‘AT RISK’ YOUTHS’ PERCEPTION OF SCHOOLING:
A CASE STUDY IN KATHORUS

by

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This study investigated ‘at risk’ youths’ perceptions towards schooling. It focussed on grade eight in three secondary schools namely, Katlehong, Landulwazi and Ilinge in the Kathorus area, which is situated on the East Rand in the Gauteng province.

The motivation for conducting research is the ‘drop out’ rate of students at the junior secondary phase. Inherent in the research problem is the claim: Probably the ‘at risk’ youths’ perceptions towards schooling may impede their learning.

Through condensing, organising, categorising, conceptualising and coding data, which represented voices of the participants, common properties of data surfaced. For example, the culture of teachers’ absconding was expressed in all the schools during observation and interviews. Students were also reported to ‘bunk’ periods, emulating teachers and spending time smoking in the toilets or sunbathing outside the classrooms.

Most students were reported not to be doing homework tasks and not compiling notes after lesson periods. Teachers were said to be ridiculing such students by insulting them, cursing them or teasing them about their natural deformities instead of providing reprimand, guidance, advice or motivation.

Such behaviour manifested the concept of lack of sense of duty, lack of discipline and demotivation amongst others. This state of affairs is a fertile ground for ineffective teaching and learning, which manifests affective neglect and non-acceptance in the light of the ‘at risk’ perspective. The status quo evokes a feeling of alienation in youths, which results in ‘anomie’ and their dropping out of school.
Empowerment of individuals and the community means involving them in the decision-making activities and in the formulation of policies. To build acceptance, trust and a sense of belonging in students, they should be involved, for example, in the formulation of school rules and policy, planning sporting activities, itinerary and thus instilling ownership of such activities. It is only by empowering youths through participative involvement that one can become what one can become potentially. In this way the 'at risk' will not feel dissociated and rejected.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to my father and my late mother whose support and love I will always treasure.

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Section 1

1.1 Background to case study

This study addresses the problem of youth in previously violent townships. The focus is on youth who do not complete their school careers and who appear socially marginalised. Kathorus (that is, Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus), was declared an 'unrest-stricken' area in the early nineties because of recurring, callous, incidents in the area. The repercussions are manifested in lawlessness, insensitivity, and high illiteracy within the community.

For quite some time, the community's perspective towards order, discipline, property, life and education was coloured by ongoing violence. Many Kathorus youth, during this unstable era, were 'vigilantes' and adopted a culture of 'not to be told by elders', but 'to do as they wished'. They advocated slogans like, 'freedom now, education later'. This socio-economic, political imbalance hits most hard on the youth, because their view of the future is clouded by the instability of the present.

Many youth within the Kathorus community, for example, lost interest in schooling and dropped out as early as the junior secondary phase. Such youths are 'at risk' of:

- Not being able to face the challenges of reality, inter alia, honouring class periods daily and executing class and homework tasks timeously; meeting the evaluation tests standards with the aim of passing each standard;
- Failing to interact successfully with their environment, for example, not accepting authority but violating school rules and policies; not conforming to societal norms and values. Consequently they cannot take control of themselves and their lives thus cannot realise self-actualisation and become what they could potentially be.
Not surviving in life challenges and becoming victims of crime, drug addiction and abuse. Once such a subculture dominates school culture, parents and teachers lose positions of authority and respect.

1.2 Research interest and topic

In the light of the background to the problem, my research interest is the perception of Kathorus 'at risk' youth towards schooling. For the purpose of learning more and gaining a better understanding of the research problem in this study, my research topic is phrased thus: 'At risk' youths' perceptions of schooling: A case study in Kathorus. To give the reader a holistic and comprehensive picture of case, I will have to give a descriptive, analytic, interpretative and evaluative presentation of this case.

1.3 Research questions

The following research questions may be posed as relevant to the phrased research topic, namely:

- What are the 'at risk' youth's perceptions of schooling?
- How could the youth’s perceptions be incorporated when designing community education programmes which aim at instilling a sense of belonging and ownership, thus encouraging youths to stay longer in their schooling career?

1.4 Research problem and claim

It is from the above stated research questions that the research problem is clearly defined, namely: The need to find out from 'at risk' youth what their perceptions are towards schooling.
'At risk' youths drop out at the junior secondary phase as if to say:

- Is it worthy to be schooling when there are other short cut means of earning a living for survival?
- Why pursue education designed for and conducted in the South African township school's style when it still purports the apartheid ideals?
- Why stick to the senseless rigid cultural and educational norms, which ignore realistic variables and dynamics, in which the creators of such culture, for example, school uniform, school fund payment and corporal punishment, are aiming at personal interests and gain?
- We (that is, 'at risk' students) cannot make it personally and educationally because of socio-economic imbalances.

The above assumptions lead to the claim: Probably the 'at risk' youth's perception may impede their learning.

1.5 Motivation

What actually motivated me to conduct this study, is to find out more and gain a better understanding:

- about the above assumptions that may be inherent in the research problem, thus bringing the 'at risk' youth's perceptions to the fore and
- about what the 'at risk' youth's perceptions are towards schooling.

1.6 The aim of the research is to:

1. Elicit and document the perceptions of 'at risk' youth in Kathorus towards schooling for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of their related attitudes in learning.
2. Investigate their perceptions with the purpose of evaluating the extent and intensity these perceptions which may contribute towards their alienation towards the school community and their subsequently 'dropping out'.
3. Come up with suggestions for
   - Combating anomie.
   - Establishing 'gemeinschaft' schools.
   - Letting youngsters form learning communities.

1.7 Target participants

For purposes of this study, I will focus on grade eight (that is standard six) students, because most of them drop out in this class at the junior secondary phase. The participants will have been categorised as 'at risk' by their school.

The number of participants to be observed and interviewed will be at least three per area, thus totalling nine for Kathorus. The more the participants, the better the chances of eliciting the youth's perceptions more reliably.

1.8 Duration for observation and interview

For convenience and practicability, I will utilize one day for observation per area, tentatively from Monday, 21.09.98 to Wednesday, 23.10.98; that is Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus respectively. Time duration for observation might vary per area depending on the participants' responses.

As a follow-up and for gaining a better understanding of observational data collected, an in-depth interview will be conducted tentatively on Thursday, 24.09.98. Thursday is purposely chosen as a holiday because the youth will have enough time to themselves to honour the interview session.
1.9  Research Strategy and Methodology

I will make prior arrangements with the relevant people at the schools identified for this investigation, giving details of date, time and duration of observations in classrooms.

During observation, I will be looking for commonalities, like for example, the common characteristics that the identified 'at risk' student youths have. I will also be noting down their communication activities, both verbal and nonverbal. Activity characteristics will range from openness, withdrawness, spontaneity, non-spontaneity and passivity to activity of participants observed. Additional characteristics will be added, as the above do not constitute a fixed characteristic schedule.

Data collected can be categorized, coded and analysed with the aim of finding 'the why' of phenomena and thus consequently helping in addressing the research problem, so as to understand more about the perceptions of 'at risk' youth in Kathorus as regards schooling.

A qualitative research approach will be followed. The answer arrived at might help to investigate the youth's perception towards schooling. For the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the observational data collected, an in-depth interview will be conducted.

The fact that I have limited time at my disposal to conduct this study, means I need to employ an interview guide as a data collection method, as it ensures:

- the best use of limited time available in an interview situation;
- coverage of all relevant topics for a particular study;
- that the interview interaction is focussed for all interviewees, by covering the same material;
- sequencing of questioning is in the same order for all participants; and
- relevance and conciseness (Patton, 1987: 111-143)
During the interview I will formulate probing questions whenever the need arises. A tape recorder will be a very useful instrument during the interview. However, its use will depend on the co-operation of participants. The tape recorder can be constructively used for capturing exact quotations. However, using a tape recorder during an interview will not necessarily eliminate the need for compiling field notes, because field notes will help in clarifying assumptions, which may be inherent in the research problem, capture facts and help in formulating new questions as the interview proceeds. I may observe things that I will not hear on the recording. An interview will enable me to gain insight into the respondents' varying potentialities, personalities and also the varying families' cultural, socio-economic and educational background.

The fact that this case study focuses on 'at risk' youths in grade eight, means that other than observational and interview data, records, impressions and statements of others about 'at risk' youths, will have to be obtained from the relevant sources. For example, class teachers, guidance committee and PIDA (that is, Panel for the Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance).

In conducting the case study, I will:

- Assemble raw data consisting of all the information collected and then conceptualize, categorize and code data.
- Write case study narratively to afford the reader the opportunity of understanding the observation and interview (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 63-74).

All data generated from observation, interview and case study documents will be clustered and coded. This data will then be interpreted and displayed in an outcome matrix mould. If in the case of 'at risk' youths the recurring theme is for example, 'let students participate in designing the community education programme', then the outcome theme will be, 'instill ownership in students'.
1.10 The main theoretical view

Emile Durkheim's theory of 'anomie' (Schweitzer, 1991), Sergiovanni’s discussion of Tonnies’ theory of ‘gemeinschaft’ and ‘gesellschaft’ and its application to schools form the baseline of the brief theoretical framework (Sergiovanni, 1994). The core-plus school concept as advocated by Tony Townsend (1994) will also feature. Allen and Martin's (1989) formulation of policies by community members through participative involvement from the ground, also include emphasis in the effort to understand the research question.

1.11 Limitations and delimitations

This study aims at capturing the perceptions of ‘at risk’ youth about their view of schooling as an institution of the community and as an empowerment vehicle for social, educational, economical, political and religious development.

If proper arrangements were made prior to conducting the study and the relevant people contacted, with appropriate data collection tools employed, then relevant, reliable and valid data could be collected. Creating a healthy relaxed milieu for study is a must for encouraging openness and co-operation of participants. This manifests an aspect of strength in the study.

After a general observation of target participants, that is grade eight, I ended up with fifteen, that is, eight for Katlehong, three for Thokoza and four for Vosloorus instead of three per area, making the total nine. A change in targeted statistics shows a weak point in the study.

In some instances participants hide realities about the status quo at their schools for fear the truth might dent their school’s image. Data collection in such instances tends to be unreliable, irrelevant and invalid. This is another manifestation of a weakness in the study.
I intended accumulating participants' personal documents for getting clarity on the academic performance as well as their reports regarding their personalities, interest, potentialities, their strengths and weaknesses. I aimed at using such data to investigate relevant aspects of their assumed perception of schooling. The fact that some of the documents are not available and that it is dubious whether such information will be confidentially kept or not, manifest weaknesses in study. Nevertheless, data obtained from three different areas and fifteen individuals restore some strength to the study.

1.12 Summary of the sections

The research essay has four sections:

- **Section 1**
  In this section, the proposed project, its aim, strengths and weaknesses are introduced. A brief summary of the following issues is given: background to the practical problem; research interest and topic; research questions; research problem and claim inherent; motivation of study; target participants, duration of observation and interview; research strategy and methods and the theoretical view.

- **Section 2**
  In this section an argument based on the research question or questions, is built and backed by the theoretical views. The argument lies within the conceptual framework of relevance with regard to 'at risk' youth's perceptions of schooling.

- **Section 3**
  This section describes how data was collected, conceptualised, categorised and coded. The investigation is presented narratively, illustrated with raw data and analytical examples.
Section 4

This section reflects on the findings, validation, suggestions and recommendations in the study. The theory employed in section two is involved and re-contextualised in the findings. References of the different sources referred to in the research essay are listed in this section. In the addenda, documents used, without which the study will be incomplete, are appended.
Section 2

2.1 Introduction

In 1976, aggrieved youths, who shared interests and values, mobilised to challenge the use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in black schools. This was an explicit challenge of apartheid education. To the youths all activities within apartheid education were unacceptable. They viewed the very school buildings as monuments of apartheid. The perception led to the vandalisation of buildings. Vygotsky defines such action as a meaningful human act constructed by history and society (Piaget and Vygotsky, 1993: 9).

The youths' collective perceptions expressed what they suffered within an unjust educational situation. The unjust exploitative legacy of the past, with its dehumanising, unashamedly hegemoneous education sparked a revolution amongst the youths. In Emile Durkheim's terms, this state of confusion and normlessness created a social fabric that contributes to a sense of 'anomie' (Goodman & Marx, 1978: 182).

Although deviance disturbs the healthy relation within a social structure, it may serve as a mechanism for introducing change (Goodman & Marx, 1978:182). The change effected after the 1976 revolts set off decades of school disturbance. The question is whether this has addressed the youth's outcry of transforming apartheid education into an adequate and compensatory education.

The move from a limiting and domesticating education to a system of transformative education is explained by the notion of 'domesticating' learners in terms of Freire (1977). Freire's notion of education is the search for knowledge by all, that is, educators and learners. It is egalitarian, affording all students equal opportunities to achieve goals. This notion can also be viewed from the core plus school perspective, which propounds equal opportunity for all members of the school community (Townsend, 1994: 115).
The 1976 uprisings marked the beginning of recurring traumatic experiences in black townships of Southern Africa. The 16th of June was a commemoration day, which presupposed a day of mourning rather than a school day. The 1980’s marked the decade of political, economic and educational instability. The culture of learning was camouflaged by mushrooming cultures of unrests in townships and by child abuse, especially by members of the South African Defence Force. Youths were abused sexually by being outraged physically at the barrel of the gun and teargas, and emotionally by witnessing callous, cold blooded deaths of fellow people and loved ones. Youths were torn into two because on the one hand parents were perturbed by the fact that they were losing out at school, on the other hand the unpredicted incidents within the townships and schools forced them to idle outside the classrooms and be vulnerable to the insensitive treatment of the South African Defence Force. It is a premise of this study that the state of affairs made youths feel alienated from school, which had become the place of social disturbance.

2.2 How the ‘at risk’ youth perceive schooling

I argue that the sense of alienation in township schools left many township youth at a loss, thus aggravating loneliness, isolation, as well as a feeling of dissociation from others and society.

However, Schweitzer (1991) in his interpretation of Durkheim’s solution to ‘anomie’ maintains that a sense of attachment to the community presupposes personal autonomy. This means that personal autonomy and discipline pivot on community’s shared interests, values and goals. Therefore in the light of Schweitzer’s interpretation, an autonomous and disciplined individual has a sense of belonging and the interests of the community in which he is immersed at heart.

I therefore believe that the youths’ feeling of alienation, which could consequently lead to ‘anomie’, could be overcome through participation and involvement of youth in school
and communal activities - thereby living, working and learning together as regards the norms, traditions, customs, values and goals of the community. In this way a sense of community, which presupposes attachment, duty sharing and self-determination, is nurtured (Sergiovanni, 1994: 63). In fact, schools should provide a service that is accessible, equitably distributed and perceived as relevant to local people's lives (Allen & Martin, 1989: 3). In this way schools form the basis of community education.

The main claim of this paper is that 'at risk' youths seem to perceive schools as organisations in society rather than community learning centres. The former perception in Sergiovanni's argument breaks down the notion of community or 'gemeinschaft'. I argue that loss of community has psychological consequences, which manifest as dysfunctional behaviour (Sergiovanni, 1994: 11).

2.3 A negative perception of schooling

In this study the research problem is explicitly defined as the need to find out what the 'at risk' youths' perceptions are towards schooling. Presumably 'at risk' youths' perception of schooling is that it is an institution driven by society the state and a distant education department. Sergiovanni uses Tonnies' term of 'gesellschaft' to capture the notion of society. In 'gesellschaft' every person strives for own advantage, as long as it satisfies individual interest and gain. In the light of this perception, relationships are competitive. People engage in contracts rather than relationships and group acceptance is conditional.

Conditional acceptance would presumably lead to manifestations of loneliness, rejection, unattachment, aloofness, isolation and distrust. Competitive relationships would probably manifest jealousy towards the more successful peers, show resentment and bitterness towards failure as well as manifest sensitivity to any reference of personal or scholastic deficiency. Sergiovanni's 'gesellschaft' refers to prized, rational, artificial will, which is based on reason and logic (1994: 10).
Although we all live in a 'gesellschaft' world characterised by technical rationality, which brings gains as defined by Sergiovanni, we need to remember that 'gesellschaft' also brings its own problems. Gains like personal prestige and how others particularly treat one, are the results of prestigious remuneration, which befits a prestigious occupation that is gained by the winners. Other gains, like family status realised because of educational, economic and occupational inequalities, may have a strong effect on how one is viewed by others, neighbours and teachers (Light et al, 1989:124). Potential dropouts may feel isolated or even alienated from their community, because they feel excluded from society.

How a student is viewed by teachers as a potential failure, for example, may lead to actual failure, because stratification and labelling depress the individual's wellbeing and perception of opportunities, thus leaving the individual at an explicit disadvantage. It is therefore not surprising that 'at risk' youths manifest deviant behaviour, like not regarding themselves as having the potential for succeeding academically and personally, and displaying poor scholastic achievement and truancy. A low self-esteem related to social stratification could result in poor scholastic performance, failure and ultimately evoke alienation and lack a sense of belonging. According to Schweitzer (1991), this means a lack of a sense of self and a feeling of alienation.

2.4 Who are the youths 'at risk' of dropping out?
In the discussion thus far, I have emphasised that both the history of township education and the lack of community spirit in schools, can lead to potential non-completing students' experience of alienation. In the light of Von Gruenen's description in Le Roux (1994: 81-94), black children 'in crisis' are immersed in the same socio-politically and economically imbalanced society, characterised by normless and rapid changes as those 'at risk'. Both children 'at risk' and 'in crisis' manifest the same type of deviant behaviour patterns. For the purpose of this study therefore, the two will be treated as synonymous. They are therefore those youngsters who deviate from behavioural norms in an extreme way and who, especially, do not complete learning activities.
Merging with Le Roux's definition of children 'in crisis', I define youth 'at risk' as children who fail to integrate successfully with their environment, because of failure within themselves, their environment, their history and those issues pertained in their environmental interaction (Le Roux, 1994: 92).

It is the effect of such factors that do not afford 'at risk' youths the opportunity of realising personal and contextual competence. Consequently youths cannot become what they ought to become, but drop out from school. They do not feel part of society, which is distant and do not experience school as a community where shared values and ideas can bind them.

2.5 Factors that constitute 'at risk' vulnerability and their manifestations

This section focuses on the relationship between environmental interaction, affective and cognitive functions, plus the behavioural deviance of youths 'at risk' of dropping out. Le Roux (1994: 92), in his analysis of factors that constitute 'risk' vulnerability, identified three sets as explained here below. Although the already discussed notion of alienation is not repeated, the background of the following is the notion that potential 'at risk' youth already feel that they do not belong.

2.5.1 Factors within the child

Refusal to co-operate with educators, for example (probably because of a low level of expectations regarding scholastic success and sensitivity to any personal deficiency) portray factors within children themselves. Often, it is just the type of education that a youngster has had. If Vygotskyan theory (1978) about the cultural character of education is considered it may be argued that students can learn to live a negative educational culture due to the schools they have gone to. Therefore, when referring to an individual student, the individual remains part of a system and its history. In South African townships it can be argued that history did create a negative culture. The individual may experience many
personal barriers to learning, but in contemporary educational thinking these are addressed in their inclusive perspective. It remains the environment that is the greatest drawback for typical ‘at risk’ students.

2.5.2 Factors within the environment

Apart from the social and political upheavals in townships, other variables also come into play. Poor socio-economic conditions, for instance, lead to inequalities within society. Inequalities of income do affect people’s life chances as Weber, one of the founders of social theory explains that having little money severely restricts one’s freedom of opportunity in a consumer society in Goodman and Marx, (1978: 261). Being isolated from mainstream society and living in a segregated poor township is in itself an alienating factor.

People with economic resources, for example, consolidate power and actually influence those in economic power, such that political decisions benefit them. Contrastingly people immersed in poor socio-economic conditions are without relevant resources and therefore have little or no ability at all to influence any political decisions in their favour (Goodman & Marx, 1978: 264). Although the democratically elected government does now legislate and implement actions for social upliftment in townships, the process is slow and in the day to day lives of poor students, they still can feel marginalised, silenced and alienated. At the same time the family and community ties are not strong enough and the temptation to deviate increases with the increase of poverty.

Unequal distribution of resources, like poor housing and inadequate educational facilities, impede a person’s life chances and can open channels for deviance. In addition, poor people are often exposed to hazardous living conditions and are at high risk of being prey to crime and being vulnerable to illness. Because health care varies according to people’s income, people therefore have different chances of being mentally healthy too. In the
traumatised parts of Kathorus Rossouw and Lamprecht (1998) found that the need for counselling among militarised youth is serious.

Unrests and normlessness in black townships, family violence, physical and sexual abuse of children, lack of moral support for children whenever the need arises, may impede their learning, because of an "incongruent ecological interaction". "Incongruent ecological interaction" captures the conflict, trauma and social hardships that the average family in Kathorus has been enduring. Such incongruent interaction with one's fellowmen and environment results to disharmony with societal norms and deviancy and incompetence as Thurman asserts in Le Roux (1994:94). Children immersed in such an environment are inevitably victims of stress. However, Garmezy (1977:226) maintains that whilst cognitive deficits reduce the capacity to cope with stress, high cognitive ability can buffer children against environmental stress. Schools can therefore contribute to dealing with social incongruency and lack of balance or a sound social ecology. In this essay I argue that the school will have to redefine itself as a community institution for that to happen.

2.5.3 Factors related to the youths' history

Whilst the 1976 uprisings expressed the voices of the deeply angered, exploited and marginalised masses during the apartheid regime, the revolts of the eighties and nineties led to their liberation; yet at the same time it left a deeply seated problem in black townships and schools. Rossouw and Lamprecht define the problem as lack of responsibility, tolerance and respect for others (1998: 23).

For as long as the problem is not addressed, townships and schools will remain unsafe, unstable and non-productive. It is therefore not surprising that students on the one hand blame teachers for their lack of guidance and sense of duty, whilst teachers on the other hand feel intimidated in the situation. Teacher intimidation leaves them numb, adopting a 'don't care attitude' as if to say: 'go on with your unbecoming behaviour because you are rotting for your own parents'. Hence the disorderliness in schools.
Hooliganism and gangsterism prevalent in black schools leave teachers insensitive and passive. Some of the youths carry weapons to school as if to imitate the military youths whose purpose was “to protect black communities against crime and political violence” (Rossouw & Lamprecht, 1998: 18), when in reality the status quo disrupts orderliness in schools. During the ‘Two-Way’ programme on SABC I, one teacher debating about the status quo regarding the culture of learning in black schools, justified their so-called lack of authority and sense of duty. He expressed how they felt intimidated because of youths carrying weapons at schools. Presumably the teachers and parents of ‘at risk’ youths were victims of trauma during the 1976, and later uprisings, when lawlessness was employed as a daring means to realise a constructive end. Like Rossouw and Lamprecht’s military youths, the uprisings left some of the parents “under-educated, jobless and under trained to enter the civilian job market” (1998:18). It is therefore not surprising that such parents lack the motivation for their children’s pursuit of schooling, as they themselves were victims of school failure.

Whilst positively viewing the pursuit of schooling, youths feel alienated by the fact that teachers do not afford them the chance of citing and explaining their problem of not meeting some of the scholastic demands, as a result of their home, socio-economic and educational limitations. Instead, teachers ridicule them or respond abusively. The way in which an individual is treated will determine an individual’s outlook in life and attitude, as McGregor explains in Van der Westhuizen, (1991: 198). It is the teachers’ reactions that make youths feel dissociated from the school and not see the reason for pursuing schooling. To the youths teachers are part of the system, still advocating apartheid practices of insensitivity and discriminating against people. This is how the students’ respect for teachers is lost.

Factors related to the youths’ history, unrest in black residential areas, unequal distribution of resources, poor housing, school conditions and community support systems, family violence and break-ups, poor family and teachers relationships, lack of parental and
teacher control, affective neglect— all these promote 'at risk' possibilities. Such conditions decrease the youths' opportunities for school success.

2.5.4 Factors related to the child's environmental interaction

Manifestations like lack of understanding as regards the pursuit of schooling, rejection of education and inadequate exertion of authority over children are some of the factors related to the child's environmental interactions. Inadequate exertion of authority for instance, could mean rejection of the child, thus violating the declaration of children's rights (Act 108 of 1996, 13 – 14), which states that all children should be protected from neglect and exploitation and should have the right to grow up with love, affection and security. Family support as a protective factor can buffer children 'at risk' from stress and trauma and instil resilience (Gabarino, Dubrow, Kostelny & Pardo, 1992: 204). It is the effect of factors within the child's environment that places youths at high risk of dropping out, because of task demands (like coping with educational activities) and expectations (like obedience, respect and scholastic achievements). These demands and expectations are less steep at home than at school (Rutter, Graham & Yule, 1970: 422). The consequences of the effect of such factors are anxiety, stress and frustration.

Anxious, stressed out and frustrated youths will perceive the self negatively and could devaluate education and schooling, while participating destructively rather than meaningfully in society (Le Roux, 1994: 103). Such stressed and frustrated youths often engage in vandalism, arson, stealing, truancy, absconding and other destructive criminal activities. Such unacceptable behaviour is a symptom of maladjustment, failure to establish social relationships and an indication of a developmental gap - as van Niekerk interprets it (Le Roux, 1994: 90).

Once youths are in disharmony with societal norms and once they feel rejected and consequently also feel left out of community, ecological interaction incongruency is overt. For example, youths can probably participate in student subcultures such as gangsterism,
drugs, alcohol and sex abuse. Once such student subcultures dominate the school's legitimate culture, parents, teachers and principals often lose control of the youths. These youths have established a community in which they share symbols and boundaries as Cohen (1985:12-13) explains. They form a community of interest and of mind in the model of community as propounded by Sergiovanni(1994:63). Their need for belonging and togetherness thus drives them to form their own 'gemeinschaft'.

For schools to include more of their neighbourhoods, sharing values and commitment, they should be perceived as 'gemeinschaft', thus adopting a community character of bonding people together for improvement of learning, teaching and skill empowerment. To realise this objective, strategies for combating 'risk' probability factors have to be employed.

2.6 How factors that promote 'at risk' probability can be combated

It is only through constructive participation in community life that adherence to community values and acceptance of common ideals are realised. It is also through the community that people can respond to their individual calling and thus shape their lives. When living as part of a community that shares values, norms and a code of conduct, true belonging is dependent on compliance.

2.6.1 Employment of strategies to combat 'at risk' possibility

For education to be empowering and for it to contribute to improved learning and teaching, teachers and parents should be helped through in-service training sessions and skill empowerment workshops in which they learn skills to meet the needs of youths 'at risk' of dropping out. Although well-targeted training sessions can be of help, this study proposes that schools should become part of communities in a radical way.
2.7 Conclusion

In this section I have argued that schools as hegemonic apartheid symbols, which stifle personal autonomy and self-determination, (as viewed by 'at risk' youths) seem to evoke a feeling of distrust, a low self-esteem in students, withdrawal, alienation, rejection and loss of community. This tendency manifests as a lack of sense of duty and discipline amongst teachers and learners in South African black schools. Hence the prevalent culture of 'bunking' teaching and learning periods flourishes in township schools.

Schools as 'gesellschaft' mean a place where there is lack of communal responsibility and duty, lack of attachment, social loss, limited personal autonomy and self determination, which in Durkheim's interpretation, leads to 'anomie'. This state of affairs manifests in a lack of sense of duty and responsibility amongst some students and teachers and even amongst some parents within black communities. While I do not refute the positive side of the competitive character in 'gesellschaft', which may motivate excellence and success in education, I argue that malicious competition in some instances may lead to negative repercussions as expressed in Durkheim's 'anomie'. For example, degradation, non-confidence, and a negative self-esteem seem to be instilled among youths, because they feel inadequate to compete and become alienated. These imbalances directly affect one's life chances, as Weber explains in Goodman & Marx (1978, 26) and may lead to premature dropping out.

Premature dropping out indicates that independence and self-actualisation may not be realised. When a sense of community is lost, a sense of attachment to the community on which independence pivots, is also lost. With social loss, a sense of belonging, patriotism and ownership is absent. Hence irresponsibility, lawlessness and vandalism in South African black schools may ensue, due to a lack of attachment to the school as an organ of community or as a community itself.
Like Sergiovanni, I believe that schools have to be mutually committed and their members work collectively together, in order to achieve both individual and community goals. In this way society will view schools as communities of learners and professionals, who share duty attachment and self determination, thus providing a strategic safety network for achieving communal goals and effectiveness in learning and teaching. This envisaged state of affairs could make youngsters feel accepted, attached and valued as part of the school and the entire community, through collective mutual commitment and sharing. In Schweitzer’s interpretation, attachment to the collective, that is community, plus personal autonomy and self discipline combat anomie (Schweitzer, 1991: 77).

I propose that schools be viewed as ‘gemeinschaft’ rather than ‘gesellschaft’, such that they become more like neighbourhoods, which share values, commitments and which are bonded together. Like Sergiovanni (1994), I believe that the sense of community in schools can contribute to improved learning and teaching, as it advocates togetherness, co-operation and mutual commitment to realise shared interests, values and goals, thus eradicating loneliness and dissociation from others.

If education is designed for a community of learners (that is, COL) or for a society which shares interests, cultured values and goals, then it should never be viewed in isolation from society and vice versa. The family, for example, should be employed as a protective factor to buffer children from stress and trauma and groom them to be resilient as Joseph (1994) asserts. Amongst other characteristics that show resilient children, are the following:

- Use proactive approaches to problem solving
- View experiences in a positive and constructive way
- Are good nurtured and easy to deal with
- Have a sense of control over their lives
- Have a positive of self esteem; positive relationships with others; cognitive competence; self efficiency and temperamental characteristics that lead to effective coping skills (Joseph, 1994: 204). From Schweitzer’s suggestion of an antidote to
`anomie', it is evident that the manner of how we solve the problems in many schools in South Africa can be seriously implicated by the degree of ‘gemeinschaft’ orientation. Establishing a ‘gemeinschaft’ school, for example, can be one way of solving the lack of sense of duty and responsibility, prevalent amongst some teachers and students in black schools especially in South Africa. Weiler’s Farm school, though poorly facilitated, is a very good example of a ‘gemeinschaft’ school. In the light of Henning’s report (1997), the farm school is literally owned by the community. Other than being a community learning centre, the school is used for community meetings, weddings and many other community activities, thus accentuating a sense of attachment, communal responsibility and duty. Through collective attachment, phenomena like responsibility, duty consciousness, discipline and patriotism are manifested. Teachers, pupils and parents are just busy with school activities and the community provides a strategic safety net required for effective teaching and learning, achieving community goals by living and working together and thereby also combating alienation.

Contrastingly, in a reasonably facilitated school out in Soweto, Henning’s research indicates that the opposite occurs. The school with an enrolment of approximately 1,300 has a handsome school population. Unlike in Weiler’s Farm school, which uses a platoon system because of inadequate classrooms, the ‘white elephant’ school in Soweto does not show any sign of participative involvement of the school community within the very premises. The school is dissociated from the entire community. It is an entity ‘out there’. Teachers are mostly heard and found in staff rooms chatting, enjoying tea when they are supposed to be in classes executing their educational tasks collectively, sharing and working together to achieve individual and community goals. Parents are rarely seen within the school premises, which they should be patriotically owning and utilising for the benefit of the school and the entire community. A picture of unattachment, dissociation and loneliness is portrayed in this school. The status quo explicitly manifests lack of duty sharing, attachment and autonomy phenomena manifested where a sense of duty is nurtured. To establish ‘gemeinschaft’ schools, the school population should learn to work and live together, all aspiring to realise shared values and goals as a family bonded by
attachment. The relationship established should be natural, sincere, meaningful and significant - such that its members experience love, warmth, intimacy, safety, trust and cooperation. With autonomy, self discipline and selfdetermination realised because of 'gemeinschaft' schooling, youngsters can form learning communities. The only problem is how to form these.

The fact that schools are not islands, but exist in the wider community, which relies on them as Brown explains (1994: 8), learning communities can be extended inside and outside schools. Within the school, adults, other than the classroom teachers, are needed to guide the learning activities. For example, older students guide reciprocal teaching or jigsaw activities as discussion facilitators. Outside the school the community of learning programme provides the community with the relevant resources, thus relieving teachers from the burden of guiding learners knowledge-wise. Here “the learning community is limited by the combined knowledge of its members” (Brown 1994: 8). For effectiveness, members of a COL (community of learning) programme should have insight as regards their strengths and weaknesses, and also have access to the learning strategies of their own-readings, plays, songs and other performances. The reason for insights and strategies in their learning is solely because learners develop at different rates, most academic learning is self-motivated, self-conscious, strategic, active, innovative and purposeful rather than the tedious every day learning known in most schools. This serves as the first principle of COL in Brown’s view (1994).

For learning to be effected, within the classroom setting, Brown (1994) highlights the contrasting theories of Bacon and Dewey. Dewey on the one side maintains that teaching should correspond with the child’s competence level and favours the lower level of competence, while Bacon, on the other hand, maintains that guides, aids and tools will help to push the upper level of the learners competence. I believe that if the two theories are situationally employed in any learning environment, the learners’ potential can be developed between lower and upper levels. The second principle in Brown’s view presupposes ‘zones of proximal development’, which in Vygotskian terms refers to learning developing between lower and upper levels depending on the learner’s
environmental support (Brown, 1994: 9). The third principle of learning recognises and legitimises individual differences like intelligence and different ways of practice like employing technological skills or content knowledge for teaching, to effect learning. According to the third principle of learning, the purpose of teachers is pooling expertise to realise richness in diverse expertise. The fourth principle expresses the belief that deep thought is embedded in dialogue. Reciprocity of dialogue produces interpretative communities through the many voices in community discourse (Brown, 1994: 10). The fact that learning and teaching highly depends on creativity, sustainability and the expansion of communal research practice, the fifth principle of learning therefore emphasises community of practice (Brown, 1994: 10). In fact, members of COL are interdependent, thus promoting an atmosphere of joint responsibility, mutual respect and a sense of personal and group identity.

I believe like Brown that if youths are to form learning communities, then all the principles of learning are to be intertwined namely:

- Learning has to be intrinsically motivated, strategic, innovative and purposeful such that;
- It develops learning according to the learners potential through zone of proximal development thus;
- Recognising individual differences inter alia, intelligence variables and the different way of implementing practice by either utilising the content knowledge or acquired skills to effect learning. For COL programme to be meaningful and meet the need of learners;
- It has to be a reciprocal dialogue through the community of discourse. A sense of community presupposes collectivity and interdependence. For COL to promote an atmosphere of collective responsibility, a sense of duty, mutual respect, personal and group identity thus realising autonomy and self determination, it has to be a communal research practice (Brown, 1994: 10).
This section is concluded by emphasising that the different levels of meaning in the concept 'community' need to be considered when thinking about 'at risk' students' view of and place in schools. I have argued that alienation from a sense of belonging in a secure community can exacerbate 'at risk' students' position.

Section 3

3.1 Introduction

This paper reports on a case study in Kathorus (that is Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus) and it is entitled 'at risk' youths perceptions towards schooling. The study inquires into their perceptions towards learning, schooling and education in general. The focus population is standard eight in Katlehong, Landulwazi and Ilinge secondaries. Katlehong means 'a place of success'; Landulwazi means 'fetch knowledge' and Ilinge means 'try it'.

A case study format was employed. That is, an in-depth investigation was conducted through observation and interviews. Data was collected for the purpose of gaining a better insight into the youths' place of birth, socio-economic and educational background of parents, youths' age, factors that might increase 'at risk' possibility and their perceptions towards schooling.

The data collection tools used were observation, interviews and the use of scholastic records to explore the background of the participants. To make tools employed user friendly, an audio recorder and videocassette were used. In this subsection the participants' voices, through emotive and opinion responses, are cited during the description of the research procedures.
The analysis of the responses of these grade eight students provides insight into the shared interests, norms, values, goals, the behavioural reactions, the positive or negative commitment and attitude of teachers, the students and parents in socio-economic contexts as backdrop for the research sample's views of schooling.

3.2 Data sources and processes

For eliciting data, I used observation and interviews as data collection tools. Question guides were used during both sessions, ensuring the best utilisation of the time available. The sequencing of questions was in the same order for all participants, thereby covering the same material for all interviewees.

An audiocassette tape recorder was used during interviews to capture the participants' views verbatim. A video camera was utilised during the in-depth interview to observe the non-verbal and verbal communication of participants.

Other than the raw data gathered during the field study, record impressions and statements of others about 'at risk' youths were obtained from relevant sources, inter alia teachers, guidance committee or PIDA (that is, Panel for the Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance).

In conducting this case study, I followed the steps as tabulated here below:

- Assembled raw data, consisting of information about 'at risk' youths;
- Constructed a case record by condensing, organising, classifying and editing raw data into manageable and accessible packages;
- Wrote a narrative case study, affording the reader the opportunity of enjoying and understanding the conversational information in this format.

All data generated from observation, interview, and documents were coded, clustered and were later interpreted and displayed in the outcome matrix mould. If in the case of 'at risk'
youths for example, the recurring theme is; Let students participate in designing the non-
formal education programme, then the outcome theme will be, 'instil ownership in
students'.

My focus is on the grade eight population in the three townships that is Katlehong,
Thokoza and Vosloorus. I specifically investigated 'at risk' students (as identified by their
schools perceptions) towards schooling. I purposely chose the last two days before
schools closings, that is, Tuesday, 22-09-1998 and Wednesday, 23-09-1998 because
during this period most schools are through with continuous assessments and students are
available when needed for activities other than scholastic ones.

According to prior arrangements with the relevant people at the schools, I was supposed
to have started in Katlehong Secondary, which is just opposite my home on Tuesday, 22-
09-1998 from 09h30-10h30 promptly and then proceed to Landulwazi Secondary out in
Thokoza township the same day.

However, despite prior arrangements with the H. O. D for guidance, Mr Moss Ramochela
at Katlehong Secondary, I had to postpone the appointment to the next day for two
reasons, namely, the appointment coincided with a school's trip and the absence of Miss
M. More, the teacher who was not available on that day because of unforeseen
circumstances.

At Landulwazi, I intended starting at approximately 11h00-12h00 the same day. I
telephoned Landulwazi Secondary and arranged for an earlier appointment a day earlier-
that is 10h30-11h30, instead of 11h00-12h00. I also phoned Ilinge Secondary to arrange
for an appointment a day earlier, that is Tuesday 20-09-98, instead of the Wednesday 23-
09-98. I earnestly appreciated the flexibility of the relevant people at the schools.

Mrs Swazi Modibe, the principal, Miss Gabisile Sekese, the guidance teacher and Mrs
Puseletso Phaleng, all of Landulwazi Secondary, afforded me the chance of conducting an
observation session at their school, on Tuesday 22-09-98 from 10h30-11h30. Mr Solly Chivula principal, Mr A Sethatho and Mrs Tiny Thantsha of Ilinge Secondary also gave me a chance of an observation session at their school on Tuesday 22-09-98 from 12h00 -13h45. Mr A. Mamadi principal, Mr Moss Ramochela and Miss M.More all of Katlehong Secondary also allowed me to conduct an observation at their school on Wednesday 23-09-98 from 9h30-10h40. I appreciated the co-operation of the three schools.

3.3 Research Setting

The schools (Katlehong, Landulwazi and Ilinge) are situated in the East Rand area of Gauteng Province. All the schools have double storey elevations. Although the school buildings are not adequately facilitated as they are supposed to be, the buildings are electrified and have basic requirements expected of any secondary school (see Addenda A & B).

From the number of classrooms, students' enrolment and staffing, the schools are graded as fairly big (see Table 3.1-Description of the Setting-Addendum A).

3.4 Observation at individual schools

At the initial stage during observation, I observed a grade eight class in each of the three schools. For purpose of proximity, voice and audibility, eye contact and instilling a sense of togetherness, furniture was closely arranged. My table was set right in front of the class to enable me to compile field notes, curb obscurity and thus be advantaged to employ eye contact with every participant whenever the need arose. The audio cassette player and recorder were placed just next to my table to enable easy operation.

For creating a healthy and conducive environment for conducting observation, I introduced myself as an M.Ed. Community Education student at RAU (that is, Rand
Afrikaanse Universiteit). I further clarified the purpose of my visit, namely the sharing of views with matters of concern about schooling, learning and teaching in Kathorus.

Throughout the observation cum-interviewing sessions, I had a teacher or two who helped me in eliciting the students' perceptions by asking questions as compiled in the question guide. In each of the sessions before observing, I read the declaration of children's rights with the aim of abreasting the students on information entailed in the declaration. I also clarified some phrases in the declaration like:

- All children have a right to free education. This right does not warrant waste of resources supplied to schools by the education department, nor does it stop school fund contributions and fund raising pledges;

- All children should never have fear of arrest and detention. This does not imply the transgressor's exemption from punishment regarding their misdemeanours;

- All children should not be made to work before a certain age. This actually curbs child neglect and exploitation. Violation of this right with its manifestations, inter alia, premature dropping out of school, working on a farm to secure residential permit on the very farm, is taboo.

In all the schools students felt good that the declaration spells out rights which protect them from neglect and exploitation. This evoked a feeling of being cared for, which left them with a sense of acceptance and security which is a fertile condition for eliciting perceptions during observation and interviews. If it biased them, it was not intentional, because I wanted them to forward their views in the light of rights that were read to them. In a way I saw myself as a social agent who researched the students. Although this research is not an experiment, I presupposed that this 'intervention' would play the type of role that is encapsulated in the 'stimulated recall' interview format. This means that their thinking was intentionally 'stimulated' in recalling their experiences.
Participants were made to feel at home, by allowing them to communicate in either English, Zulu or Sotho as it suited them best. Students accepted the request for the use of an audiocassette and a video camera. They were requested to either raise their voices for audibility when answering questions or come nearer to the audiocassette recorder. In each of the schools, teacher facilitators posed questions as compiled in question guide while I compiled notes to capture views and perceptions as articulated by the participants’ voices. I wanted to keep the setting informal. I observed and interviewed with the help of the teachers.

In Landulwazi Secondary, Miss Gabisile Sekese was facilitating. Mr A. Sethato and Mrs Tiny Thantsha were facilitating in turns at Ilinge Secondary. In Katlehong Secondary, Miss M. More was a facilitator. All the interviews were transcribed (and translated into English by the teachers who were present).

It was not an easy task to condense, organise, categorise, conceptualise and code data into manageable and accessible lots. I treated question responses per school. I further listened to the cassette player, re-checking if participants’ voices were well recorded in the field notes and the transcription then organised, categorised and coded data.

Responses per question were analysed per school. The responses from the three schools were then analysed by asking analytical questions about relevant data. For example, in the emotive question: What could be the most hurting thing to a student, I checked on similarities and differences. In all the three schools, child abuse was highly rated as a most hurting act. When coding the initial label of the concept child abuse, the code is ch.a in this research essay. Labelling of students by teachers was often cited through out the observation session as grossly hurting. Other similar responses are criticism, bunking of classes by either students or teachers. Now the concepts ‘labelling’, ‘criticism’ and ‘bunking’ are grouped to form the category demotivation of the self. In coding, the
category becomes *d.o.s.* Categories are supposed to have properties, which are recognisable and which subsume a number of codes.

Throughout data-organising matrixes, the first step for analysis was the conceptualisation of data, that is, giving each idea, event or incident a name or a label. Concepts were then grouped together to form categories. The latter were grouped according to properties noting frequency, extent, intensity, duration and amount of information in an incident (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 63-73). For example, codes are the given initial name like *l.o.d*, that is, lack of discipline.

### 3.4.1 Observation notes and interview questions- oral data

Whilst the teacher-facilitator was posing questions, during the observation session, I observed a relaxed atmosphere amongst students. A positive and willing attitude reflected on their countenances. The students observed were between thirteen and sixteen years of age. They were 15 in number. Thirteen were born and brought up in Kathorus, that is, eight in Katlehong, one in Thokoza and four in Vosloorus. Only two of them were born outside Kathorus, that is, one in Soweto and one in the Eastern Cape.

1. **What could be the most hurting thing to a student?**

   **Katlehong** - Rapist abusing students, students not respecting school rules. Student bunking classes. Teachers not give student a chance to speak. Teachers not treating statements in the same way, that is, discriminating against students.

   **Landulwazi** - Outsiders abusing students. Teachers or classmates labelling students. Teachers or parents scolding children. When you are criticised. Students coming to school but teachers do not teach. Teachers teasing students about natural deformities.
**Binge** - Child abuse. Teachers labelling students. Teachers criticising student because they do not understand subject. Telling me how bad I am.

2. **How does failing or passing affect a student negatively or positively?**

**Katlehong** - Feel bad because parents scold you. Parents supply needs but students are playing.

**Landulwazi** - Feel good because passing rewards my effort. Feel bad but it's own medicine because no effort made - you caused it.

**Binge** - Painful because of scolding at home. Friends laugh at you. Criticism at home and at school.

3. **What are your comments about Matric results in black schools?**

**Katlehong** - Bad because students come late to school. Some students are absent, not serious about school, don't care, are out of classes during teaching.

**Landulwazi** - Not satisfying because students have bad attitude - they make themselves teachers.

**Binge** - Very poor because teachers bunk periods and students have little time for learning. Student at times play, do not concentrate in the class - do not do school work and homework. The schools do not have enough facilities. Love affair and smoking drugs waste time.
4. What could cause high failure rate and how can the situation be redressed?

Katlehong - Students bunk periods. Students do not study and prepare late for tests and exams. Students are less worried about schoolwork. Boys especially, sunbathe during teaching periods. Relationships between students and teachers are not good.

Landulwazi - Student do not do school work, rely on copying. Some students have home problems and do not tell teachers. Students disrespect teachers - students should respect teachers and take advice.

Ilinge - Student do not concentrate, do not make notes - but write test and exams. Not enough text books at school.

5. What could cause high pass rate and how could standards be maintained

Katlehong - Students stick to school policy. Students and teachers work hard. Parents do supervision; guide and give help to children. Students attend periods and work hard. Students and teachers relationship is well.

Landulwazi - Students concentrate in class. Students and teachers are commitment in schoolwork.

Ilinge - Students and teachers commitment. Student to be serious in class. Ku shu kuthi we must co-operate - Shuthi ama students, teachers na-ma parents. No bunking of periods - School gates should be locked. Teachers to consider the different talents of students. Enough teaching and learning facilities.
6. Is schooling worth to be pursued? If no or yes why?

Katlehong - Yes, education key to success. There is nothing without education. Education gives good future, good work. Life favours educated people. When you idle it leads to gangsterism and abuse.

Landulwazi - Yes with education, future will be bright school protects us from bad. Education is the key to success. There is nothing we can do without education.

Ilinge - Yes uneducated people become stupid when other people work and buy cars we will be going on foot and picking up paper. Better education, better employment, better salary you can buy a Pajero - better living. With education you can go wherever you want.

7. Are there other alternatives to schooling?

Katlehong - No- because idleness -leads to gangsterism and abuse for example drug alcohol and child abuse.

Landulwazi - No- we will not survive without education, we will be mothers before time, we will be thugs. Without education crime goes up.

Ilinge - No - idleness cause criminal actions and you end up in jail - it also cause Pregnancies. When you are educated -you are better employed and move in a Pajero.

8. Are you happy to be at this school? Yes or no - give reasons.

Katlehong - Yes -because the discipline is good and students put on uniform. We are
taught and the school has right rules. No-because some students bring guns to school. There are teacher strikes and students strikes.

Landulwazi - Yes because some teachers teach us, today I can communicate in English. No - because some teachers do not treat us well. They bunk periods, insult us. At times there are teacher strikes and student. Strikes are caused by fights between outsiders and students.

9 (a) **How is the general discipline at the school? Negative or positive? What could be the causative factors?**

Katlehong - Fairly good. School has right rules, for example, late comers are punished. Students do not fight teachers, but put on school uniform. Some teachers bunk periods and stay in the staff room. Students lose out with their lessons. Boys smoke dagga in the toilets - some girls smoke dagga.

Landulwazi - Not good especially boys, they smoke in the toilets. Some do not even do homework. Teachers instead of correcting such students: they say we will meet in the press- that is, newspapers for standard 10 results. Punishment is not wrong when we’ve done wrong things but not more than 10 strokes please punishment not on the buttocks. Teachers use fists for students. Other teachers do not understand - when we explain other things, they just punish. Standard 10 on Mondays, they just come without having done homework and nothing is done to them. Students should not strike for uniform.

Ilinge - Not very good - late comers for grade 8 are punished but grade12 are not punished. Teachers just punish us when we come late- they do not ask students why late. Some students have personal have personal home problems.
9(b) **What are your comments about the Learning - Teaching situation at your school?**

**Katlehong** - Some students play and make noise during teaching periods and some bunk classes and go to toilets. Some teachers bunk periods. Some students despise teachers. Students who are S.R.C members lose out in school hours – because they attend S.R.C meetings during school hours.

**Landulwazi** - Not good - subject like maths are done late during the day when students are tired - students request that these are fitted in early periods. When students ask teachers for extra lessons, teachers say they have their own commitments. At times teachers are too fast when teaching for students to cope and understand subject. When testing students they do not stick to scope. That is why students fail in big number. Some teachers write questions and answers on the chalk board - so that other teachers and principal think their student pass in big numbers. This is really killing the students. Other teachers say that teacher is moja (that is, good). Teachers want to remain in high in marks.

**Ilinge** - Some teachers come late to teaching periods and overlap to next period – the next teacher fights for his period. Some teachers only showing shots in the period until periods ends without teaching yet signs in period register 'attended'. Students change periods and move for another period. This is wasting time. Teachers should change classes and students should remain in class. The teaching and learning situation is not good as compared to maths. In maths exercise books one almost full with written exercises - which give students practice.
9(c) Are you happy or unhappy about the situation? Give reasons.

Katlehong - No when you don’t understand teachers labels you- stupid, Ngudu (i.e. old one). When late for class, teacher punishes you or chase you away. Some male teachers concentrate on girls. Some teachers and some students bunk classes especially during winter. Teachers gossip in staff rooms – boys wind in the toilets and smoke.

Landulwazi - Unhappy. Teachers proceed with syllabus whilst we do not understand. Teachers does not ask whether student understand or not. Some teachers write questions and answers for students to impress their teacher friends.

Ilinge - No. Some teachers just give tasks without explaining. Some teachers do showing shots for teaching periods.

10. How can status quo be redressed?

Katlehong - Class representative to fetch teachers from staff rooms. No teacher should be fetched because salary is not fetched by teachers, but brought to teachers. It is the teacher’ duty to teach us. Such teachers should be suspended. No, first talk to teachers - if teachers does not improve report teacher to principal, to parents at parents’ meeting. Matter should also be reported to S.R.C executive. No, before reporting teacher to S.R.C and parents - principal should talk to teacher and give advice. If no improvement, report to Mary Metcalfe. Teacher to be expelled. The are many teachers without employment. Students who do funny things should be punished. If they
continue their parents should be told - they can also be suspended. Students should be punished not abused.

Landulwazi-Change maths periods - to be in the morning and not after lunch when students are tired. Teachers to stop insulting students. Teachers to explain where there are problems in the subject. Teacher not to leave syllabus not completed and students not understanding subject. Stop giving students' answers for questions. Teachers to be slow – be with the student pace – students are not fast. Give exercise on chalkboard, show us as a parent, do not rush us. Teachers give us practice through examples and explain.

Ilinge - For teacher who do not attend periods, class rep to report matter to principal. Class rep should make sure that such a teacher should not write 'attended' in period register please. No, discuss your dissatisfaction with teacher first before reporting to principal. No cell phones in class please.

11. How do you feel when preparing yourself for school?

Katlehong - At times you feel like not coming. Teachers insulting students discourage students to love school. But for other teachers I like to come to school.

Landulwazi- Coming to school is a waste for time and boring because some teachers sit in the in offices and staffrooms bunk periods. Student make noise and despise each other, at times fight because there is no teacher in class. Some students busk in the sun instead of learning. If you know what you want, coming to school is "moja". Some teachers do not know why you are late, but their idea of being teachers tells them to say, 'you are a dog, isn't'.
Ilinge - Unhappy, because some students do not have money to buy at the shops and teachers send them during break. When coming back there's no time for eating and the bell rings for school in. I want to come to school but is a waste of time because some teachers do not teach.

12. Say did not do your home-work or any educational project. You were expected to hand in, how do feel when coming to school?

Katlehong - I just feel O.K because I must be punished when I am wrong, punishment is not abuse. When you are punished and teacher tells your wrong is good, but when punished for nothing is abuse.

Landulwazi - You won't come when not done homework or are late, because teacher will say 'get out!' or punishment. You don't feel like coming. Teachers do not listen to students, sometimes students do not do home work because of family violence and home tasks. "Lefura la ngwana ke ho rongwa" (i.e. when your are a child, yours is just to send around). I feel bad if not done your homework because in my home there is drinking and selling and I am scolded when I do homework because they say I must cook and look after the kids. Parents must think for their children and must give them time to do their schoolwork. When they have failed they must not cry. Students should not cheat because you cheat yourself. Students should teachers their own problems.

Ilinge - Not done homework, I feel not to come but bunk school because I come to be punished.
13. How do you feel when in class generally?

Katlehong - If teacher is not in, fetch him from the staff room. Students should form groups, help each other and do school work.

Landulwazi - Feel like telling teacher own problems but I am afraid. I want to tell the truth because telling lies is cheating your ownself.

Ilinge - feel bored, class teacher always cross, irrelevant topics discussed for example, weekend soccer results discussed.

14. When there is no teacher in your class what comes first to your mind?

Katlehong - Talk with friends or play. No, student should form group and study.

Landulwazi - Student are idling, make noise or fight, tease each other. Collect money for polish. When teacher is absent, we despise each other. I wish to fight but principal warned me not to fight.

Ilinge - Leave class, visit a friend, go to tuckshop, play in class, because when you organise your school work classmates say you pretend to be a trusted. If teacher bunks therefore student are tempted to bunk. Boys who are running private business sell cigarette when there is no teacher in class. Some sell 'digata' (marijuana). No, if the teacher is not in class, form study or learning groups. Classmates may understand better than when subject is handled by a teacher. Explain schoolwork to each other, let's use our talents to benefit each other as students. There are other students who play when others learn, then therefore just want to copy and ask us to explain. Let's all be active and participate.
15. **What do you think of yourself as a student?**

**Katlehong** - Think of my future. I can make it in life. I want my dream to come true. I believe in myself. I want to learn hard and imitate my role model. I want to compete my classmates in schoolwork. I want to drive a Pajero.

**Landulwazi** - I feel good as a student. Learn for knowledge. Proud of better future, no crime.

**Ilinge** - I want to study hard and be a principal one day, imitate my role model. If I have a financial problem, I will tell teacher. I want to be a motor mechanic. I want to be a farmer, a “baas”, because to achieve, I have to be active. I don’t want low quality but high.

3.5 **Observation – all three schools combined**

A video camera was used to capture the verbal and non-verbal responses of student youths. I also compiled field notes, which I later used for organising, conceptualising, categorising and coding data.

A day prior to the interview session, I organised my neighbour and a few neighbouring children together with my niece to help in cleaning the classroom, which was to be used as the venue. I also organised the cleaning of the volleyball court, which is just opposite the venue. I wanted the venue to be welcoming for the participants.

Before commencing with the interview, participants were once more calmed by allowing them to communicate in either Zulu, Sotho or English, that is, choosing the language which suited them best. At the end of the interview, I organised a mini braai plus
refreshments as token of appreciation for the participants, and the children who helped in cleaning as well as my neighbour.

The interview session included fifteen youths, that is, eight from Katlehong; three from Thokoza and four from Vosloorus. Students were given section A of the questionnaire to respond to personal particulars. These were handed in after completion. Section B, C and D, were answered in turns by the groups from Katlehong, Landulwazi and Ilinge secondaries.

3.5.1 Observation notes and interview questions – written and oral data

Section A: Who are the youths 'at risk'?

For this section, 'at risk' youths answered questions 1-10 as individuals and answer sheets were handed in after completion.

Section B

From Section B to Section D participants responded orally

1. What are the youths' experiences during their first year at secondary school?

☐ I nearly left school, because of ethnic discrimination and teasing. I was always reminded, 'this Xhosa'.

☐ New comers have to pay a certain fee for to be new at the school. They pay it to old comers.

☐ New comers are sent to the shops by old comers, to buy them their needs. New comers have to use their own money. At times a BMW is drawn on the ground and a newcomer is supposed to board that when getting to the shops.
2. How is the student-student; student-teacher; student-authority relationship in class and during extra-mural activity time?

- Some students do not have respect for teacher, especially during educational trips. A student would say, 'Hey, you are a teacher at school not here?'
- Some teachers share cigarettes and liquour with students.
- Some teachers propose love to schoolgirls.

3 What happens when you do not communicate well with the subject matter?

- Teachers tease and label us when we do not understand, especially when you are a bit older for the class. 'Hey! Ngudu (that is, old one) stupid! My child who is your age is doing standard 8. You must just go to the firms and work.'
- Teachers do not consider that some students are slow whilst some are fast. They just go on with syllabus whether we understand or not.

4 How do you feel about your classmates, teacher, authorities or peers at school?

- Do you feel loved, cared for, confident, trusted, secured, do you have a sense of belonging or the contrary?
- Give reasons why feel that way.

I feel alright with my classmates because we discuss school work together and help each other. But sometimes others do not want to copy notes or do school work. They usually come for us and ask for help, when we refuse they swear at us and say we think we are best. When the teacher is not in class we despise each other and we end up fighting.

When with some teachers we feel good because they teach us as their students, they are parents but with some teachers we don’t feel good because they insult us,
nickname or label us. We fear some of the teachers, we are not free to tell them our problems. We are not always with the principal. Whenever he comes to the class he usually punishes us for noisemaking. There is nothing done to teachers who bunk classes. We lose out as students and we feel bad about this because we want to be educated.

Section C

1. What academic activity do you love most? Give reasons why?

- Maths because our maths books are almost full. Teacher give us many exercises.

2. What sporting activity do you love most? Give reasons why?

- I love netball because I am talented in it. I want to follow it until I am a star, so that when I fail at school, I can earn a good salary with it like Americans.
- I love basketball because I want to improve my English. Americans who play basketball use English when playing.
- I love soccer because I want to be like Benny McCarthy.

3. What cultural activity do you love most? Give reasons why?

- I love S C M because it makes me feel good spiritually.
- I love gospel music because I have a good powerful voice.

Section D: What could be the reason of putting ‘at risk’ possibility high?

1. Is schooling pursuit worthwhile? Give reasons.

- Yes, so as to be figure-wise, for a better future, to get good jobs.
- Idling leads to drug, alcohol and sexual abuse, destructive ideas and crime.
Without schooling we will be ignorance, exchanging 1 sheep for a pin or a mirror.

2. Do you get motivation from home to pursue schooling? Yes or No, give reasons.
   - Yes, my parents always say we should learn hard, be educated and be better than them.
   - No, my parents are not educated, they are unemployed. It is only my brother who is working.
   
   What could be the consequences of such motivation?
   - When somebody encourages you, he gives the power to do something. When nobody encourages you, you also get discourage.

3. Are all your school needs met, whenever the need arises?
   - No, we are many at home. It is only my mother who is working.

Does your subject teacher offer help whenever the need arises? If not why?
   - Yes, some teachers do help us when we do not understand. Some teachers say if you do not understand its not their baby.

Does your family offer help in this regard? If not why?
   - No, because I'm afraid to ask them. When I ask them they think that I'm going to be silly.
   - Yes, because if my parents told me to tell them any problem I have.
   - Yes, I am free to discuss my problems with my parents because they give me chance to talk with them.
4. Are there any supportive subject programme services offered at your school?

☐ No, when we ask for extra classes teachers say they have their own plans during weekends

5. Briefly explain the learning, teaching strategy employed at your school.

☐ At the end of each subject periods, students go to the next class for the next subject. This is a waste of time because students play, drag their feet asking the way and start kites for the next period.

☐ The learning-teaching strategy is very poor because maths periods are done after lunch, when students are tired. These should be in the morning when students are still fresh.

6. Are you happy about the learning-tendency situation? Yes or No, give reasons.

☐ No, because some teachers bunk periods and stay in staff rooms and we lose out with our schoolwork. Some students also bunk lessons. The principal does not make a follow about this. Some teachers are always sulky. Some give notes without explanation. Some write question and answer on chalkboard. This kills us as students, because we don’t learn, we copy. Cell phones during learning teaching period for example, discuss about social results. Some teachers use insulting language

7. How can the status quo be redressed if it is at your disadvantage?

☐ Class representatives to use period register and only allow teachers to sign ‘Attended’ when have taught. Principal to make a follow up about such teachers. Disciplinary action to be taken against such teachers. Teachers to stop insulting students. Teacher to stop writing questions and answers for students, but teach students. Teachers to teach and explain should work. Should ask if all students understood before
proceeding to next thing. Teachers to stop changing subject content before students understood subject content they are busy with. Student cards to be used and security to be at the school gates to avoid trespassing of undesirable elements in the school yard.

8. Are you happy with your scholastic performance? Give reasons

☐ No, some teachers bunk periods and students lose out in learning and get poor results. Some students are not serious with schoolwork; do not give themselves enough time for studying and therefore fail when tested. The reasons for this is that, some students do not respect their teachers and parents. They attend street batches over weekends

9. Are you happy about the general discipline at the school? Yes or No, give reasons

☐ No. Some students are punished for late coming and others are not punished, for example, standard ten and SRC executive members. School uniform is only stressed on girls and not boys. When boys smoke cigarette and dagga in the toilets, classes next to the toilets are affected by the bad smell.

Give comments about the student’s performance at the school in general

Katlehong – Not very good, especially in standard ten because teachers are not very strict with as they are with other students

Landulwazi- Standard ten are not serious. They strikes and treat teachers like animals. They do not want to write exams, for example, June examinations. Their performance is not very good.
Illinge – Illinge is not as bad as people see. The standard tens are going to beat all the other secondaries because they are very serious and co-operate with teachers

10. What could be the reasons for students’ dropping out?

- **Child neglect** – for example, giving away your own child and leaving him/her to struggle on his/her own. The child is left without guidance, support and love.
- **Poverty** – Children who are from poor families get discouraged and frustrated when they are not like their friends and schoolmates with school needs and other needs like clothes. Children compete in how they dress. Most children who lose in such competition decide to leave school and try other means that can help them to match their friends.
- **Child abuse** – Children who are abused, sometimes think that everybody knows about the abuse and are shy to go back to school. They decide to leave rather than to be laughed at.
- **Pregnancy** – Children fall pregnant, and after delivering they are shy to go back to school. Some are forced to go and work for the child and there cannot go on schooling.
- **Friend’s influence** – Some children drop out because of friends’ influence, for example, wasting time in street batches. They do not study; they start drinking, smoking dagga, while also wasting time in love affairs and having little time to do their schoolwork.
- **Recurring school failure** – some children cannot stand to be always failing yearly or every second year, they get discouraged.
- **Teacher’s attitude** – teacher’s bad attitude may encourage students to leave school for example, teachers are always insulting students, labelling, criticising and teasing students about their deformities. Suggesting that older students should go and work in the firms and leave school. Recurring bunking of periods by teachers, cause students lose out, lose interest and drop out.
Teachers proposing girl-students - male teachers who propose to girls may encourage children to leave school, because once the student is not in the favour of the teacher's request that student is discriminated against by the teacher and his friends.

Falling in love - students who are in love tend to concentrate more on love affairs than their school work - they have no time for studying. This leads to failing and they get discouraged.

Weak management - If the school management does not make follow-ups and discipline wrong doers like teachers who are disobedient and do not respect teachers and school rules, this might lead to students leaving school because they are not get scolded and guided for their wrong things.

3.6 SABC 1 programme – Two-Way – Interpreted Data and Notes

I used information from this television programme to assist me in analysing and interpreting the data, because the theme was similar to my research topic.

On Tuesday 29.09.98, I watched Ceasar Molebatsi's programme on SABC 1 from 17h00 – 17h30.

A number of factors that caused discipline problems in school and thus impede the culture of learning, were cited by students. About two teachers referred to the same problems encountered by teachers at the schools used in this research.

Data collected in this programme, accurately supported data collected during the observation and interviews that I conducted in this inquiry. Field notes compiled expressed the students' views about discipline problems in schools. It is such problems that demotivate them pursuing schooling and thus dropping out. The following were the main issues aired by the students who participated in the television programme.
- **Discipline problem** – inter alia, late coming; absenteeism; teachers' bunking of periods; the cultures which are emulated by students are rife in black community schools. Once teachers find only nine students instead of about thirty five, they become demotivated to teach. The culture of bunking of periods; disrespecting teachers; not wearing the school uniform as set in school rules remains unsolved because of the abolition of corporal punishment. No alternative corrective measures are put in place.

- **Disorderliness** – inter alia, gansterism; hooliganism are also prevalent in schools. Teachers feel intimidated because students carry weapons within schools’ premises. Boys go to the extent of fighting with outsiders over student lovers. Such love feuds, promote hooliganism rather than learning culture.

Some teachers promote private business within the school premises, like selling sweets, apples, cigarettes and organising credit allowances. Checking and controlling these credits waste a lot of these students’ learning time. Other teachers promote their private studies by writing assignments during learning periods. They even go to the extent to hiding in staff rooms, conversing leisurely during duty time. Some teachers come to school drunk. Students were complaining that disciplinary measures were not taken against transgressors.

In response, one teacher outrightly blamed some of the school's management for their inconsistent implementation of a set of rules and policies. He maintained, 'Management is too lenient and inconsistent in the maintenance of discipline at schools', hence the prevalent discipline problems and disorderliness. Another teacher summed up by explaining how discipline, order and progress can be realised in an organisation, through unity, sharing and co-operation. Vusi Nkumane of Pace school proudly announced how their school community is experiencing discipline.
3.7 Conclusion:

The data presented in this section was coded and categorised and revealed the following main themes with regard to:

- Child Abuse
- Affective Neglect
- Disrespect
- Disorder
- Lack of sense of Duty

These themes were conceptualised from the main data categories, which were in turn, clustered from the following labels or concepts used in the coding process.

*See Data Analytic Tables in pages 52 and 53.
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Incorrect infliction of corporal punishment
Drug and alcohol addiction
Abusive language
Labelling
Teasing
Ridicule
Sexual abuse
Lack of authority

Conversing and playing in class
Drunkenness on duty
Late coming
Absenteeism
Not studying
Bunking classes
Not compiling notes
Question and answer method of teaching
Disregard of authority

Abusive language
Answering back
Smoking and drinking liquor in teacher’s presence

CHILD ABUSE

Ch.ab

LACK OF SENSE OF DUTY

Lo.s.o.d

DISRESPECT

disres
Employing open coding as explained in Strauss and Corbin (1990: 61-74), helped in breaking down, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data. Data was coded either sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph, depending on the way which was most suitable in the varying instances (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 72-74). Merging open coding with selective coding (1990: 116-142) helped in selecting and revealing the core category, related it to other sub-categories, indicated its properties and thus told a proper story.

The analysed data tell a compressed story of the investigation, while the detailed ‘raw’ data presented in this section reveal a more detailed view. I have been involved in the meaning-making process in an active way, co-constructing the findings. I therefore submit subjective findings, hopefully in a reliable way.
Section 4

4.1 Introduction

What an experience to realise that the assumptions I had about ‘at risk’ youths’ perceptions towards schooling were not substantiated by the investigation. I assumed that their perceptions towards schooling were negative and that they therefore saw no need to pursue learning. Through data analysis, I found that there were other underlying factors which promoted ‘at risk’ probability.

4.2 Data categories and how they link

By analysing data elicited and collected from the observation (spoken data) and interview (written data) sessions, concepts, which were later clustered into categories, surfaced. The phenomena identified in data were inter alia, labelling; teasing; ridiculing of students instead of giving them relevant assistance, were categorised as child abuse. In worst cases concepts like ‘abusive language instead of reprimanding or giving guidance’; ‘incorrect infliction of corporal punishment’; ‘drug and alcohol addiction by youngsters’; ‘sexual abuse of youngsters by adults’; were also categorised as abuse.

Youths expressed gross hurt and showed deep concern about some of the teachers’ attitudes and discrimination towards students at school settings. They could not understand why some of them were punished for coming late when others were exempted from punishment for the same transgression. Acts like a ‘negative attitude’; ‘discrimination’; ‘abusive language’; ‘lack of guidance and authority’ are clustered as affective neglect. It is such insensitivity; inconsistency and intolerance from teachers that decreases the trust and respect for teachers in youth.

According to the participants’ report, some students have the tendency of smoking and drinking in the presence of teachers, especially during school outings. When some duty
conscious and disciplined teachers attempt to correct such deviant behaviour as reported by 'at risk' youths, disrespectful students remain adamant. They tell teachers that they are only regarded as teachers within schools' premises and not during school outings. The way in which an individual is treated, as Mc Gregor asserts, will determine an individual's outlook in life and attitude (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 198).

Such teacher reactions promote dissociation of youths from schools and their communities. Once the youngsters feel alienated, it becomes difficult to win their respect; to discipline and to control them. The participants further reported how some students answered back whilst engaged in dialogue with teachers.

To what extent do teachers realise the indelible harm and hurt caused by such insensitive and discriminatory acts, instilling a feeling of being unwanted and uncared for in youth? Disrespect presupposes lack of discipline and leave schools disorderly.

In an anarchical situation, students will outrightly violate school rules and policies. Boys especially are said not to adhere to school uniform rules for example. They are also reported to have a tendency of 'bunking' lessons and while away learning time by smoking in the toilets. According to the interview and 'Two-way' programme data reports, such transgressions are not reprimanded for the following reasons:

- Leniency and inconsistency on the part of management as regards the implementation of rules and policies.
- Indifferent attitude of teachers when it comes to reprimand and guidance because they feel intimidated by students who carry weapons within school settings.

Such deviant student behaviour leads to hooliganism and gangsterism. Student and teacher strikes, reported by participants to be prevalent contemporarily in schools, waste a lot of the learners' time and cause disorder.

The habit of 'bunking' classes by both teachers and students was cited more often and dimensionally. The extent of the damage caused by this habit was best interpreted by the
participants’ verbal and non-verbal expressions. One student said, “It is the teacher’s duty to teach us. No teacher should be fetched because the salary is not fetched by the teacher, but brought to teacher. “Teachers who bunk periods should be suspended”. Another student went on to say, “If a teacher does not improve, that teacher must be reported to Mary Metcalfe and be expelled; because there are many qualified teachers who are without jobs”.

Throughout the interview students explicitly expressed their dissatisfaction about bunking of classes; late coming; absenteeism; the transcription of question and answers as method of teaching; which they defined as a ‘killer approach’ to students. All these concepts were clustered as *lack of sense of duty*. Without sense of duty collectively exerted, personal discipline; autonomy and self-determination cannot be realised as Schweitzer asserts (1991: 77).

4.3 Findings

According to data elicited and collected from the participants, 86.6% of the youth were born and bred in the unrest stricken area of Kathorus. Eight were born and raised in Katlehong; four in Vosloorus and one in Thokoza. All the youngsters are victims of trauma. Two of them came from Soweto and the Eastern Cape. The countrywide violence and instability did not leave them unscathed.

Before the first democratic elections in 1994, Kathorus was hard hit by violence. Militarised youth groups were formed, as Rossouw and Lamprecht (1998) explain, to protect communities against crime and political violence. Although the political violence that rampaged black townships disappeared after the 1994 election, the military youths still were armed, yet unemployed and still played double roles namely, constructive and destructive (Rossouw & Lamprecht, 1998: 21). It is unfortunate that the Kathorus ‘at risk’ youth are immersed in such unrest stricken communities, characterised by social and economic imbalances. Such living conditions diminish the ‘at risk’ schooling opportunities
as Christiansen explains (1996:204). Consequently 'at risk youth fail to actualise potentialities into meaningful activities in society. Unemployment and normlessness manifest in such a status quo.

Children live their environment. Probably the 'at risk' are living the normlessness prevalent in the Kathorus community in which they are immersed. Although data collected show that about 86.6% of the participants' parents are employed, data also show that of the very number employed, 13.4% earn just to survive. 73.2% of the parents are remunerated below the bread line. Already the 'at risk' are explicitly exposed to a socio-economic disadvantage. Such a disadvantage is another relevant factor, which directly affects a child's behaviour (Kavales, Alper, Purcell, 1981:412). The 'at risk youth' will probably 'drop out' not because of a negative perception of schooling, but because of factors that promote risk probability.

Presumably most of the participants' parents dropped out after the 1976 uprisings and were left under-educated, under-trained and unable to enter the civilian job market (Rossouw and Lamprecht, 1998). They themselves were 'at risk' of school failure and thus have not successfully adjusted to life (Clark, 1983: 208). It is therefore not surprising that when investigating the frequency, extent and intensity of parents' supervision of their children's work, data showed that only 40% of the parents supervised because of the confidence and direction gained from their educational status. 60% could not supervise because of inadequate education and ignorance. Already youngsters parented by such adults are trapped in a milieu that inhibits the applicant of human talent (De Villiers, 1974:34).

If human motivation as De Villiers (1974: 34) explains, lies in man’s being plus background, then the youngsters parented by under-educated adults already have an educationally imbalanced background. Such a background lacks stimulation for development and achievement, taking the responsibility for achieving the aspired goal, as well as recognising the individual achievement lies outside the self. Like Mc Gregor, I
believe the average person learns quickly, especially when the correct motivational factors are good enough to:

- accept responsibility given or;
- assume responsibility through own initiative as van der Westhuizen explains (1991: 198), just like pursuing schooling as in the case of this study.

Parents with inadequate education cannot tap their children’s potential because of ignorance and non-acquisition of the relevant skills. ‘At risk’ youths are therefore at high probability of being antagonised towards learning because of the non-conducive circumstances and negative experience they go through. At home for example, parents who are under-educated can neither help nor motivate because they are not motivated themselves. Some youngsters cannot communicate freely with their parents because they are afraid of them.

At school students have limited learning time because some teachers ‘bunk’ lesson periods. Other teachers do not afford students the chance of freely communicating academic and sharing personal problems because of their insensitive and negative attitude. In the instance of Mc Gregor’s ‘Y’ theory, “people are not naturally antagonised towards work, but circumstances and negative experiences could influence their work experience and attitude either negatively or positively” (van der Westhuizen 1991: 198). In fact, how an individual is treated, in Westhuizen's view, will determine his outlook in life and attitude (1991: 198). Given the circumstances in which these youngsters are immersed at home and at school, and the attitudes they are faced with from parents and teachers, it is not surprising that they ‘drop out’ from school.

From analysed data, it is evident that about 33.3% of the youths are parented by single adults. In single parenting, either the maternal or paternal figure is missing in the child’s life. This might directly or indirectly affect the child’s perspective in life and attitude. Data collected from the personal particulars’ questionnaire reveal that about 66.6% of the participants are from fairly large families, ranging from three to six children. Throughout
the observation and interview sessions, the participants' voices expressed the problems which some of them were encountering in not meeting their personal and scholastic needs because of the socio-economic and educational status of their families. Already family background, which reveals inequality of educational, economic, occupational and societal status, will determine the youngsters life chances. Weber explains how having little money severely restricts one's freedom and opportunity (Goodman & Marx, 1978: 24).

According to data condensed from personal particulars, only two girls out of the fifteen participants are at the right age for grade eight, which is thirteen. Four of these youngsters, that is, two girls and two boys, are a year late for the grade, meaning they are going to complete grade twelve at the age of eighteen, should they not fail along the way. Two girls are two years late for the grade and will complete grade twelve at age nineteen. Those that are three years late for the grade will complete grade twelve at the age of twenty. They are seven in number that is, four girls and three boys. Data reveals that nine of the youths are a bit late for the grade, but this does not warrant ridicule by teachers, who go to the extent of telling students, as reported through data collected, that their right place is in the workplace at the industries. Such attitudes and humiliating remarks are hurting and instill resentment, rejection and alienation in youths. Alienation leads to deviant behavior like disrespect and disorderliness. The perception of schooling may appear to be negative when in reality their perceptions are quite positive. Like McGregor explains in van der Westhuizen (1994: 198), it is the circumstances and negative experiences that could have a detrimental influence on one's work experience and attitude. It is factors discussed herein that lead to 'dropping' out as a result of alienation and loss of community. The students are not negative, but feel inadequate and disconnected.

4.3.1 Summary of findings

The following list presents a summary of the findings

1. 'At risk' youths are grossly hurt and show deep concern about teachers' attitude and discrimination against students
2. Students feel teachers’ and students’ strikes waste a lot of their time. They maintain such activities should be negotiated outside the learning-teaching time.

3. Students feel that they need to be taught effective interpersonal relations skills in the ecological world (that is, peers; teachers and environment) like when expressing personal and academic problems.

4. There appears to be leniency and inconsistency of management in the implementation of school rules and policies- the indifferent attitude of teachers regarding reprimand for deviant behaviour and transgressions contribute to disorderliness.

5. The habit of teacher’s ‘bunking’ of classes encourages students’ bunking.

6. Most parents of the participants were themselves ‘at risk’ of school failure and probably have not successfully adjusted to life because of being under-educated and under-skilled.

7. Some parents’ and teachers’ attitudes are not conducive to promote acceptance, trust and respect amongst the youths so as to inculcate learning interest and thus the motivation to pursue schooling.

8. Most parents of the participants are employed, yet remunerated below the bread line.

9. Parents, teachers and youths are victims of trauma

10. Almost all the youths in the case study were born and bred in the unrest stricken communities of Kathorus. Only two of them are from Soweto and Eastern Cape.
Most of the youths come from fairly big families, which are socially, economically and educationally imbalanced.

60% of the youth are late for grade eight. Their ages range from 13 years – 16 years.

Youths aspire to pursue schooling if only they were taught as they ought to be treated rightly, their individual problems and varying potentialities taken into cognisance.

The 'at risk youths' perception toward schooling is not as negative as assumed, but the circumstances in which they are immersed plus the parents' and teachers' attitude that they are exposed to appear to influence their learning experience as well as their attitude towards schooling.

Teachers seem to be demotivated to execute their educational and guidance tasks.

4.4 Recommendations

Schools should move away from being entities 'out there', but ought to be seen as communities of learners and of professionals who will committedly share duty, attachment and self-determination (Sergiovanni, 1994), in redressing the present status quo in black schools. In the light of the data collected and findings arrived at, recommendations are as follows:

1. School counsellors should play a variety of roles in the school community to meet the diverse needs of the students, teachers and parents, so that they benefit from their services.
2. The counselling services should provide psychological, trauma or career counselling depending on which need is most urgent at a specific point in time. Counselling can be organised as individual or group sessions. The choice will depend on which session is most appropriate for effective results.

3. For the purpose of helping teachers to meet the needs of 'at risk' youths, school counsellors should organise and present staff development and training sessions where in teachers are empowered with:

- classroom instruction and play ground interaction skills;
- social and interpersonal skills, which have to be transferred to students for the acquisition of personal development.
- Effective interaction skills, which they in turn have to transfer to students by teaching for example, formal ways when entering and leaving the classroom, when looking for assistance in scholastic tasks, when presenting personal problems and so on.
- Classroom management strategies, thus creating a fertile environment for teacher-student and student-student interpersonal relations—thus building acceptance, trust, and respect.

4. School counsellors will liaise with community members by conducting liaison activities with the 'at risk' students' families or community agencies (for example, youth clubs and libraries)

- School counsellors should provide workshops in parenting skills for parents of the 'at risk'.
- Parents could be invited to schools' open days, with class visiting and communicating with class teacher about the child's academic performance and other relevant information. In this way parents are kept abreast with child's strength and weaknesses.
- Parents could be invited to a lunch, to sport activities, cultural activities or other special school activities days.
Through such participatory involvement as advocated by Sergiovanni (1994) and engaging in participatory dialogue in Freire's (1971) view, a sense of community in schools could be restored. In fact, the employment of creative strategies involving 'at risk' families in the school programmes, is another way of building commitment in the people as De Villiers asserts that commitment comes from participation (1974: 56).

- Parents could be requested to share their talents, like managing school projects; tutoring in specific subjects, thus manifesting expertise. In this way Brown's strategy of teaching, is employed to effect reciprocal teaching (Brown, 1994: 8).

- 'At risk' youths should be encouraged to have membership in local libraries and/ or youth clubs for the development of interpersonal relations and social skills. In some of the organised community structures, survival and entrepreneur skills can be acquired.

- Building positive relations with older students of similar interest, to act as role models, to buffer stress and trauma and build resilience in the youths. Peer facilitators can have a positive effect on students' behavior and school performance (Myrick, Highland & Sabella, 1995). Help youths to form community of learning (COL) programmes, according to Brown's reciprocal teachings framework.

4.5 Conclusion

It has been rewarding to realise how this investigation unearthed hidden realities through the analysis and interpretation of data. There is no way in which the status quo can be redressed, while dissociating the school from the community and vice versa. The very triangle, which constitutes the school community namely, students, teachers and parents, is to be bound together, lest the sense of community is lost. In the developmental psychology advocated by Vygotsky (1978), there is no way in which one can understand
the individual except by understanding his cultural background. The one is indispensable for the other. Therefore, for teachers to be able to handle problems and the needs of learners 'at risk', whose care and guidance are bestowed upon them, will have to be abreast with the youths' social, economic and educational background.

To realise commitment of the school community and the entire community, there should be participatory interaction, which Paulo Freire pleads for. This interaction presupposes commitment without which production is inconceivable. Increasing productivity can be achieved by examining work to be done and determining methods to be employed. In the case of teacher productivity, perhaps the elimination of too much or ineffective used labour can bring about productivity in schools as De Villiers explains (1974: 73). According to De Villiers, it is essential that an individual be given a chance for the application and development of his aptitude, skills so as to reorganise and increase productivity.

In the formulation of community of learning (COL) programmes; co-designing by participants is imperative for the purpose of ownership; patriotism and for the constructive and effective utilisation of potential and skill.

The observation and interview sessions have surfaced some of the gross hurts caused by teachers and parents, probably unconsciously. The extent of the hurt, measured from the verbal and non-verbal expressions of participants, warrants an urgent addressing of these. Investigation of the teachers’ and parents’ views towards education and schooling could be elicited in the same way with the purpose of rectifying whatever wrongs committed consciously or unconsciously.

Perhaps the school communities in black townships could benefit by interfacing and sharing ideas with sister schools of other communities, hence employing Brown’s reciprocal teaching through a variety of collaborative teachings (1994). Seminars, and conferences can be organised outside the school for teachers, parents and students because schools are not islands but exist in the wider communities. Community learning
programmes are innovative because they are purposeful, self-motivated, self-conscious and strategic (Brown, 1994). COL is founded on this learning principle.

I have come to the conclusion that 'at risk' youth are 'at risk' of living a life in school, which is devoid of sense of community. The cause of this sense of alienation seems to be a complex mix of many factors. Their view of schooling per se does not seem to be an important contributing factor, but their relationship with individual teachers seem to play a role.
REFERENCE

ALLEN, J & MARTIN, I 1994: Education and community. Britain: Cassel


TOWNSEND, T 1994: Effective schooling for the community for the community. New York: USA and Canada publications

TABLE 3.1

DESCRIPTION OF THE SETTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Township</th>
<th>Cardinal Point</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Year started</th>
<th>No of Class Rooms</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
<th>No of Teachers</th>
<th>P/T Ratio</th>
<th>No of Prin. Offices</th>
<th>No of Dep. Offices</th>
<th>No of Hod. Offices</th>
<th>No of Libraries</th>
<th>No of Typing Centres</th>
<th>No of II/Craft Centres</th>
<th>No of Tuck Shops</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katlehong</td>
<td>South West of Germiston</td>
<td>Katlehong</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1652</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31:1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thokoza</td>
<td>South East of Alberton</td>
<td>Landulwazi</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>27:4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vesloorus</td>
<td>South of Boksburg</td>
<td>Illinge</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28:1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Township</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>No Of Sports Ground</th>
<th>No of Labs</th>
<th>No of Work rooms</th>
<th>No of Tech. Dept.</th>
<th>No of All Purpose Classrooms</th>
<th>No of Staff rooms</th>
<th>No of Storage Rooms</th>
<th>No of Wood Work Dept.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katlehong</td>
<td>Katlehong</td>
<td>1 Volleyball 1 Netball</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thokoza</td>
<td>Landulwazi</td>
<td>1 Netball</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vesloorus</td>
<td>Illinge</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE DECLARATION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

All children have the right to name, enough food to eat and a decent place to live. All children should be looked after when they are sick and have a right to grow up with love, affection and security.

Handicapped children have a right to special treatments and education. All children have a right to free education and should be protected from neglect and exploitation.

All children should not be made to work before a certain age and should be protected from discrimination. All children should never have to fear arrest and detention and should be brought up to understand that their energy and talents should be devoted to the service of their brothers and sisters.
FIRST CALL FOR CHILDREN

World Declaration
And Plan of Action from
The World Summit for Children

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

UNICEF

The Constitution
of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

Act 108 of 1996
Kids in India say ‘no’ to child labour

A CHILD WORKING,
IS A FUTURE DENIED.
BACHPAH, ISACHAO ANDOLA.

WINNING SUPPORT FOR THEIR CAUSE. . . . One of nearly 1,000 freed child labourers protests in New Delhi against child labour on Friday, November 20. Children passed out pamphlets asking motorists to make New Delhi a ‘child labour-free state’ and formed a human chain to win support for their cause as campaigning for local elections in four key Indian states reached fever pitch.

Pic: AP
A MAN accused of raping his three teenage stepdaughters was refused bail in the Belfast magistrate's court in Mpumalanga this week, writes PHILLIP NKOSI.

The 33-year-old Machadodorp man is accused of raping his stepdaughters — aged 14, 17 and 19 — last weekend while their mother was away. He was arrested after the teenagers told their grandparents of the alleged rapes.

On Friday, the man, who may not be named, was denied bail and the case was postponed.

Meanwhile, a member of the South African National Defence Force has been accused of raping two teenage girls, aged 13 and 15.

Bhekie Masango, 21, allegedly raped the girls on Monday as they were on their way home from church in Ermelo Trust in KaBokweni, near White River in Mpumalanga.

The KaBokweni magistrate's court granted Masango bail of R2,000 on Wednesday, but he could not afford to pay it. He was not asked to plead and the case was postponed to October 26.