnaires for educators employed in selected schools in the Western Cape Education Department in the Cape metropole.

I am required by the ethical guidelines of the Faculty of Education, UWC, to obtain your consent to participate in the above study. You can be assured that your responses will remain anonymous and that the information you provide will be treated as confidential at all times. Please find attached a consent form to be signed by you, should you agree to participate in the study.

Yours Faithfully

-----

Miss. Diane Daniels

## APPENDIX III

### Letters for school counsellors

Athlone School for the Blind  
Athlone Street, Glenhaven  
Bellville South, 7530  
Ph: 021951 2234  
Fax: 021 951 5118/ 0865351724  
Cell: 0828167855  
Email: danielsdiane@gmail.com

Dear Sir/ Madam

#### **RE: Education Research**

My name is Diane Daniels and I am an educator at Athlone School for the Blind. I am currently doing my master's thesis at the University of the Western Cape. My topic is: "The Role of School Counsellors in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Skills Schools". My aim is to investigate the role of school counsellors and the contribution they make to teaching and learning. The findings of this study will hopefully contribute to a shift in policy around the employment of school counsellors and how each school could benefit from having a school counsellor based on site.

You are invited to participate in an interview framed by the following research questions:

1. What is the role of school counsellors in supporting teaching?
2. What is the role of school counsellors in supporting learning?
3. What is the role of the school counsellors in supporting the development of the school as an organization?
4. What are the challenges that face school counsellors in supporting teaching and learning?

The research activities will include a semi-structured interview for principals and school counsellors and questionnaires for educators employed in selected schools in the Western Cape Education Department in the Cape metropole.

I am required by the ethical guidelines of the Faculty of Education, UWC, to obtain your consent to participate in the above study. You can be assured that your responses will remain anonymous and that the information you provide will be treated as confidential at all times. Please find attached a consent form to be signed by you, should you agree to participate in the study.

Yours Faithfully

-----  
Miss. Diane Daniels

## APPENDIX IV

### Letter for educators

Athlone School for the Blind  
Athlone Street , Glenhaven  
Bellville South, 7530  
Ph: 021951 2234  
Fax: 021 951 5118/ 0865351724  
Cell: 0828167855  
Email: danielsdiane@gmail.com

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Diane Daniels and I am an educator at Athlone School for the Blind. I am currently doing my master's thesis at the University of the Western Cape. My topic is: "The Role of School Counsellors in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Skills Schools". My aim is to investigate what the role of a school counsellor is and the contribution they make to teaching and learning. The findings of this study will hopefully contribute to a shift in policy around the employment of school counsellors and how each school could benefit having a school counsellor based on site.

You are invited to participate in an interview framed by the following research questions:

1. What is the role of school counsellors in supporting teaching?
2. What is the role of school counsellors in supporting learning?
3. What is the role of the school counsellor in supporting the development of the school as an organization?
4. What are the challenges that face school counsellors in supporting teaching and learning?

The research activities will include a semi-structured interview for principals and school counsellors and you will be required to complete a questionnaire.

I am required by the ethical guidelines of the Faculty of Education, UWC, to obtain your consent to participate in the above study. You can be assured that your responses will remain anonymous and that the information you provide will be treated as confidential at all times. Please find attached a consent form to be signed by you, should you agree to participate in the study.

Yours Faithfully

-----

Miss. Diane Daniels

**APPENDIX V: CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS**

**THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SKILLS SCHOOLS.**

1. I agree to participate in the study as outlined in the attached letter.
2. I am a principal employed by the Western Cape Education Department and agree to participate in an interview.
3. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without fear or penalty; this includes having my inputs withdrawn from the study.
4. I understand that I may choose not to answer a particular question or set of questions.
5. I understand that I will be protected through anonymity. This means that my name will not be revealed on any public documentation, unless I specifically agree for this to occur.
6. I agree to the tape-recording of the interview. Should I feel uncomfortable I can request that it be switched off at any time.
7. I understand that I may, if I wish, have access to interview notes and/or transcriptions from the interview process for editing purposes, and that I must respond within one month should I wish to make any recommendations for changes.
8. If I participate in a focus group interview, I understand that this process is bound by confidentiality. I agree to respect other participants by ensuring that the content and process of the focus group interview is not compromised.

I hereby agree to / do not agree (indicate choice by circling) to participate in this study and to have the findings used in the ways described above.

Name in print: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX VI: CONSENT FORM FOR SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

### THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SKILLS SCHOOLS.

1. I agree to participate in the study as outlined in the attached letter.
2. I am a school counsellor employed by the Western Cape Education Department and agree to participate in an interview.
3. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without fear or penalty; this includes having my inputs withdrawn from the study.
4. I understand that I may choose not to answer a particular question or set of questions.
5. I understand that I will be protected through anonymity. This means that my name will not be revealed on any public documentation, unless I specifically agree for this to occur.
6. I agree to the tape-recording of the interview. Should I feel uncomfortable I can request that it be switched off at any time.
7. I understand that I may, if I wish, have access to interview notes and/or transcriptions from the interview process for editing purposes, and that I must respond within one month should I wish to make any recommendations for changes.
8. If I participate in a focus group interview, I understand that this process is bound by confidentiality. I agree to respect other participants by ensuring that the content and process of the focus group interview is not compromised.

I hereby agree to / do not agree (indicate choice by circling) to participate in this study and to have the findings used in the ways described above.

Name in print: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX VII: CONSENT FORM FOR EDUCATORS

### THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SKILLS SCHOOLS.

1. I agree to participate in the study as outlined in the attached letter.
2. I am an educator employed by the Western Cape Education Department and agree to participate in completing a questionnaire.
3. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without fear or penalty; this includes having my inputs withdrawn from the study.
4. I understand that I may choose not to answer a particular question or set of questions.
5. I understand that I will be protected through anonymity. This means that my name will not be revealed on any public documentation, unless I specifically agree for this to occur.
6. I agree to the tape-recording of the interview. Should I feel uncomfortable I can request that it be switched off at any time.
7. I understand that I may, if I wish, have access to interview notes and/or transcriptions from the interview process for editing purposes, and that I must respond within one month should I wish to make any recommendations for changes.
8. If I participate in a focus group interview, I understand that this process is bound by confidentiality. I agree to respect other participants by ensuring that the content and process of the focus group interview is not compromised.

I hereby agree to / do not agree (indicate choice by circling) to participate in this study and to have the findings used in the ways described above.

Name in print: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX VIII: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR EDUCATORS

### THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SKILLS SCHOOLS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information around how school counsellors support teaching and learning in Schools of Skills. To ensure anonymity, you are not required to write your name on the questionnaire. Please answer all the questions as accurately and fully as you can.

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY PLACING AN (X) WHERE RELEVANT OR WRITING YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

#### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Age:  20 – 30yrs  30 – 40yrs  40 -50yrs  over 50 yrs

2. Teaching Experience:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Less than 5 years  |  |
| 5 – 10 years       |  |
| 10 – 20 years      |  |
| More than 20 years |  |

3. Number of years at this school:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Less than 5 years  |  |
| 5 – 10 years       |  |
| 10 – 20 years      |  |
| More than 20 years |  |

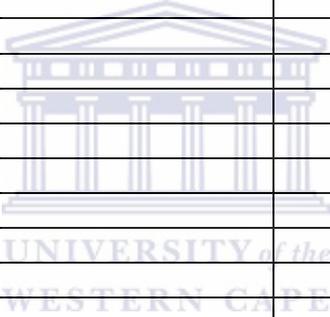
4. Grade/s you teach:

| SOS 1 | SOS 2 | SOS 3 | SOS 4 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|       |       |       |       |

**1. SECTION B: PSYCHO-SOCIAL BARRIERS OF LEARNERS**

Which of the following psycho-social barriers impact on teaching and learning at your school? Please mark with (X) how many learners experience psycho-social barriers in classes you teach.

|      |                          | Unsure | All | Many | Few |
|------|--------------------------|--------|-----|------|-----|
| 1.1  | Substance abuse          |        |     |      |     |
| 1.2  | Emotional abuse          |        |     |      |     |
| 1.3  | Physical abuse           |        |     |      |     |
| 1.4  | Sexual abuse             |        |     |      |     |
| 1.5  | Poverty                  |        |     |      |     |
| 1.6  | Domestic violence        |        |     |      |     |
| 1.7  | Aggression               |        |     |      |     |
| 1.8  | Bullying                 |        |     |      |     |
| 1.9  | Disruptive behavior      |        |     |      |     |
| 1.10 | Truancy                  |        |     |      |     |
| 1.11 | Disrespect for educators |        |     |      |     |
| 1.12 | Absenteeism              |        |     |      |     |
| 1.13 | Tearfulness              |        |     |      |     |
| 1.14 | Tiredness                |        |     |      |     |
| 1.15 | Mood swings              |        |     |      |     |
| 1.16 | Teenage pregnancy        |        |     |      |     |
| 1.17 | Other (specify)          |        |     |      |     |
|      |                          |        |     |      |     |
|      |                          |        |     |      |     |



**2. How do these barriers impact on teaching?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**3. How do these barriers impact on learning?**

.....

.....

.....

**4. SECTION C: THE ROLE THAT THE SCHOOL COUSELLOR PLAY AT SCHOOL**

**What is your understanding of the role of a school counsellor?**

.....  
 .....

**5. What role does the school counsellor currently play at your school?**

**Please indicate next to each item by making a cross (X) in the appropriate space provided.**

|      |   | Role | How often    |             |
|------|---|------|--------------|-------------|
|      |   |      | Twice a week | Once a week |
| 2.1  | Counselling learners individually                 |      |              |             |
| 2.2  | Counselling educators individually                |      |              |             |
| 2.3  | Group counselling with learners                   |      |              |             |
| 2.4  | Group counselling with educators                  |      |              |             |
| 2.5  | Supporting learners with academic skills          |      |              |             |
| 2.6  | Supporting Life Orientation educators             |      |              |             |
| 2.7  | Administering new applications for school         |      |              |             |
| 2.8  | Referrals to other support services.              |      |              |             |
| 2.9  | Assessing learners / Administer diagnostic tests  |      |              |             |
| 2.10 | Provide career guidance                           |      |              |             |
| 2.11 | Assist with progression and promotion of learners |      |              |             |
| 2.12 | Assist with school administration                 |      |              |             |
| 2.13 | Assist with classroom management interventions    |      |              |             |
| 2.14 | Facilitating workshops with educators             |      |              |             |
| 2.15 | Other (specify)                                   |      |              |             |

**6. SECTION E: CHALLENGES SCHOOL COUNSELLORS FACE IN SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING?**

**Which of the following challenges do you believe the school counsellor may be facing in supporting teaching and learning?**

|     |   | Yes | No |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 1.1 | Lack of time  |     |    |
| 1.2 | Lack of human resources                                   |     |    |
| 1.3 | Lack of financial resources                               |     |    |
| 1.4 | Groups are too large during group work                    |     |    |
| 1.5 | Learners are not cooperative                              |     |    |
| 1.6 | Learners are not allowed out of class during contact time |     |    |
| 1.7 | Counsellors cannot support teaching due to work load      |     |    |
| 1.8 | Counsellors cannot support learning due to work load      |     |    |
| 1.9 | Other (specify)   |     |    |

## APPENDIX: IX

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. What is your understanding of the role of a school counsellor?
2. What role does the school counsellor play at your school?
3. What are the main barriers to learning that learners are confronted with at your school?
4. What factors impact on the provision of teaching and learning at your school?
5. What roles does the school counsellor play in supporting teaching?
6. What role does the school counsellor play in supporting learning?
7. What role does the school counsellor play in supporting and developing the whole school?



## APPENDIX: X

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

1. What is your understanding of the role of a school counsellor?
2. What qualifications do you hold?
3. How long have you been working as a school counsellor?
4. What is your role as a counsellor at this school?
5. What role do you play in supporting teaching?
6. What role do you play in supporting learning?
7. What role do you play in supporting and developing the school as an organisation?
8. What challenges do you face in fulfilling your role as counsellor at your school?

