

# The role of an adventure-based experiential programme on the personal functioning of adolescent youth with Mentally Mild Learning Disability

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# SUMMARY

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Approximately forty percent of youths' waking hours are unrestricted and not committed to activities such as eating, sleeping or going to school. Many of this free time is spent without companionship or supervision from adults, which puts them at risk of spending their time out on the streets, where the risk of succumbing to peer pressure and becoming involved in inappropriate or illegal activities is increased. The absence of structured activities, stimulation and support can lead to youth becoming involved in rebellious and unwanted behaviour, partly due to their continuous search for adventure and excitement. Learners with Mentally Mild Learning Disabilities (MMLD) can be seen as youth at risk because of their academic and behavioural problems. Learning disabilities can increase the risk factors for delinquency and substance dependence. Previous research suggests that adventure-based experiential programmes (AEPs), which are highly structured, can thus be a very powerful intervention or prevention medium to empower youth at risk to overcome obstacles through the acquisition and practise of skills.

The purpose of the study was firstly to determine what the personal functioning profile of MMLD youth looks like, which was done in order to gain insight into the different aspects of the personal functioning, which were focused on when developing the AEP. The study was secondly done to determine what the role of an AEP is on the personal functioning of learners with MMLD. Books, journals, dissertations, theses and internet sources were used to do a thorough literature review. The literature review was done in order for readers to understand the link between MMLD youth and an AEP. The literature review gave an introduction to the phenomenon of MMLD youth and also explained how an AEP could be beneficial towards them.

A qualitative research design was used by the researcher in the form of an instrumental case study. Case studies make it possible for the researcher to use qualitative as well as quantitative constructs for data gathering purposes. Sampling of participants was done in two steps. A school for Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) (Die Wilge High School) was sampled through purposeful sampling by means of criterion-based sampling techniques. The second step was to sample fourteen male learners from Die Wilge High School

through purposive sampling. The personal functioning was determined by using the Youth at Risk Assessment Scale (YAR3) Questionnaire 3. The researcher made use of semi-structured, one-on-one interviews and field notes in order to gather data. The field notes and transcribed interviews were analysed in order to obtain a clear picture of the content, which was then used to identify the codes. After the data was analysed four main themes, each with its own categories, were identified. The themes related to the personal functioning of the youth and consisted of interpersonal relationships, trust, self-worth and perseverance.

The learners had positive feedback regarding their interpersonal relationships, trust, self-worth and perseverance before participation in the AEP. This was attributed to the Strengths-based Approach which the researcher followed in the development of the AEP. Despite this positive feedback, the learners still felt that there was an improvement after the AEP in all of the areas. Most of the learners attributed the improvement to learning more about each other, learning to work together and building friendships among each other. These new found friendships made it easier to trust each other and believe in themselves. The learners also realised that they experienced more positive feelings from persevering than when they quit. The results were used to discuss the objective of the study and to determine if the researcher met the objective.

**Keywords:** Youth at Risk, Personal Functioning, Mentally Mild Learning Disabilities, Interventions, Prevention, and adventure-based experiential programmes

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## DEFINING IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

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**Adventure-based Experiential Programmes:** Adventure-based experiential programmes make use of outdoor recreational activities as a catalyst for “talk” interventions. Participation in an adventure-based experiential programme does not result in change; it causes the participant to realise the need for change and supports the personal decision to make changes. For these reasons, adventure-based experiential programmes have become a powerful tool for modifying the behaviours of participants (Priest & Miles, 1990:114).

**Ecological perspective:** The ecological perspective not only determines the behaviour of how people act in certain situations but also how others behave towards that person. The ecological perspective states that the environments that a person live and interact in does not stand alone, but are linked together. These environments include the physical, interpersonal en socio-cultural environments (Wodarski, 2002:21).

**Free Time:** Free time is also referred to as discretionary time, which is time that is free from any obligations (Russell, 2009:24).

**Juvenile Delinquent:** A juvenile delinquent is a young person between the ages of 10-18, that has been found guilty of committing an illegal act (Scheepers, 1997:32).

**Learning Disability:** Learning disabilities are intrinsic to an individual and may occur across the lifespan (Howard & Peniston, 2002:8). Learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the psychological processes needed for the understanding or using of language, spoken or written, which may lead to the inability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations (Inesia-Forde, 2005:4).

**Mentally Mild Learning Disability Youth:** Youth with MMLD have below average intellectual functioning, associated with impairment in adaptive behaviour. This can be seen in youth maturing later than their peers, youth having a reduced learning capacity and youth not being adequately socially adjusted. When using the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) to define MMLD learners,

these learners fall in the IQ range of 50-70 (Special Education Support Service, 2007:1).

**Personal Functioning:** Personal functioning refers to the behaviour patterns of a person when placed in the different roles and environments that person is part of (Faul & Hanekom, 2006:2). For the purposes of this study personal functioning will refer to psycho-social functioning elements (perseverance and satisfaction), self-perception (anxiety and self-worth) and relationships (interpersonal among peers).

**Recreation:** Recreation is seen as an activity you partake in during your free time that is pleasurable and that has social redeeming qualities. Recreation is the participant's involvement in specific, wholesome and voluntary activities. The participation in recreation activities must result in constructive, positive and socially acceptable behaviour (Edginton *et al.*, 2006:56).

**Risk:** Risk is the potential one has of losing something of value. The loss may lead to harm that is physical, mental, social or financial. Risk can be either real or perceived (Priest & Gass, 2005:18). Real risk is when the participant is actually exposed to the possibility of getting hurt or having a close call, while perceived risk refers to the participant thinking that there is a possibility of being injured (Caldwell & Smith, 2006:399).

**Risk factor:** Risk factors are characteristics that predispose or are associated with, young people's involvement in crime and antisocial behaviour. Simply put, a risk factor is a "variable that predicts an increased probability of later offending" (Centre of justice and crime prevention, 2009:4).

**Youth:** The word "youth" describes the group of young men and woman who are no longer children, but are not adults yet. It is a generic term and is used interchangeable with other terms such as "adolescent," "teenager" or "young person" (Cross & Capuzzi, 1989:9). For the purposes of this study youth will thus be defined as young people between the ages of 10 – 18.

**Youth at Risk:** For the purposes of this study youth at risk will thus refer to MMLD learners that are susceptible to delinquency because of their social, cognitive, neurological and intellectual difficulties (Mallett, 2012:14).

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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AEP	Adventure-based Experiential Programme
LD	Learning Disabilities
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
MMLD	Mentally Mild Learning Disabilities
NCD	National Council on Disability
NOLS	National Outdoor Leadership School
NWU	North-West University
SAY	Save-A-Youth
SAYMCA	South Africa Young Men's Christian Association
YAR3	Youth at Risk Assessment Scale Questionnaire 3
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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# CHAPTER 1

## PROBLEM STATEMENT, OBJECTIVE AND STRUCTURE

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- 1.1. INTRODUCTION
  - 1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT
  - 1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
  - 1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION
- 

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Youth at risk and especially the youth's social health and wellbeing, are becoming a major concern of many researchers, community leaders, the educational system and the national government (Jamieson *et al.*, 2000:215; Palmay & Moat, 2002:3; Edginton *et al.*, 2005:127; South African Council of Educators, 2011:3). According to Bruyere (2002:208) and Harper (2009:1) all youth are at risk, but not all exhibit negative behaviour. Adventure-based Experiential Programmes (AEPs) could prevent negative behaviour and be useful as an intervention method for youth at risk (Bloemhof, 2006:2). Although the positive impact of AEPs on youth at risk has already been cited by many researchers (Priest & Miles, 1990:325; Witt & Crompton, 1996:35-95; Warrington & Wright, 2003:46-50; Bloemhof, 2006:1), very little research has been conducted on the effect that AEPs have on youth at risk with Mentally Mild Learning Disabilities (MMLD) in South Africa.

### 1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Youth are defined as people between the ages of 10 and 18 (Hansen, 2002:25; Edginton *et al.*, 2005:125; World Health Organization, 2011:2) and comprises 19.33%, of the total South African population, which is faster growing than the population as a whole (Statistics South Africa, 2013:9). Lehman (1997:1) describes youth at risk as young people with various emotional, psychological, behavioural and academic problems.

Norman (2003:1) on the other hand states that, youth at risk is a label used to describe youth that comes from poor families or communities, whom are usually high school dropouts or perform poorly in school. Learners with MMLD can be seen as youth at risk because of their academic and behavioural problems (National Council on Disability, 2003:55). Learning disabilities can increase the risk factors for delinquency and substance dependence (Ross-Kidder, 2002:1; National Council on Disability, 2003:55). MMLD youth can show environmental conflict or personal disturbances (Epstein & Cullinan, 1984:33; National Council on Disability, 2003:55). When MMLD youth exhibit behaviour that irritates, agitates or causes conflict between the youth and other people, it is described as environmental conflict. Personal disturbances can refer to behaviour that influences personal development or show internal distress among youth (Epstein & Cullinan, 1984:33). Feelings of low-self esteem and confidence, need for acceptance and inability to read other people's body language, emotions and feelings that put MMLD youth at risk for delinquent and criminal behaviour (Inesia-Forde, 2005:11).

If the involvement of youth in crime is taken into consideration, the threat that youth at risk hold for society cannot be ignored (South Africa, 2009:1). The increase of youth crime has become a major concern for communities, especially since crime in general has also increased (Jamieson *et al.*, 2000:215; Leggett, 2002:1). In a study done by the South African Council of Educators (2011:13) it shows that 5.8% of all school learners have been assaulted by their peers, while 12.8% have been threatened by violence. According to a study done by The Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (2007:5), a total of 61616 youths in South Africa were incarcerated at some point in their adolescent lives. This number includes sentenced and exonerated youth between the ages of 14-25. McKay (in Goslin *et al.*, 2000:313) and Howard and Peniston (2002:3) states that youth crime is a complex appearance which is influenced by factors such as social and environmental pressure, low socio-economic status, dysfunctional families, feelings of failure, a low self-concept and a lack of recreational opportunities. Various researchers (McKinley, quoted by Anon, 2004:3-4; Onwudiwe, 2004:153; Verster, 2004:1; Bruyere, 2010:209) stated that a lack of recreational intervention and prevention programmes can lead to youth moving away from the family structure, performing poorly in school, isolation, developing a sense of worthlessness and engaging in high-risk behaviour.

Approximately 40% of youths' waking hours are unrestricted and not committed to activities such as eating, sleeping or going to school (Jamieson *et al.*, 2000:215). Many of this free time is spent without companionship or supervision from adults, which has them spending their time out on the streets where the risk of succumbing to peer pressure and becoming involved in inappropriate or illegal activities is increased (Witt & Crompton, 2002:65; Edginton *et al.*, 2005:128; Harper, 2009:1; South African Council of Educators, 2011:4). Youth who have experienced the "action" and "excitement" of inappropriate or illegal activities need programmes that are challenging and interesting to keep them stimulated (Witt & Crompton, 2002:65). In this regard activities that have little or no structure are positively related to antisocial and illegal behaviour, whereas highly structured activities act as prevention methods against such behaviour (Coatsworth *et al.*, 2005:362). Highly structured activities are defined as activities that have regular participation schedules, with rule-guided engagement and are directed by one or more adult activity leaders. It places an emphasis on skill development that is continually increasing in complexity, challenge and requires sustained attention and it also places an emphasis on self and emotional development (Coatsworth *et al.*, 2005:362).

The absence of structured activities, stimulation and support will lead to youth becoming involved in rebellious and unwanted behaviour, partly due to the continuous search for adventure and excitement (Le Roux, 1986:69; Kriegler & Farman, 1996:44; Scheepers, 1997:44; Goslin *et al.*, 2000:313; Christensen, 2003:72). Previous research suggests that AEPs, which are highly structured, can be a very powerful intervention medium to empower youth at risk to overcome obstacles through the acquisition and practise of skills (Bruyere, 2002:210). Research has shown that by increasing the self-esteem and emotional intelligence of MMLD youth, they might learn alternative methods to deal with aggression, increase adaptability skills and reduce delinquent behaviour (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000:28; Ross-Kidder, 2002:1; Inesia-Forde, 2005:11).

When youth are challenged and come out successful in the challenge, their sense of mastery can increase; this helps the youth to discover insight into who they really are (Kiernan *et al.*, 2004:904; Louw, 2008:4). AEPs are designed based on the individuals' behaviour, perceptions, previous experiences and physical, as well as psychological risk-involved activities (Priest & Gass, 2005:18). The informal setting of an AEP is more attractive to youth than the traditional forms of therapy (Bruyere, 2002:207). AEPs are

used to empower youth at risk, to change their behaviour and emotions (Rosol, 2000:44; Warrington & Wright, 2003:49; Prouty *et al.*, 2007:13; Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010:49). According to Louw (2008:107,134) and Inesia-Forde (2005:22), AEPs also have a positive effect on the development of inter- and intrapersonal skills, life effectiveness and personal effectiveness of youth at risk. Cross (2002:253) found that AEPs had a significant positive influence on specifically feelings of alienation and perceptions of control among youth at risk.

AEPs consist of specific activities, such as initiatives, high adventure, which would include rock climbing and/or wilderness activities like camping and canoeing (Itin, 2001:80). These activities are direct, active, engaging and with real consequences in order to involve the whole person (Itin, 2001:80; Prouty *et al.*, 2007:12). Adventure takes a person into their stretch zone, a place where your interest is piqued and your senses are enlivened (Prouty *et al.*, 2007:39). Although the first AEP for youth at risk were only developed in the late 1930's, the therapeutic value of AEPs were already recognised since the early 1900's (West & Crompton, 2001:119). According to research done by Knight (quoted by Warrington & Wright, 2003:50), participants of an AEP can experience the benefits of such a programme for three years after participation. Therefore, taking into consideration the above literature, the problem statement for this research can be summarised in the following research question:

What role does an Adventure-based Experiential Programme have on the positive psycho-social functioning elements, self-perception and relationships of adolescent youth with Mentally Mild Learning Disability?

The benefits of this study will be a better understanding of MMLD learners and of the extent to which an Adventure-based Experiential Programme can be utilised and implemented by LSEN Schools to improve the personal functioning of these learners.

### **1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this study is to determine:

The role of an Adventure-based Experiential Programme on the personal functioning elements with regards to positive psycho-social functioning elements, self-perception and relationships of adolescent youth with Mentally Mild Learning Disability.

#### **1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation is submitted in the traditional format, with the following chapters:

**Chapter 1:** Problem statement, objective and structure of the study.

**Chapter 2:** Literature review: Adventure-based Experiential Programmes and youth at risk with MMLD.

**Chapter 3:** Research Methodology.

**Chapter 4:** Results and Discussion.

**Chapter 5:** Conclusion, Limitations, Recommendations and Areas for further study.

The chapters will furthermore comply with the following format:

- The references for Chapters 1 to 5 will be according to the North-West University reference guidelines.
- All references will be at the end of chapter 5.

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## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW: ADVENTURE-BASED EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMMES AND YOUTH AT RISK WITH MMLD

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- 2.1. INTRODUCTION
  - 2.2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND THEORY
  - 2.3. YOUTH
  - 2.4. THE MMLD LEARNER
  - 2.5. ADVENTURE-BASED EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMMES (AEP)
  - 2.6. SUMMARY
- 

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the terms adventure-based experiential programme (AEP), youth at risk, personal functioning and youth with Mentally Mild Learning Disabilities (MMLD) will be defined and the conceptualisation of these terms will contribute to the understanding and possibility of adventure as a powerful intervention and prevention method against at-risk behaviour exhibited by learners with MMLD.

The researcher starts by looking at the theoretical foundations of the study followed by a discussion on youth in general as well as youth suffering from MMLD. Personal functioning will also be discussed in the form of psycho-social functioning elements (perseverance and satisfaction), self-perception (anxiety and self-worth) and relationships (interpersonal among peers). The chapter concludes with AEPs and how interventions could be planned to help MMLD youth overcome the obstacles they face by acquiring the necessary personal functioning-, inter- and intrapersonal skills.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND THEORY**

### **2.2.1. Positive psychology**

The researcher Abraham Maslow (1987:201) noted that psychology has focused more on the negative side of human behaviour than on the positive side. Psychology has taught much about the shortcomings, illnesses and sins of humans, but little about the potential, virtues and achievable aspirations that humans have (Maslow, 1987:201; Lopez & Gallagher, 2009:3). The same tools and techniques can be used to enhance our understanding of strengths and to promote well-being when explaining weakness and preventing or treatment of illnesses (Lopez & Gallagher, 2009:3).

Positive psychology does not reject negative psychology; it only recognises the benefits of enhancing the positive behaviour in order to solve a problem (Diener, 2009:10). The positive traits of a person enable positive experiences which have important positive consequences in the family, workplace and community settings and ultimately the functioning of a person (Peterson & Park, 2009:25). Positive psychology is about facilitating good lives and helping people to be at their best (Linley *et al.*, 2009:35). Research has shown that positive psychology can be used to reduce criminal recidivism in rehabilitating offenders which leads to an improvement of the offender's capabilities, patterns of behaviour, resilience to criminal behaviour and an improved quality of life (Linley *et al.*, 2009:40).

Positive psychology gave rise to positive adjustment, development and resilience. The study of resilience during adolescent development produced a shift in understanding and helping youth who are at risk (Masten *et al.*, 2009:129). This shift is evident in the forming of new goals and aims for prevention and intervention, seeing as it addresses both the problem and the competence to deal with it. This is also apparent in assessments of youth which includes the assessment of personal strengths in addition to risks and problems (Masten *et al.*, 2009:129). All youth have personal strengths and when it is aligned with their family, school and community resources, it can promote positive development (Harper, 2009:1; Lerner, 2009:149). It is not possible to address all the hazards that expose the well-being and lives of youth, therefore it is important to

learn how to preserve, protect and recover good adaptation and development (Masten *et al.*, 2009:130).

### **2.2.2. Strengths-based Approach**

The Strengths-based Approach involves a connection between personal aspirations and the available resources and support systems (Saleebey, 2006:16-17). According to literature personal strengths are the focus of interventions (Saleebey, 2006:16). Change is based on the strengths of the individual, while the problem areas or weaknesses of the individual are given enough attention in order to not interfere in the process of achieving goals (Saleebey, 2006:17). The Strengths-based Approach engenders a trusting working relationship, empowers individuals to take the lead on their own well-being, taps into individuals' personal sources of motivation and sustains positive change through learning, growth and capacity-building (Saleebey, 2006:16; Masten *et al.*, 2009:129-130). Table 2.1 gives a more detailed picture of the contrasts and comparisons between a Strength-based- and a Deficits-based Approach to interventions (Saleebey, 2006:16-19).

While the Deficits-based Approach focuses on the shortcomings and problems of the individual, the Strengths-based Approach focuses on the individual's resources, capabilities, knowledge, abilities, motivations, experiences and intelligence which can be used as a basis for empowerment, to solve problems and to pursue positive change (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010:12). Saleebey (2006:16-19) cites three principles involved in the Strengths-based Approach:

- Every individual, family, group and community has strengths and is full of resources.
- Trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be sources of challenge and opportunity.
- Assume the person does not know the limits of the capacity for growth and change, and take the individual's, group's or community's aspirations serious.

Individual strengths can include educational background, work history, problem solving and decision making skills, personal qualities and characteristics, physical and financial resources and positive attitudes (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010:14). Groups can be empowered through the use of support groups which consist of people with similar

problems or issues that come together to support each other, provide each other with information on how to cope with the problem or to suggest resources for helping with the problem (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010:14). Communities can be enhanced and empowered by using the Strengths-based Approach to recognise potential community resources such as recreational facilities, schools, libraries and social service agencies which approve the community's functioning (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010:15). The ecological perspective places an emphasis on the relationship between an individual or group and the place lived in during their lives. The ecological concept is used as a metaphor to describe the relationship between individuals and their environments or communities (Sands, 2001:2; Ungar, 2006:3).

*Table 2.1: Contrasts and comparisons between the Strengths- and the Deficits-based Approach (Saleebey, 2006:16-19)*

<b>Strengths-based Approach:</b>	<b>Deficits-based Approach:</b>
Individuals are unique with own talents and resources	The individual is seen as a case or a diagnoses
The focus lies on strengths, resources, capabilities and adaptive processes	The emphasis lies on what is wrong, missing or abnormal
Interventions are focused on possibilities	The intervention is focused on the individual's problem areas
The professional knows the individual through the individual's interpretation of events and meanings, and not through the professional's interpretations	An expert professional interprets the individual's story in order to make a diagnosis
Trauma may contribute to the individual's strengths or weaknesses	Trauma predicts pathology
Aspirations of the individual, families or communities are the focus of the interventions	The professional develops the treatment plan
The individual, family or community are viewed as the expert	The professional is the expert concerning the individual's life
Help is focused on getting on with one's life, using the skills and resources of the individual	The professional's skills are the primary resources for getting the work done
The goals are well-being, thriving and high quality of life	The goal is absence of the illness or dysfunctions
Uses the ecological model	Uses the medical model

In order to focus on youth at risk's strengths instead of weaknesses, it is important to firstly understand the development of youth in general; secondly to understand who

youth at risk are and why they are seen as such and finally, what the connection between MMLD and juvenile delinquency is.

## **2.3. YOUTH**

### **2.3.1. Defining youth**

The word “youth” describes the group of young men and woman who are no longer children, but are not adults yet and is a generic phrase that is used interchangeable with other phrases such as “adolescent,” “teenager” or “young person” (Cross & Capuzzi, 1989:9). Most of the individuals classified as youth fall between the ages of 10 - 23, but seeing as “youth” is a state of mind, these boundaries are not set in stone (Cross & Capuzzi, 1989:9; Hansen, 2002:25; Edginton *et al.*, 2005:125; World Health Organization, 2011:2). For the purposes of this study youth will thus be defined as young people between the ages of 10 - 18, seeing as the learners in LSEN schools (Learners with Special Educational Needs) fall within this age group.

According to the literature adolescence refers to the transition from childhood to adulthood; unfortunately some youth experience this phase as a struggle (Cross & Capuzzi, 1989:9). When youth struggle to adapt during this transitional phase, they risk compromising their physical, psychological and social health (Cross & Capuzzi, 1989:10; Witt & Caldwell, 2010:12), which leads to the reported upsurge in youth suicide and pregnancy, as well as high patterns of drug and alcohol abuse, school dropout and delinquency (Witt & Caldwell, 2010:12).

### **2.3.2. Development of youth**

Adolescence starts during puberty and is known for the rapid physical changes, significant maturation of cognitive functioning, emotional intensity and an increase in the seeking of peer acceptance (Cross & Capuzzi, 1989:10; Meyer, 2005:150). During the adolescent years, youth experience many psychological and emotional highs and lows. Youth are aware of fluctuating emotions and emotional cycles and start using strategies to regulate those emotions in certain ways. The decisions that youth make are guided

by moral principles and beliefs (Cross & Capuzzi, 1989:10). Youth increasingly use self-presentation strategies for impression management and become aware of the importance of shared emotional self-disclosure in making and maintaining friendships (Carr, 2006:25). As soon as youth become aware of the fact that certain actions can lead to approval or disapproval from significant others a standard of behaviour is internalised (Carr, 2006:26). This internalisation process allows youth to experience feelings of pride, shame and guilt (Carr, 2006:28).

Carr (2006:14) established four distinct stages of development, namely the sensory motor stage, the pre-operational stage, the concrete operational stage and the formal operational stage. Youth enter the formal operational stage at the age of 12. In this period the adolescent is able to use logical principles to solve abstract problems, predict real consequences for their actions, become aware of logical inconsistencies and have the capacity to realise that right or wrong is relevant to the situation they are in (Carr, 2006:15). The personal functioning of youth takes place within the framework of the youth's past and are integrated into the developmental stage the youth operates in (Tesnear, 2004:17).

Personal functioning refers to the behaviour patterns of a person when placed in the different roles and environments that person is part of (Faul & Hanekom, 2006:2). During the development years youth's personal functioning and subsequently patterns of behaviour is influenced by situational factors such as the social environment (among peers), the home environment (family) and the school or play environment (Cross & Capuzzi, 1989:11). When these environments are not in balance with each other the youth may become alienated from friends, family, school and the community, which can be defined as a lack of a sense of belonging. Alienated youth have more potential to get into trouble and become delinquent (Cross, 2002:248). Having lost a sense of belonging in one or more of these environments, the youth may not fit into school or society and consequently lack the necessary skills and values to act as responsible members of society. The biggest problem comes in when more than one of these environments simultaneously cause feelings of alienation and the other environments are not providing enough comfort to compensate for these feelings, which then leads to negative personal functioning (Cross, 2002:248; Carr, 2006:15; Faul & Hanekom, 2006:3). Alienation does not only entail the loss of a sense of belonging, but also include feelings of

powerlessness (the ability to influence choices), isolation (acute loneliness), absent norms (individual value systems that are inconsistent with the value systems of society) and the loss of a sense of control over one's own life (Cross, 2002:248).

The importance of family cannot be ignored when it comes to individual development, seeing as family is the most powerful socialisation agent and is vital in establishing and maintaining connections with the outside world (Scheepers, 1997:37). Therefore family has a powerful influence over the young individual, whether it's positive or negative depends on the circumstances (Scheepers, 1997:37). The family life of MMLD learners tend to be more chaotic and have higher levels of conflict and anxiety because the homes of these learners may have accumulated risk factors such as a history of abuse, neglect, poverty, substance abuse and parents who have been in the justice system (Scheepers, 1997:37; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000:28; Gouws *et al.*, 2000:184; Inesia-Forde, 2005:12).

The bonds that youth form with peers and members of a group during the adolescent years are of great importance for the development of personal identity (Scheepers, 1997:40). The peer group gives opportunities for emotional intimacy, support, understanding, companionship and fun (Meyer, 2005:158). During the adolescent years, youth gain more independence from their parents by sharing more intimacy with friends (Scheepers, 1997:40; Meyer, 2005:158). This is also the time when parent-child conflict is the most; seeing as it plays a vital part in the adolescent becoming self-sufficient (Scheepers, 1997:40). Social growth and change take place in the peer group and because peer pressure is a constant, many risk taking behaviours can be induced. As part of a peer group it is expected of the youth to show loyalty to, and to, adhere to the group's norms (Meyer, 2005:158).

The peer group offers the youth the opportunity to go through the process of self-evaluation (Carr, 2006:27). In order to have a sense of individual self-worth as an adult, it completely depends on whether social and emotional competencies were attained during the adolescent years (Moote & Wodarski, 1997:147). By being accepted into a peer group, a youth's self-confidence can be strengthened, because individual social needs were satisfied and the sense of belonging was experienced, while not being part

of a peer group can cause feelings of alienation, which in turn leads to a decrease in self-worth (Meyer, 2005:158).

As part of moral development youth uses a person's intentions as the primary criterion to evaluate the morality of the act (Moote & Wodarski, 1997:147). Rules are used as social conventions to judge the wrongfulness of an act (Carr, 2006:26). The ability to make moral decisions does not necessarily lead to moral and pro-social behaviour, only the internalisation of standards of behaviour will affect how the adolescent acts or reacts in certain situations (Carr, 2006:26). Youth compares the values and norms obtained from childhood with those of their peers (Moote & Wodarski, 1997:147; Carr, 2006:26). Comparing these values may have two possible outcomes: either it confirms and strengthens the value system that the youth already knows or it leads to the questioning and judging of the value system portrayed by their parents (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:109). The youth may become delinquent when they are surrounded by a deviant environment and friends which may lead them to a deviant value system (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:109; Caldwell & Smith, 2006:399; Mitchell & McCall, 2007:23).

### **2.3.3. Overview of youth at risk**

The term "youth at risk" refers to a diverse group of youth that needs interventions in order to avert them from potentially dangerous circumstances (Stumbo, 1999:1). There are three important dimensions when it comes to defining the term youth at risk:

- The future time dimensions inherent to the term meaning that with some individuals at-risk is used in a predictive fashion, because future negative behaviours are anticipated in the absence of a specific intervention.
- At-risk as a continuum rather than a contradiction, because there is no such thing as "no risk". All youth are at risk, some just more than others, but every individual can fall prey to destructive patterns.
- Interactions between treatment and prevention. Programmes that are offered to youth at risk can be preventative or intervening (Stumbo, 1999:1; Munson, 2002:31; Harper, 2009:1; Witt & Caldwell, 2010:11).

According to the ecological perspective youth at risk are more likely to come from an environment that heightens their vulnerability, such as communities with a scarcity of social resources, high levels of stress and inadequate institutional support (Stumbo, 1999:2). As such there are four different categories that predict at-risk behaviour i.e. (1) antecedents, (2) markers, (3) behaviour and (4) outcomes. Antecedents describe factors such as poverty, neighbourhood environment, dysfunctional families and lack of parental involvement or support which predicts negative outcomes for youth. Markers are the behaviours or conditions that signal impending dysfunction such as poor school performance or being placed out of home. Problem behaviour is behaviour that causes negative outcomes and consequences for the individual or his/ her community. Problem behaviour includes the early onset of sexual activity, running away from home, school truancy or absenteeism and early use and abuse of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Outcomes are the results or consequences of the individual's behaviour. The typical outcomes of problem behaviour include teen pregnancy, parenthood, homelessness, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, dropping out of school, committing crimes, going to prison or juvenile jail, morbidity and death (Stumbo, 1999:2).

All youth can be categorised to fit the at-risk continuum (Table 2.2). The at-risk continuum consists of five components namely minimal risk, remote risk, high risk, imminent risk and participation in at-risk activities (McWhirter *et al.*, 1995:568). Preventive programmes are normally offered to youth at risk in the minimal-, remote-, high- and sometimes the imminent risk categories, while intervention programmes are offered to the at-risk youth that has already participated in risk activities. Although a distinction can be made between a prevention and intervention programme in theory, in practice it is more difficult seeing as the same programme activities can be used in both. For that reason the researcher focused more on the term AEP as method of programme delivery, seeing as it is important to provide the full spectrum of programmes in order to satisfy the needs of, and help the full range of youth at risk (Stumbo, 1999:2; Munson, 2002:31; Lueck, 2008:7).

Youth who are vulnerable to the surrounding environment are considered to be at risk of potentially negative future life events (Stumbo, 1999:3). The interactions and relationships that youth have may have a negative effect on the youths' perceptions

about their own competencies, skills and self-definition (Stumbo, 1999:3; Ungar, 2006:3; Masten *et al.*, 2009:118). These youth have no basis on which to build resiliency (Stumbo, 1999:3; Ungar, 2006:3; Masten *et al.*, 2009:118). Resilience refers to patterns of positive adaptation during or after significant exposure to risk; in other words the capability to overcome adversities (Ungar, 2006:3; Masten *et al.*, 2009:118). Resilient youth shows competence, autonomy, makes healthy decisions and has effective strategies to cope with life events. Resilient youth also experience adverse developmental conditions and are still able to live productive and normal lives (Stumbo, 1999:3). Therefore, youth that does not show resiliency is typically classified as high risk youth (Stumbo, 1999:3; Ungar, 2006:3; Masten *et al.*, 2009:118).

Protective factors leading to resilience can be categorised under (1) child factors such as social competence, (2) family factors such as supportive parents and consistent rule setting and (3) community factors such as positive relationships (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:50). Resilience can be seen as the ability to bounce back from hardship or those factors that interrupt the course from risk to problem behaviour, which then leads to adaptive outcomes in threatening circumstances (Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994:4; Bloemhof, 2006:1). Risk factors are factors that increase the chances for an individual to develop an emotional or behavioural disorder (Bloemhof, 2006:2). The common risk factors that youth come upon during their developmental years include temperament, developmental delay, early anti-social behaviour, troubled peer relationships and biological factors (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:44; Bloemhof, 2006:2).

*Table 2.2: The at-risk continuum (McWhirter et al., 1995:568)*

<b>Minimal risk:</b>	<b>Remote risk:</b>	<b>High risk:</b>	<b>Imminent risk:</b>	<b>Participation in at-risk activities:</b>
High socio-economic status families (Favourable demographics)	Middle socio-economic status families (Less favourable demographics)	Low socio-economic families, minority ethnic group (Negative demographics)	Negative demographics	Negative demographics
Few physiological and emotional stressors	Increased psychological and emotional stressors (Divorce or death in immediate family)	Numerous psychological and emotional stressors (Loss of family income)	Self-destructive behaviour	Have passed beyond at-risk, because they have already exhibited maladaptive behaviour

Have loving relationships with families and friends	Less than positive family, school and social interactions	Negative family, school and social interactions	Deficit social skills and poor coping behaviours	At-risk behaviour likely to continue into adulthood
		Individual's personal negative attitude and emotions e.g. depression, anxiety, aggression and hopelessness	Deviant behaviour such as aggression towards others e.g. gateway to juvenile delinquency	Progeny at-risk

Youth in the high- and imminent risk categories, such as MMLD youth, often have a distorted self-concept which affects their self-esteem negatively (Stumbo, 1999:3). Self-concept can be described as the way in which people perceive themselves academically, physically and socially, while self-esteem is described as the way in which an individual evaluates his perceptions of these areas (Meggert, 1989:99). High- and imminent risk youth perceive these self-concept areas as negative and consequently lower their expectations of success (Meggert, 1989:99; Stumbo, 1999:4). High- and imminent risk youth seem to have difficulties in areas of social interaction, communication, coping with anxiety and stress and self-control skills (Meggert, 1989:99; Stumbo, 1999:4). This leads to high- and imminent risk youth failing to consider consequences and operating on an external locus of control (Stumbo, 1999:4). High- and imminent risk youth have difficulties with setting reachable goals and the youth feel that they are not in control of their lives and thus unable to shape their futures (Stumbo, 1999:4). These youth may engage in delinquent activities in order to increase their self-esteem and they can subsequently be categorised as youth at risk who has already participated in at-risk activities, which will then make them juvenile delinquents (Stumbo, 1999:3).

#### **2.3.4. Juvenile delinquency**

Deviant behaviour refers to a variety of activities that are seen by society as eccentric, dangerous, annoying, bizarre, outlandish, gross, abhorrent, criminal or illegal (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:183). This implies that deviant behaviour is behaviour that falls beyond the limits of toleration (Scheepers, 1997:32; Gouws *et al.*, 2000:183). From this the researcher defines a juvenile delinquent as young person between the ages of 10-18 that has been found guilty of committing an illegal act (Scheepers, 1997:32; Gouws *et*

*al.*, 2000:183). An illegal act is an act that violates either the adult law or an act that violates laws that is only applicable to juveniles such as truancy, running away from home, being unmanageable and/or using banned substances (Scheepers, 1997:32).

Most crimes are rooted in the economic, political and social sectors (Scheepers, 1997:36). Accordingly, individuals turn to crime to relief their economic situation or to show their disapproval with the political and social order. Youth react to the stressors of poverty and violence with rage, distrust and hopelessness (Munson, 2002:32). This may lead to substance abuse or the forming of delinquent gangs (Munson, 2002:33). According to literature the majority of juvenile delinquents come from lower-class social backgrounds (Scheepers, 1997:35; Gouws *et al.*, 2000:183). Youth in lower social class environments are acutely aware of the wealth and opportunities afforded to the youth from higher socio-economic classes around them. Lower social-economical class youth may react to this “unfairness done to them” by means of embarrassment and withdrawal or social deviation and rebellion (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:183). From this observation it is clear that socio-economic status contributes directly to juvenile delinquency (Scheepers, 1997:36).

Emotional stress resulting from familial breakdown combined with poor socio-economic status creates a situation where delinquency can almost be guaranteed. Delinquent children often come from families with very little verbal interaction and little supportive communication (Scheepers, 1997:38). Educational factors can also contribute to juvenile delinquency (Scheepers, 1997:38). Juvenile delinquents as a group are accompanied by serious academic backwardness and reading difficulties (Scheepers, 1997:38). In addition, it seems that low achievement, low vocabulary and reasoning abilities have strong correlations to delinquency (Scheepers, 1997:39). Many youth from poor communities and backgrounds also drop out of school in order to find work, which is a stronger predictor of delinquency than unemployment (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:184). This can be the effect of particular characteristics displayed by early school dropouts such as low levels of achievement motivation, poor self-esteem, weak emotional stability as well as low initiative and reliability (Scheepers, 1997:40; Gouws *et al.*, 2000:184).

The peer group however is one of the most important predictors of juvenile delinquency. The peer group can cause conflict between the adolescent and his/her family, as the

family may not approve of the friends, whereas when the family structure is not supportive and interactive the youth may become involved with delinquent peers (Scheepers, 1997:40). There are also cases where the youth commits delinquent acts not because he wants to improve his family's living conditions, but to prevent rejection and to fit in with a specific peer group, thus peers are capable of discouraging, as well as encouraging delinquent behaviour (Scheepers, 1997:41; Gouws *et al.*, 2000:77).

It is important to note that all of these factors namely socio-economic status, family problems, educational factors and the peer group can cause delinquency in youth, but it is more likely to occur when two or more of these factors are combined (Cross, 2002:248; Carr, 2006:27). The risk factors for juvenile delinquency include living in poverty, poor family functioning, being adopted or raised by a distant family member and lower household education achievement (Mallett, 2012:10). These are also the risk factors that increase the chances of having a learning disability (Mallett, 2012:10).

## **2.4. THE MENTALLY MILD LEARNING DISABLED LEARNER**

### **2.4.1. Defining the MMLD learner**

Learning disability is a disorder that occurs in one or more of the psychological processes needed for the understanding or using of language, spoken or written, which may lead to the inability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations (Inesia-Forde, 2005:4). According to the report from the Special Education Support Service (2007:1) and the research of Gillberg and Soderstrom (2003:811) MMLD learners can be defined as: "pupils with significantly below average general intellectual functioning that can be associated with maladaptive behaviour. This can be reflected in learners maturing later than their peers, learners having a reduced learning capacity and learners not adjusting socially. When using the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) to determine intelligence of MMLD learners, they will fall in the IQ range of 50-70".

Learning disabilities are developmental disabilities that start in childhood or adolescence before the age of 18 (Medical Dictionary, 2013:1). Learning disabilities are diagnosed when an individual shows one or both of the following symptoms: (1) an intellectual functioning level below average or (2) considerable limitations in two or more adaptive

skills areas (Medical Dictionary, 2013:1). Social skills deficiencies and low self-concept (due to constant academic failure) will lead youth with learning disabilities to rather engage in maladaptive behaviour than try new pursuits in which they may fail (Howard & Peniston, 2002:8). Social dysfunction can be seen as the opposite of personal functioning (Tesnear, 2004:18).

#### **2.4.2. Characteristics of MMLD learners**

The cognitive characteristics of learners with MMLD include below average general intellectual functioning, information processing problems, trouble with visual skills and a struggle to interpret verbal and auditory stimuli (Inesia-Forde, 2005:9). MMLD learners are easily distracted and are likely to be inattentive, impulsive and hyperactive (Inesia-Forde, 2005:9; Mallett, 2012:14).

For learners with MMLD there seems to be a discrepancy between academic performance and abilities in the areas of reading, writing, listening, speaking, mathematical reasoning and calculations, spelling and language comprehension (Hammill *et al.*, 1981:217; Inesia-Forde, 2005:9). The characteristics of MMLD learners that lead to these academic problems include the learners' lack of generalisation skills, working slowly to complete tasks, inconsistent performance, lack of self-determination and poor short- and/or long-term memory (Inesia-Forde, 2005:10). Some MMLD learners show adaptive behaviour to make up for their perceived disability (Settle & Milich, 1999:201). These adaptive behaviours include (1) compensating for the deficiency by acting like they are not disabled, (2) a learned helplessness, (3) dropping out of school, (4) substance abuse and/or dependence, (5) retreating from society and (6) delinquent behaviour (Inesia-Forde, 2005:10). The learned helplessness style behaviour is more common with girls than boys and refers to the MMLD youth losing confidence in their intellectual abilities due to repeated failure and then attributing the failure to insufficient ability rather than insufficient effort (Settle & Milich, 1999:201). The learned helplessness style thus lowers the MMLD youths' expectations for future academic performances (Settle & Milich, 1999:201). A cycle develops in which the MMLD learners believe they will do badly, then does not put in any effort, subsequently does badly and lose even further confidence in their abilities (Settle & Milich, 1999:202).

This cycle leads to doing even worse the next time around and reinforces the MMLD learners' feeling of helplessness even more (Settle & Milich, 1999:202).

Research done by Bott *et al.* (1997:5) shows learners with a speech deficit is more likely to also have behavioural problems than those without a speech deficit. The MMLD learner's social characteristics, or rather lack thereof, heightens the likelihood of problems in school and the likelihood of coming in contact with the criminal justice system (Kravetz *et al.*, 1999:248; Settle & Milich, 1999:207). A study done by Kavale and Forness (1996:233) found that about 75% of learners with MMLD suffered from social impairments. MMLD learners tend to be hypersensitive to social cues and emotionally unstable, which leads to social mistakes such as overreaction and the incorrect interpretation of non-verbal communication (Settle & Milich, 1999:209). Learning disabilities are often associated with aggression and misconduct in classrooms, which could be the direct consequences of interpersonal processes such as low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy (Kravetz *et al.*, 1999:248). The risk factors that facilitate delinquent behaviour are feelings of low self-esteem and -confidence, inadequacy, the need for acceptance, the inability to read others' body language and maintaining socially acceptable distance from others (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000:27; Ross-Kidder, 2002:1). In order to minimise these risk factors it is necessary for the MMLD learner to receive social skills training (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000:27; Ross-Kidder, 2002:1).

Various researchers (Peniston, 1998:10; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000:33; Ross-Kidder, 2000:1; Inesia-Forde, 2005:11) have found that by increasing the MMLD learner's self-esteem and emotional intelligence, these learners will develop alternative methods of dealing with aggression, which in turn will lead to increased adaptability, reduced delinquency and a reduction in the misreading of social cues. According to Morrison and Cosden (1997:43) MMLD learners commonly suffer from serious inter- and intrapersonal problems such as loneliness, depression, suicide tendencies and delinquency.

#### **2.4.3. The MMLD learner as at-risk youth**

Research by Loeber and Farrington (2001:1) has drawn attention to the importance of understanding the risk and protective factors associated with delinquency as well as focussing on youth developmental issues and programmes. The risk and protective

factors can be internal characteristics of the individual or individual disturbances, or it can be external factors displayed by the family, school, community or environmental conflicts (Epstein & Cullinan, 1984: 33; Morrison & Cosden, 1997:43).

Learning disabilities in itself can also be seen as a risk factor, because the learning disability puts the learners at risk of ensuing non-academic problems (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:45). According to the National Council on Disability (NCD) (2003:55) and Mallett (2012:12) there are three commonly cited hypotheses or explanations as to why youth with learning disabilities are likely to get involved with juvenile delinquency, namely (1) school failure, (2) susceptibility and (3) differential treatment (NCD, 2003:55; Mallett, 2012:12). The school failure hypothesis suggests that the learning disabilities faced by learners may lead to frustration, lower self-worth, rejection, difficulties in school and school drop-out, which might then in turn lead to involvement with negative peers and delinquent activities (NCD, 2003:55; Mallett, 2012:13). Inesia-Forde (2005:8) found that youth with learning disabilities are more likely to fail in school or drop out of school, than learners who does not suffer from learning disabilities.

The second hypothesis, namely the susceptibility hypothesis, concludes that youth with learning disabilities have cognitive, neurological and intellectual difficulties (Mallett, 2012:14). Characteristics such as impulsivity and suggestibility, which are associated with both delinquency and learning disabilities, can increase the chances for MMLD learners getting involved with negative peers or criminal activities (NCD, 2003:55). The result of this is that MMLD youth now have to deal with both having a learning disability, as well as low-social skills and not being able to predict the outcome of their actions (Mallett, 2012:14).

The third hypothesis, namely differential treatment hypothesis, states that youth with learning disabilities does not get more involved with juvenile delinquency than their non-disabled peers. However, they are more likely to be arrested or supervised by courts (NCD, 2003:55; Mallett, 2013:15). According to Inesia-Forde (2005:8) learners with learning disabilities are twice as likely to be either ignored or punished in school. Four interactive models are considered when looking at the relationship between MMLD, school failure and juvenile delinquency. In the first model (figure 2.1) the learning disability (LD) leads to school failure which increases the risk of engaging in delinquent

behaviour (Morrison & Cosden. 1997:55). This is the main model that the researcher will focus on when developing the AEP for this study.

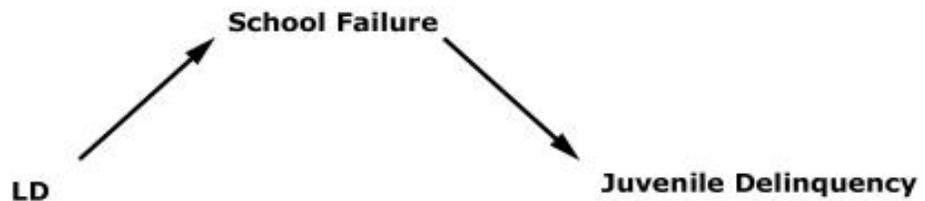


Figure 2.1: Model 1 (Morrison & Cosden. 1997:55)

In the second model (figure 2.2) the school environment, through poor schooling, creates a stressful environment for especially MMLD learners which then increase their chances of engaging in delinquent behaviour (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:55).

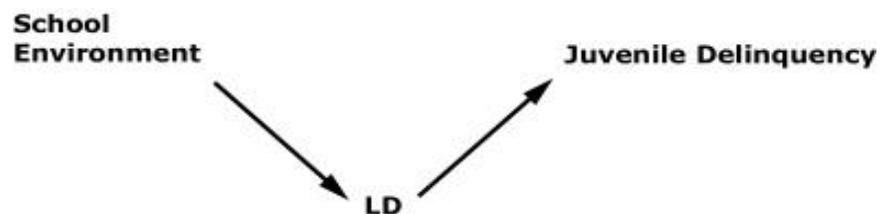


Figure 2.2: Model 2 (Morrison & Cosden. 1997:55)

The third model (figure 2.3) suggests that both a poor schooling environment and a learning disability are required to lead to the risk of MMLD learners engaging in delinquent activities. This model is however weakened by MMLD learners that have failed in school, but has not turned to delinquent activities as a result thereof (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:55).

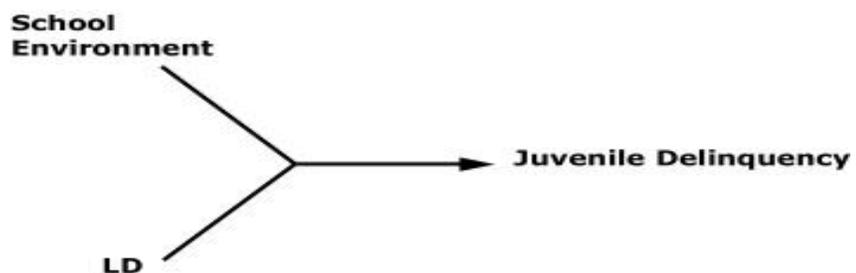


Figure 2.3: Model 3 (Morrison & Cosden. 1997:55)

The forth model (figure 2.4) suggest that a poor school environment and a learning disability act independently from each other and that both carry equal weight in increasing the risk of MMLD learners partaking in delinquent activities (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:56).

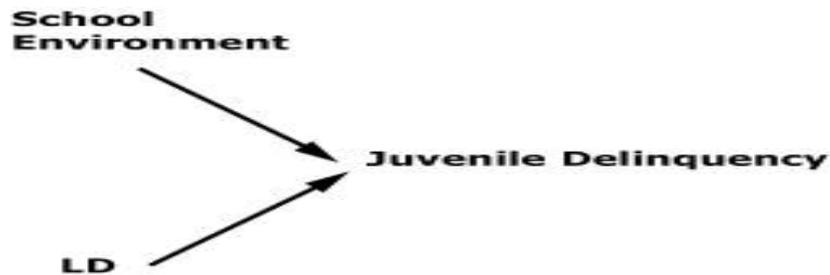


Figure 2.4: Model 4 (Morrison & Cosden. 1997:55)

## 2.5. ADVENTURE-BASED EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMMES

### 2.5.1. Defining AEPs

Adventure is often wrongly associated with unusual activities and programmes that mostly take place in the unspoilt nature, which is out of reach of the ordinary individuals and only meant for daring individuals (Ewert, 1989:10). Terms like “exciting experience”, “to dare or to try”, “to take the risk of change” and “with the hopes of a positive outcome” are usually used when defining adventure (Roget’s II: The New Thesaurus, 2011:2; The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2011:1; WordNet, 2011:2). The phrases to focus on from the above mentioned are exciting, experiences, taking risks and positive outcomes. Individual perceptions and ultimately experiences differ from each other. Therefore an experience that is exciting for one person is not necessarily exciting for the next person and what counts as a positive outcome for one, is not necessarily seen this way by someone else (Ewert, 1989:10; Heunis, 1997:45-102). The approach that Heunis (1997:45-102) takes to the term (*adventure*) can be better understood if adventure is seen as a state of mind which is experienced by each participant rather than a specific activity that one partakes in.

According to Edginton *et al.* (2004:234) programmes presented outdoors can be classified as outdoor recreation. The researcher kept this in mind while planning the

AEP. Adventure programmes however focuses more on the element of risk, which was the foundation for the AEP. For the purposes of this study (*adventure*) will thus be defined as a state of mind, which holds some degree of perceived risk and is not restricted to one activity. It will also imply active participation, which requires mental involvement and action, and will ultimately lead to self-development. Adventure provides opportunity for exploration which leads to an extension of the self, which in turn leads to growth and leads the participant towards fulfilment of his/her life (Hansen, 2002:35).

### **2.5.2. Theoretical foundation of AEPs**

Some people may view the deliberate seeking and taking of risks as dangerous and foolish, but risk is the essence around which AEPs are planned. Risk emerges when there is a possibility of emotional, financial or physical harm and the participant's ability to predict the outcome thereof. These risks refer to real or perceived risks based on the perceptions of the participant (Ewert, 1989:3). Real risk is when the participant is actually exposed to the possibility of getting hurt or having a close call, while perceived risk refers to the participant thinking that there is a possibility of being injured (Caldwell & Smith, 2006:399). Educational or structured AEPs are designed to contain a sense of perceived risk, which does not only include physical risks such as falling, fast water or cold temperatures, but also include emotional risks (Ewert, 1989:4; Caldwell & Smith, 2006:399). Emotional risks during an AEP with a group and especially a youth at risk group could include conflict within the group, which may lead to a group member being left out or feeling abandoned by the group (Ewert, 1989:61).

Research suggests that the typical risk-seeker is usually young and male (Ewert, 1989:62). The typical risk-seeker's personality shows that he seeks sensation and has a tendency for risk-taking (Ewert, 1989:62). Sensation seeking can be described as a need for varied, novel and complex sensations, as well as the willingness to take physical and social risks just for the sake of the experience, such as in the case of youth at risk (Ewert, 1989:62). Because sensation seeking is so closely linked to optimal arousal (Figure 2.5)<sup>1</sup> it is of great importance in AEPs. The reason being, that in order for a participant to reach optimal arousal, the flow experience is needed (Figure 2.6)<sup>1</sup> (Ewert, 1989:86-89; Priest & Gass, 2005:47-48; Bisson, 2009:138-139).

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<sup>1</sup> Figure 2.5 and 2.6 are adapted from the original source by the researcher.

The flow experience can be described as an experience which is all extensively, intrinsically satisfying and outside the parameters of stress and boredom (Priest & Gass, 2005:47-48). According to this flow theory it is often not external rewards that drive people to participate, but the activity in itself.

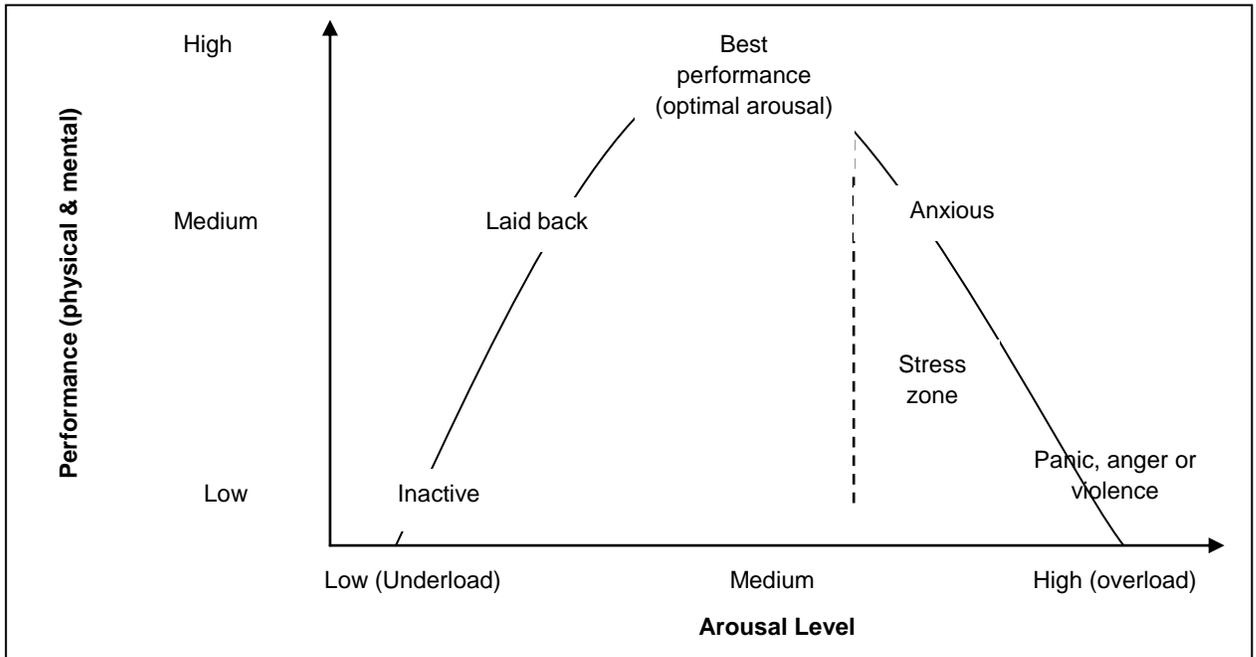


Figure 2.5: The Optimal Arousal Theory (Priest & Gass, 2005:47)

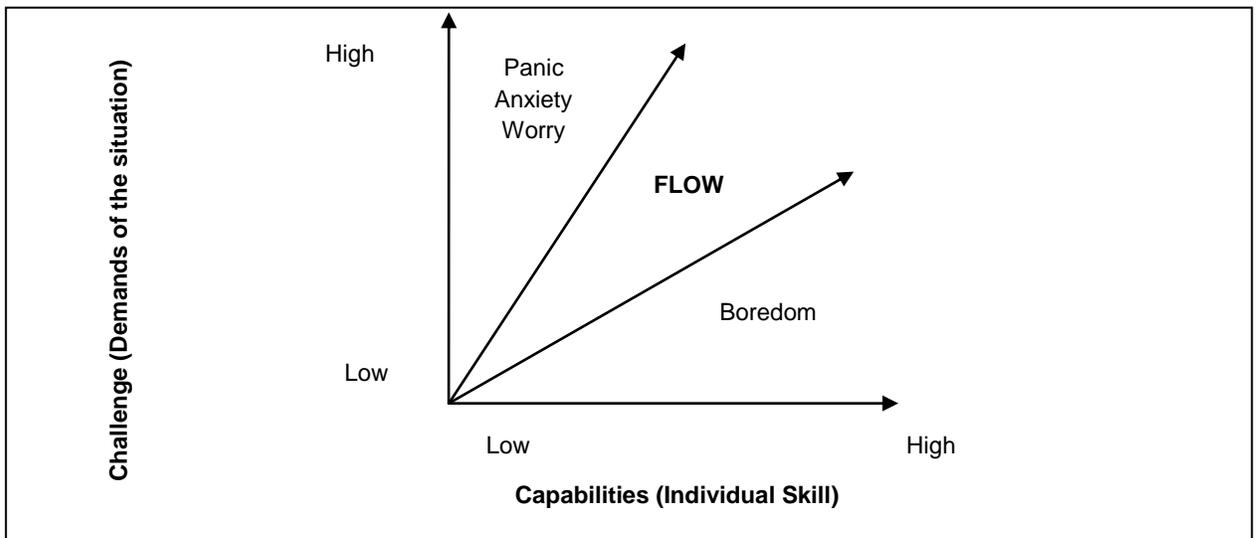


Figure 2.6: The Flow Theory (Priest & Gass, 2005:48)

High sensation seekers may deliberately seek out thrill and novel sensations and they might have the ability to make a destructive or constructive contribution to society (Ewert, 1989:64). Constructive high risk seekers usually seek their risks through AEPs and take more physical than social risks, while destructive high risk seekers seek out sensation through anti-social activities such as delinquency and criminal acts (Ewert, 1989:64). Youth at risk demand adventure and because they are not familiar with adventure-based pursuits they will often seek risk and sensation through illegal and unsocial acts (NOLS, 2011:3). This leads to the assumptions that AEPs can act as an intervention and prevention method for MMLD learners (Bloemhof, 2006:2).

According to Maslow (1987:201) participation in AEPs is a result of a need for psychological or sociological outcomes. People thus participate in certain Adventure-based activities in order to satisfy certain needs or to obtain certain goals (Maslow, 1987:201; Ewert, 1989:66). These goals and needs can be seen as the desired outcomes. People who seek adventure through recreation activities are those people that seek risk and potential danger in their experiences (Ewert, 1989:66). By incorporating perceived risk in an AEP, the programme leader creates the illusion of risk that creates fear in participants (Ewert, 1989:70; Priest & Gass, 2005:48). Using that fear in an AEP can enhance decision making skills, discipline and personal awareness, which may also lead to the underlying outcome of teaching the participant the skills to deal with future fearful experiences (Ewert, 1989:70; Priest & Gass, 2005:48).

Fear is mostly related to rejection and failure, but fear can also be constructed by underlying factors such as lack of control, personal inadequacies, personal skills, the state of your physiological equilibrium, level of comfort and programme inadequacies (Ewert, 1989:72). Fear is used in AEPs to either teach the participants about themselves and why they experience fear, or how to overcome fear. The programme leader should remember when using fear that it can be motivating or weakening depending on the intensity thereof (Ewert, 1989:76). A participant, who has overcome a particular fear or learned something about themselves through a fear-provoking activity, has had a valuable educational experience (Ewert, 1989:70; Priest & Gass, 2005:48). Through the use of AEPs the individual can be provided with a personal testing and learning stadium which is difficult to morally obtain anywhere else in society (Ewert, 1989:79).

Adventure-based learning is active, fast paced, fun, supportive and personally engaging (Priest & Gass, 2005:48). The participants need to figure things out for themselves, they need to try out new skills, carry out assignments and challenges that depend on the knowledge they acquired (Hansen, 2002:34). AEPs thus emerge when adventure is deliberately used to achieve positive outcomes and benefits that encourage change (Priest & Gass, 2005:23). AEPs have the potential to broaden the horizons of learning, especially learning that exists within urban areas, since these programmes are based on direct and purposeful experiences (Priest & Gass, 2005:146). Priest and Gass (2005:147) state that AEPs can help participants to develop physical, intellectual and emotional skills, which they can use to continuously evaluate themselves. The participants are being challenged because they are taken out of their comfort zones and have to find a new phase of equilibrium (Priest & Gass, 2005:146). Most of the AEPs are based on the belief that all forms of learning, behavioural changes and personal development and –growth, occurs as the direct result of a real and meaningful experience (Priest & Gass, 2005:147; Tucker, 2009:316).

Participants learn by doing and then by also reflecting on the activity (Stremba, 2009:182). An adaption of Kolb's Experiential Learning model will be used in order to better understand this process (Coetzer, 2007:50; Stremba, 2009:181). In Kolb's model (figure 2.7) the process begins with concrete experiences which are followed by reflecting on the experience through the discussion of the experience and activity. The reflection helps participants to make generalisations about the experience. This stage is also known as abstract conceptualisation, in which students look back and discover patterns of behaviour. The last stage known as the critical transference or application stage helps the participants to apply the skills learned through the experience to everyday living situations (Priest & Gass, 2005:154; Stremba, 2009:181).

According to Hobbs (quoted by Scheepers, 1997:48) and Priest and Gass (2005:146-147) programme leaders create situations and use metaphors in order for the participants to learn from experiences. Hobbs (quoted by Scheepers, 1997:48) and Priest and Gass (2005:146-147) believe that direct, real experiences are of more value to help with the transfer of learning and awareness of the participants' own skills, knowledge and competencies, as well as the initiation and upkeep of positive change. Long (2001:101) states that an AEP can be used as a successful alternative method for

transfer of learning. The reason for better understanding the learning that took place is the concrete nature and shared experience of activities, which is followed by a facilitation session about the meaning and application of the activities.

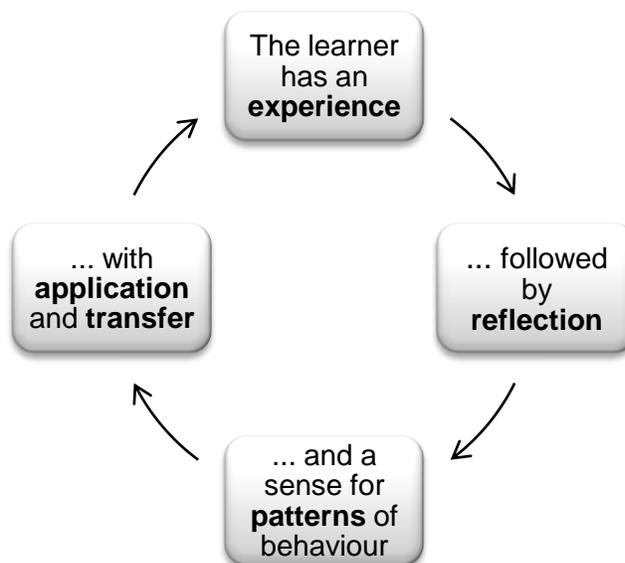
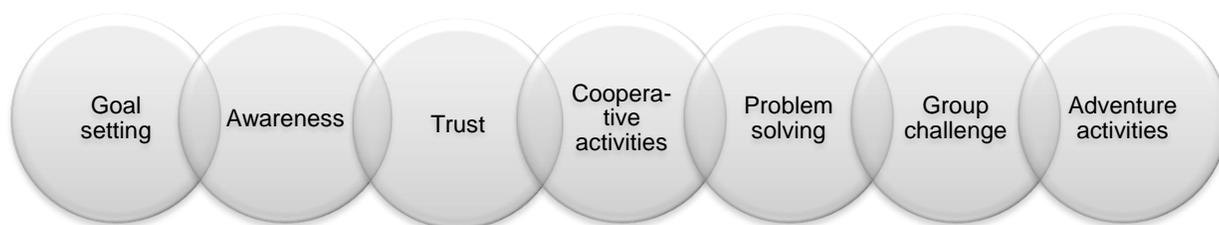


Figure 2.7: Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (Stremba, 2009:182)

Transfer of learning within the AEP can occur through many different processes of which Priest and Gass (2005:185) identified three:

- **Specific transfer:** This happens when the participant exercises the skills he/she acquired e.g. orienteering, canoeing, fire building, independency from the outdoor leader and camp environment. This is usually evident in the physical skills mastered by the participant.
- **Non-specific transfer:** This refers to the learning of general principles and behaviours and then applying them to different situations. Cooperation, problem solving, determination and environmental awareness are often products gained through participation in AEPs.
- **Metaphoric transfers:** This occurs when an activity contains structural similarities (isomorphs) with a real life situation familiar to the participant, allowing parallels to be drawn from the experience to life in general. The key to metaphoric transfer lies in the strength of the metaphoric connection between the experience and real life. The use of metaphors is the corner stone for AEPs and the outdoor leader must be competent in this process.

AEPs are not only concrete, but are structured as well, in order to achieve the programme goals and utilise the concepts of progression (moving from easy to difficult tasks). Progression can be utilised by means of the seven sequential steps of a programme for youth with behavioural disorders (figure 2.8) (Ewert, 1989:154; Tucker, 2009:320).



*Figure 2.8: The seven sequential steps of the Challenge Education Model (Tucker, 2009:320).*

### **2.5.3. AEPs as a programme delivery method**

Research has proven that institutionalised treatment and discouragement of illegal activities by means of heavy punishment does not have the wanted effect on youth at risk (Cape gateway, 2004:1). It could lead to youths making friends with other youth whom are also offenders. In other words, it could lead to youth being negatively influenced for the rest of their lives and most likely, turn the youth into criminals (Cape Gateway, 2004:1).

AEPs are recognised worldwide as an effective scientific method to develop personal functioning of youth at risk including the intra- and interpersonal skills, as well as being an important resource in solving community problems (Witt & Crompton, 1996:3; Louw, 2008:107, 134). An AEP is effective for use as a programme delivery method, because it is based on experiences (Rosol, 2000:42; Long, 2001:101). Berman and Davis-Berman (1995:4) claim that an AEP are of great value for youth with various behavioural problems, which is within the developmental field of psychological health. AEPs can thus effectively be used as a programme delivery method for the problem phenomenon of youth at risk (Berman & Davis-Berman, 1995:4; Rosol, 2000:42; Long, 2001:101).

Kaplan and Talbot (cited by Gass, 1993:45) identified the following psychological benefits of an AEP on the personal functioning of youth: it offers a break-away opportunity from daily activities, it is a satisfying experience for youth that experience difficulties in their everyday lives and it offers the opportunity for relaxation. It further contributes to the inner healing of youth who are overloaded with daily tasks and responsibilities (Gass, 1993:46; Howard & Peniston, 2002:5; Tesnear, 2004:105). Facilitation of the AEP leads to discovery of a new self, that has less inner struggles and that is more integrated and pleasant (Gass, 1993:46). Except for these psychological benefits, an AEP also offers the following: an increase in the feeling of freedom, independence and self-competence (Howard & Peniston, 2002:5; Russell & Walsh, 2011:400). It can thus be said that an AEP improves the overall psychic health of youth (Gass, 1993:45; Howard & Peniston, 2002:4).

Participation in an AEP can also improve the social skills of youth at risk (Gass, 1993:45; Howard & Peniston, 2002:4; Louw *et al.*, 2008:177). These social benefits include tolerance and understanding towards others, cooperation when working in teams, opportunities for youth to make their own decisions, it strengthens peer group relationships and creates a positive outlook on life (Gass, 1993:44; Long, 2001:103; Howard & Peniston, 2002:5). An AEP creates an environment for youth at risk in which they have the opportunity to experiment with different roles inside a group, it gives them the opportunity to develop new friendships, feelings and gives them the opportunity to raise their opinions without fear of judgement or rejection (Howard & Peniston, 2002:4).

Various researchers proved that participation in an AEP is beneficial for personal wellness. The positive changes that happen due to participation is evident in youth at risk's self-concept, self-perception, responsibility, trust in others, skill development, locus of control and leadership abilities (Gass, 1993:45; West & Crompton, 2001:126-128; Long, 2001:103; Howard & Peniston, 2002:4-5, Neill, 2003:318). The participation in an AEP can further improve the youth's functioning within his/her family structure (Howard and Peniston, 2002:4). According to Long (2001:103) an AEP improves the youths' attitude, view of life and makes them more willing to change their behaviour. The assumption can be made that these positive changes can be attributed to the various cognitive and behavioural outcomes of an AEP (Howard & Peniston, 2002:4).

Russel and Phillips-Miller (2002:424-428) put the positive changes that youth undergo due to participation in an AEP into three categories, namely youth's need to change, the need to make an end to drug- and alcohol abuse and the need to be a better person. The outcomes that have been identified by youth at risk, and which they desire to achieve, after participation in an AEP include the strive towards a life goal, to complete school, to distance themselves from old habits and old friends, to respect other people, to be a positive role model for friends and to be open to and listen to other's opinions and ideas (Russel & Phillips-Miller, 2002:424-428). AEPs also show an increase of youths' feeling of belonging (Howard and Peniston, 2002:4). The contribution of an AEP as reported by parents, show a significant improvement in the parent-child relationship, school achievement and a decrease in involvement with crime (Howard & Peniston, 2002:9-15).

Russel and Phillips-Miller (2002:422-424) states that the positive changes in youth can be ascribed to the following elements present in an AEP: (1) establishment of trust relationships with the facilitator and programme leader, (2) dynamics in the peer group, (3) facilitated reflection of the youth's AEP experience and (4) challenges set to youth by the experience. The difference in significance of the impact depends on (1) the type of programme, (2) the intensity of the programme and (3) the duration of the programme (as can be seen in table 2.3). A summary of previous AEPs and the outcomes thereof were compiled through a thorough literature review of previous AEPs, which had similarities to the planned AEP.

*Table 2.3: Summary of previous AEPs and outcomes*

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Study method</b>	<b>Target population</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Outcomes achieved</b>
Gillis, H.L., Gass, M.A. & Russel, K.C. (2008)	Quantitative study (datasets/ Pilot study).	Male juvenile offenders aged 8-18 yr. N = 2115	Less than 60 days	The Behaviour Management through Adventure programmes leads to significantly reduced re-arrests.
Russel, K.C. & Walsh, M.A. (2011)	Quasi-experimental design.	33 Males; 10 Females; 60% White; 40% Non-white; Average age 15.8	June 2008 - May 2009	Significant increase in self-efficacy and hope. No significant impact on resilience.

Neill, J.T. (2001)	Quantitative study (questionnaires) ; Qualitative study (written reports).	9 Males; 7 Females; Average age 19.	22 Days	Increased self-confidence and more positive attitudes; improved behavioural maturity; improved social, communication and leadership skills. Positive increases in personal functioning (time management, social competence, achievement motivation, intellectual flexibility, task leadership, emotional control, active initiative and self-confidence).
Tesnear, S. (2004)	Quantitative study (questionnaires) .	18 Males; 10 Females; Average age 17-19.	Beyond adventure programme lasting 10 months	General positive functioning increased significantly; positive change in terms of satisfaction. The following also increased: decision-making abilities, independence, responsibility, self-perception and lack of self-worth. More attention should be given to future perspective, frustration, stigma and mistrust.
Verster, Y. (2004)	Quantitative study (questionnaires) .	18 Males; 10 Females; Average age 17-19.	8 Day intervention programme	Dimensions of self-perception that had a positive change: feelings of guilt, lack of self-worth, anxiety and insecurity. Areas that still need attention are a feeling of responsibility for other people's actions, and a feeling of no importance.
Louw, P.J., Meyer, C. du P., Strydom, G.L. & Kotzé, H.N. (2008)	Quantitative study. Pre-post-test design.	Control group: 20 males; 20 females. Experimental group: 20 males; 20 females. Average age 14.5. All black	5 Days	Intra-group great significance: leadership abilities and active involvement. Significant influence on: trust in self, self-worth, stress management, social

		learners.		<p>efficacy, cooperation, time management, striving for achievement, internal and external locus of control. Intergroup great significance: trust in self, self-worth and general efficacy. Intergroup significant influence: social skills, social efficacy, leadership skills, organizational skills, strive for achievement and active involvement. Intergroup little significance: cooperation, time management, internal and external locus of control.</p>
<p>Louw, P.J., Meyer, C. du P., Strydom, G.L. &amp; Kotzé, H.N. (2008)</p>	<p>Quantitative study. Pre-post-test design.</p>	<p>Control group: 20 males; 20 females. Experimental group: 20 males; 20 females. Average age 14.5. All black learners.</p>	<p>5 Days</p>	<p>Intra-group little significance: time management, social skills, task oriented leadership, trust in self and total life efficacy. Intergroup significant influence: intellectual adaptability, emotional control, initiative, trust in self and total life efficacy. Intergroup little significance: time management, social skills, achievement motivation and task oriented leadership.</p>
<p>Bloemhof, H.J. (2006)</p>	<p>Quantitative study. Pre-post-test design.</p>	<p>Treatment group: 46 boys, average age 16. Control group: 60 boys, average age 15.4.</p>	<p>4 Hours</p>	<p>Significant increases: value attached to achievement, enjoyment of and/or perceived competency in activities, positive attitude towards future, creative problem-solving skills, sense of acceptance, more positive self-image, enhanced self-esteem and enhanced moral development.</p>

Botha, M. (2007)	Qualitative study (semi-structured interview/ focus groups).	Evaluation of Usiko's three month wilderness based intervention programme.	90 non-consecutive days	Overall improvement of self-esteem and self-worth; improvement of relational attitudes and interactions; shifted focus away from the committed crime; opportunity to experience natural consequences of behaviour.
Bruyere, B.L. (2002)	Literature review.			Building connections to community. Equipping youth with skills to overcome obstacles. Enhancing self-esteem. Providing healthy and facilitated opportunities to take risks. To be physically active. Defining personal self-identity.
Cross, R. (2002)	Quantitative study (questionnaires)	34 Students (17 experimental group/17 control group). Age 12-19. 4 Females, 13 Males.	5 Days	Decreased feelings of alienation, powerlessness, social isolation and without norms. Stronger sense of personal control.
Garst, B., Scheider, I. & Baker, D. (2001)	Quantitative study (questionnaires) ; Qualitative study (interviews, observation, reports).	58 youth students. Age 12-15	3 Day trip	Increase in social acceptance and behavioural conduct.

#### 2.5.4. AEPs and the development of youth at risk

AEPs have been designed and focused on youth at risk since the 1930's (West & Crompton, 2001:119). Various organisations have been involved in youth programming and have had various success rates, which are usually measured by a reduction in recidivism or in the number of anti-social behaviours observed (Priest & Miles, 1990:325; Witt & Crompton, 1996:35-95; Warrington & Wright, 2003:46-50; Harper, 2009:1-2).

Most programmes attempt to create feelings of personal worth and responsibility for the youths' own life and actions, with the hope that these new attitudes will reduce or eliminate anti-social behaviour or behaviour that is harmful to the community (Ewert, 1989:152).

A few organisations and programmes that exist for youth at risk exist both internationally, such as Outward Bound, National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and Project Adventure, the Youth Diversion Programme, Project S.A.Y (Save-A-Youth), Integrated Approach to Services for Children and Youth, City Streets/ At-Risk Youth Division, Impact Youth Crime Prevention as well as nationally, for instance Outward bound South Africa and SAYMCA (South Africa Young Men's Christian Association) (Priest & Miles, 1990:325; Witt & Crompton, 1996:35-95; Warrington & Wright, 2003:46-50; Harper, 2009:1,2).

SAYMCA states that all youth have the potential to achieve great things in their lives. Youth can have a positive influence on their communities, because of the energy, enthusiasm, creativity and boldness they possess and the SAYMCA programmes seek to strengthen that ideal (SAYMCA, 2012:2). SAYMCA's has put in an extra effort in the last decade to connect with the communities and to meet the youths' needs (SAYMCA, 2012:4). In the period between 2008 and 2012 SAYMCA has developed four signature programmes in South Africa: (1) Y-Zones, which are after-school care programmes, (2) Y-Justice, which is programmes for street children and interventions for juvenile offenders, (3) Y-Arts consists of music, arts and drama programmes and (4) Y-Active that is nutrition, gym, health and fitness programmes (SAYMCA, 2012:4).

### **2.5.5. Specific goals and aims of an AEP**

AEPs aim to address dysfunctional behaviour from a specific frame of reference. An AEP aims to address the participant's cognitive, emotional and physical functioning through the use of specific, inter-connected and structured adventure-based activities (Scheepers, 1997:71; Coatsworth *et al.*, 2005:362; Caldwell & Smith, 2006:399). By experiencing their own capabilities and the success achieved through participation in an AEP, participants will be more aware of what they are capable of achieving. The AEP thus uses various challenging activities to act as metaphors for the obstacles the

participants will encounter in real life to achieve this aim. The overall aims of an AEP are (Scheepers, 1997:99):

- The improvement of the participant's self-concept.
- To build trust in others.
- To learn how to set reachable and realistic goals.
- To learn how to handle and deal with challenges and stress.
- To reach a peak experience.
- To experience humour and fun.
- To learn how to solve problems.

An AEP must include:

- A needs assessment
- Physical and psychological safety.
- Appropriate structure (e.g. limit setting, clear rules and predictable expectations about programme functioning).
- Supportive relationships.
- Opportunities to belong, including meaningful inclusion in social activities.
- Positive social norms.
- Support for efficacy.
- Opportunities for skill-building.
- Integration with family, school and community efforts (Inesia-Forde, 2005:29).

## **2.6. SUMMARY**

The chapter started by explaining positive psychology and why it is important to focus more on the positive aspects instead of the negative aspects. This led to the discussion of the Strengths- and Deficits-based Approach. This study was grounded on the Strengths-based Approach. When the strengths of MMLD learners are increased, the deficits will decrease (Bloemhof, 2006:3). Because of the learning disabilities and lack of social skills that MMLD learners have, they miss out on the opportunity to play, have fewer chances of building interpersonal skills, fewer opportunities to increase their self-

esteem and to learn concepts of teamwork and problem-solving (Howard & Peniston, 2002:3).

All youth fall somewhere on the at-risk continuum, but MMLD learners are more prone to delinquent behaviour as a result MMLD learners lacking social characteristics (Bott *et al.*, 1997:5). The researcher also explained the four models showing the relationship between learning disabilities, school failure and delinquency (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:55). MMLD learners can become involved in delinquent behaviour because of school failure, susceptibility or differential treatment (NCD, 2003:55). By exposing MMLD youth to the perceived risk which AEPs holds, the MMLD learners are taken out of their comfort zones, into the stress zone where personal growth could take place (Priest & Gass, 2005:48). AEPs offer MMLD learner the chance to try out new skills and solve the challenge that the activities hold out for themselves. An AEP requires of the MMLD learner to actively participate, which encourages positive change (Hansen, 2002:34). The various benefits that an AEP hold for MMLD learners in regards to their personal functioning were discussed in full in this chapter.

The researcher also summarised previous research studies that made use of an AEP to bring about positive change in youth at risk. Finally, by outlining the specific goals and aims of an AEP, the researcher established that the literature supports the claim that an AEP can positively influence the personal functioning of MMLD learners. Chapter 3 will thus discuss the methods used to conduct this research study, where after the results that were found will be discussed in Chapter 4.

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## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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- 3.1. INTRODUCTION
  - 3.2. RESEARCH METHODS
  - 3.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
  - 3.4. SUMMARY
- 

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

According to Grinell (quoted by Strydom, 2000:76) the research design is seen as a logical strategy for the planning of the research procedures and the provision of evidence for knowledge development. This chapter explains how the research pertaining to this study was planned and conducted. The chapter thus starts by explaining how literature was gathered in order to develop a research question and furthermore how the literature was then used to explain all facets of the question. Thereafter, a list of keywords used during the literature search on specific databases' and search engines are described. A qualitative research design was used and the reasons for using this design are explained. When using the qualitative research design the researcher had a choice of various research methods that could be used; where a case study suited the demands of this research study the best. Two sampling methods were used; the first was used to choose the LSEN School and the second method to choose the learners within the school. The sampling methods are described in full after the research method.

This chapter also describes the research procedure in the four phases in which the researcher planned the AEP, from the time the researcher met with the school Principal up until the researcher conducted the semi-structured one-to-one interviews. Although the data collection took place before, during and after the AEP, the data collection will be discussed after the research procedure in order to promote the flow of the chapter. After the data collection, the data was analysed and the methods of analysis will then be

discussed. The researcher describes how themes were generated during the data analysis procedure by first coding the transcribed interviews and then categorizing the codes. After the data analysis, the researcher describes the steps taken in order to ensure validity, by means of triangulations and trustworthiness. Lastly, the researcher describes all ethical considerations.

## **3.2. RESEARCH METHODS**

### **3.2.1. Literature review**

An in-depth review of the literature was done in order to contribute to a better understanding of the nature and meaning of the youth at risk with MMLD and to guide the researcher during the preparation of the AEP, as well as in compiling the interview schedule.

Books, journals, dissertations, theses and internet sources were used for the preparation of this study. The researcher used various search engines and databases to gather literature for the study. The following search engines were used:

- Google
- Google scholar
- Internet explorer

The following databases were consulted:

- EbscoHost
- ScienceDirect
- SAePublications
- SABINETonline
- Scopus
- Academic search Premier
- Eric
- PsychInfo
- Sportdiscus

Keywords used in the search included youth at risk, personal functioning, interpersonal relationships, learning disabilities, mild learning disabilities, mentally mild learning disabilities, mentally mild youth, diverse youth, incarceration, crime in South Africa, interventions, adventure therapy, youth demographics in South Africa, risk, anxiety, programme planning, youth programmes, identity development, prevention, recreation, and adventure-based experiential programmes.

### **3.2.2. Research design**

In AEPs, small groups of seven to fifteen people are used in order to achieve the anticipated outcomes (Schoel *et al.*, 1988:63). A qualitative research design was used for two main reasons:

- Qualitative research does not need a big population sample (more participants in a study do not necessarily lead to more results).
- Qualitative research is concerned with the meaning behind certain answers, the researcher wanted to measure the role of an AEP by means of the learners' own experiences and perspective thereof (Mason, 2010:1).

There are five methods for conducting qualitative research (figure 3.1). Since qualitative researchers often develop the design as they go along and not necessarily at the beginning of the study (Fouche & Schurink, 2011:308), the researcher based the method used for this study on the following questions (Yin, 2014:2):

- Is the focus of the study to answers “why” and “how” questions?
- Can the researcher manipulate the answers of the participants?
- Are the boundaries between the context and phenomenon clear?

Based on the fact that the answer to all of the questions above was “yes”, the researcher based this study on a qualitative research design by means of a case study. A case study gives the researcher the opportunity to explore and describe a phenomenon by making use of various data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008:544). Case studies are unique in the sense that quantitative survey data can be incorporated together with the interviews and participant observations (Baxter & Jack, 2008:554). The researcher thus made use of the YAR3 questionnaire to measure the personal functioning profile of the MMLD learners, which was used to develop the outcomes of the AEP. Field notes and

one-to-one interviews were also used for data collection (the use of the YAR3 and the data collection will be discussed later in chapter).

Figure 3.1 shows the various methods of conducting qualitative research, as well as the numerous types of case studies. The type of case study used depended solely on what the purpose of the case study was, i.e. to describe, explore or compare the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008:547). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used an explanatory case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008:547). An explanatory case study sets out to link the implementation of a programme, in this case the AEP, to the effects the programme has, which was the role on personal functioning of MMLD learners.

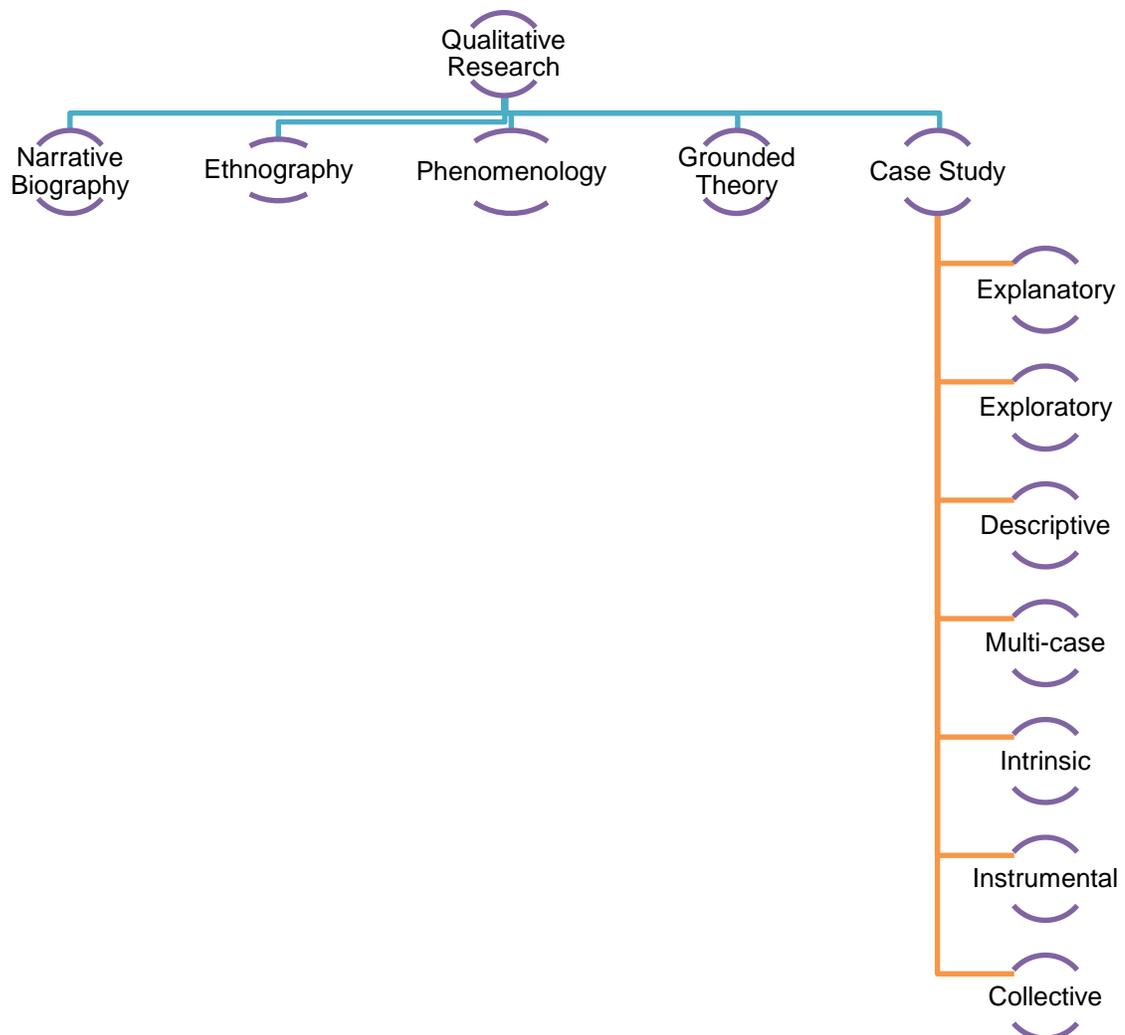


Figure 3.1.: Qualitative research design (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 547-549; Fouche & Schurink, 2011:312).

### **3.2.3. Sampling methods**

Sampling is the term used to describe the systematic selection of the object that will be studied (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006a:1). Sampling methods in qualitative research are less strict and more flexible than in quantitative research (Coyne, 1997:623). The first step in sampling is to decide whether to use random or purposeful sampling methods. For each of these sampling methods there are various sampling techniques that can be used (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006a:1). The sampling for this study was twofold and will be discussed as such. Firstly, the LSEN School was selected and secondly, the MMLD learners were selected.

The researcher made use of a purposeful sampling method to sample the LSEN School. The purposeful sampling method was done by means of criterion-based sampling techniques (Coyne, 1997:627). Although there are 456 LSEN Schools in South Africa, only three are situated in Potchefstroom in the North-West Province, namely, Die Wilge High School, E.S. Le Grange School and Ikalafeng School (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Die Wilge High School caters for learners with only MMLD and no other disabilities, whereas E.S. Le Grange School and Ikalafeng School caters for learners with mental- and physical disabilities (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Out of the three schools the researcher sampled Die Wilge High School for the purpose of this study. Die Wilge High School also offers boarding facilities which enabled accessibility towards the learners.

The purposeful sampling method was also used to select the learners that participated in the AEP. The researcher asked the residencies officer to select fourteen male learners in the hostel between the ages of 13-16 years, who will be interested in participating in the study. The researcher preferred male learners as research suggests that the typical risk-seeker is usually young and male (Ewert, 1989:62). The researcher also preferred the age group of 13-16 years of age, as this is the age where peers influence each other the most (Scheepers, 1997:40; Meyer, 2005:158). The learners that participated in the study also did not participate in after-school programmes, which meant they were available for the AEP which took place after school.

### **3.2.4. Research procedure**

The research procedure is discussed in the four phases as it took place; meeting with the school, completion of the questionnaire, developing the AEP and participation in the AEP. Although data collection was part of the research procedure, it is discussed separately.

#### **3.2.4.1. Phase 1: Meeting with the school**

A meeting was held with the school principal of Die Wilge High School where the purpose and procedure of the research, as well as the AEP was explained. After the school principal gave verbal permission to conduct the research with learners in Die Wilge High School, the researcher met with the residencies officer to arrange a date for the first meeting with the learners. At the first meeting with the learners, it was explained to the learners that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time without consequences, where after the learners had to sign an informed consent form (Appendix A).

#### **3.2.4.2. Phase 2: Completion of the questionnaire**

The YAR3 (Youth at Risk Assessment Scale questionnaire) was completed in the presence of the researcher and the researcher read and explained all the questions to the learners before the learners had to select an answer. The YAR3 was developed by Faul and Hanekom (2006) and it consists of 141 questions. According to Faul and Hanekom (2006:5) the YAR3 consists of a Cronbach-Alfa value of 0.89. The YAR3 uses a 3 level Likert scale with Yes/ Always, Maybe/ Sometimes and No/ Never as options for the questions. The YAR3 measures the following components that are relevant to the personal functioning profile of youth:

- Positive psycho-social functioning elements (perseverance, satisfaction and future perspective),
- Self-perception (anxiety and lack of self-worth),
- Trauma dynamics (frustration, mistrust, stigma and personal boundaries),
- Relationships (interpersonal with friends)

- Decision-making abilities (independency and responsibility).

After the questionnaires were filled in and the results analysed, it was outlined in three categories: need for improvement, warning and recommended range. It was presented on a scale varying from 0-100%. The values of each component are presented in table 3.1. A group report, as well as a report for each learner, with the results of the YAR3, was developed. The researcher made use of the results of the YAR3 to develop the outcomes of the AEP.

*Table 3.1: The values of test scores and group report scores.*

<b>Component:</b>	<b>Warning area:</b>	<b>Need for improvement:</b>	<b>Recommended range:</b>	<b>Personal functioning scores:</b>
Positive psycho-social functioning elements	64% - 70%	< 64%	> 70%	76%
Self-perception	30% - 36%	> 36%	< 30%	51%
Trauma dynamics	30% - 36%	> 36%	< 30%	41%
Relationships	64% - 70%	<64%	>70%	80%
Decision-making abilities	67% - 73%	< 67%	> 73%	67%

### **3.2.4.3. Phase 3: Developing the AEP**

The research study was based on a Strengths-based Approach. For that reason the researcher used the group report to determine where the areas with a recommended and need for improvement ranges fell (table 3.2).

*Table 3.2: Areas in recommended and need for improvement range*

<b>Recommended Range</b>	<b>Need for improvement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Relationship with friends</li> <li>• Perseverance</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Self-worth</li> <li>• Independency</li> <li>• Body-image</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frustration</li> <li>• Future perspective</li> <li>• Satisfaction</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Guilt feelings</li> </ul>

Through the use of the literature in Chapter 2 and the areas identified through the YAR3, the researcher was able to decide on the primary outcomes for the development of the AEP. The AEP was thus developed with the following outcomes in mind:

- Strengthening of inter-personal relationships
- Building trust
- Improving self-worth
- Being responsible
- Perseverance

The AEP was developed to take place in five sessions, after school for four hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The duration of the AEP was three weeks. The AEP was developed with four separate programmes (discussed hereafter). The researcher used a fantasy metaphor to bind all the programmes together in the facilitation sessions that followed every day after the programme.

#### **3.2.4.4. Phase 4: Participation in the AEP**

The first part was an orientation programme where the goal was for the learners to get to know each other better, to build relationships and to build trust between each other. This part took place in one session and was accomplished by doing initiatives, name games, communication activities, trust building exercises and ending with a thorough facilitation session. The orientation programme was completed by the whole group working as a team and only splitting up in two smaller teams with the last activity. The group was divided into two smaller groups to make the facilitation stronger and in preparation for the next part of the programme.

The second part of the AEP consisted of a low-ropes course, where the goals were again to build trust, as well as perseverance within each individual's tasks. This was achieved by incorporating three low-rope elements into the programme, in two sessions. The group of fourteen participants divided into the two smaller groups as at the end of the orientation programme. The two smaller groups were each headed by a programme leader (researcher and co-researcher) and completed the low-rope elements separately and out of sight of each other. The teams were given a certain amount of time in which

to complete each of the elements. After completion of the low-ropes course, the teams were firstly facilitated separately and afterwards as one group.

The third part of the programme was a recap programme which was done in one session. In this part the focus was to reiterate what was learned in the previous parts. The recap programme focussed on strengthening the trust that was built in the group, highlighting the importance of perseverance and showing the learners that all tasks are easier when you work as a team. This was done by doing one low-rope element as a group of fourteen, doing problem-solving activities and again concluding the session with facilitation.

The final part of the intervention involved a once-off high-ropes course where the learners had to rely on themselves and build their self-worth by completing the most difficult part of the intervention. Two elements on the high-ropes course were prepared for the learners. The learners were given a safety briefing on how to wear the helmet and harness and in which areas it is safe to walk before starting the activity. The learners were also shown how to belay as a group and the learners then had to belay each other under the supervision of the two programme leaders. The learners were encouraged to try at least one of the elements and had the option of doing both elements more than once. The learners that were afraid were encouraged to at least climb the ladder and go as far as they could. The whole group supported and encouraged each other. The high-ropes course was also concluded with a facilitation session.

### **3.2.5. Data collection**

The researcher made field notes during the activities and facilitation by observing the learners, how the learners behaved and how the learners handled the different situations. These notes were used in conjunction with the outcomes of the intervention, as well as the literature studied to compile the interview guide for the semi-structured one-to-one interviews.

### **3.2.5.1. Semi-structured one-to-one interviews**

The semi-structured one-to-one interviews are most commonly used when conducting qualitative research in the leisure, recreation and tourism fields of study (Ruddell, 2011:114). The semi-structured one-to-one interviews were used in order to gain insight into the participants' beliefs and perceptions after the AEP.

The semi-structured one-to-one interviews were conducted after the AEP. The researcher conducted the semi-structured one-to-one interviews on the school ground where the learners felt comfortable and safe. The purpose of the research and interviews were explained to the MMLD youth, as well as the planned duration of the interview. It was communicated to the MMLD youth that the interviews were confidential and that their names will not be made known. The learners understood that the interview could be stopped at any time. Only thirteen participants were interviewed, as one participant was no longer available. Each interview was planned to be between 20-30 minutes and guided by an interview schedule. The interview schedule was developed in accordance to the outcomes of the AEP and thus consisted of questions regarding peer relationships, trust, perseverance, self-worth and demographic questions. The interviews were planned to be open ended and there were provisions made for the learners to explain the answers. The interviews however turned out to last only 5-15 minutes. The researcher had to change interview tactics and change the questions into more close-ended questions so that the MMLD learners could better understand what was asked. According to Greeff (2011:353) the researcher is allowed to move away from the interview guide, but must decide how much deviation from the interview schedule is allowed. Although the researcher made use of close-ended questions, the researcher still gave the learners opportunity to elaborate on their answers and probed them to do so.

### **3.2.5.2. Field notes**

The researcher made use of field notes to gather preliminary data during the intervention process (Strydom, 2011:335). The field notes were taken during the activities, as well as after each day's activities during the facilitation session. Notes on common

characteristics and actions taken by the learners were made as well as notes on how the learners interacted with each other and how they handled difficult tasks.

### 3.2.6. Data analysis

The interviews were recorded with a tape recorder, after which the data was transcribed. The interview transcripts were typed verbatim and not adjusted to be grammatically correct (Greeff, 2005:286-313).

The researcher analysed the field notes and transcribed interviews in order to obtain a clear picture of the content, which was used to identify the codes. Open coding was used to identify the codes. Open coding refers to the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data (Schurink *et al.*, 2011:412). After the coding process, the researcher started to generate categories. This process of category generation meant the researcher had to search for categories that were both consistent to, as well as distinct from each other (Schurink *et al.*, 2011:410). The next step was when the researcher had to identify and label the relevant categories. The different categories that emerged were grouped together to form the themes (figure 3.2). A fellow qualitative researcher co-coded the field notes and interview transcripts in order to establish if the same categories and themes were identified. After the data was analysed by the researcher and co-coder, four main themes, each with its own categories, were identified. These four themes formed the bases for the discussion of the results.

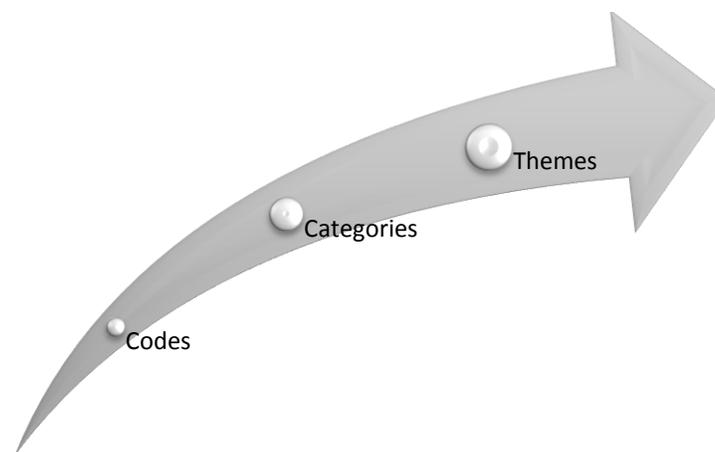


Figure 3.2: Process to identify themes

### 3.2.7. Validity and trustworthiness

#### 3.2.7.1. Validity

The method of triangulation is often used by qualitative researchers to prove validity and to ensure the results are rich and well-developed (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006b:1). Triangulation involves the empowerment of data by using one or more types of data to examine a problem (Padgett, 2004:230; Pitney & Parker, 2009:65). There are various types of triangulation. The researcher made use of the methods triangulation, as well as analyst triangulation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006b:2).

Methods triangulation can be described as when the consistency of the results is measured by the use of more than one method for data collection (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006b:2). In the case of this research study, quantitative data in the form of the YAR3 was used, as well as qualitative data in the form of the one-to-one interviews and field notes. The researcher also made use of previous research in the form of a literature review.

Analyst triangulation is when more than one researcher analyses the findings (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006b:2). For this research study the analyst triangulation was done by using a co-coder to generate the categories and themes identifies through the transcribed interviews.

#### 3.2.7.2. Trustworthiness

The researcher ensured that the research study was trustworthy by addressing the constructs set out in able 3.3 (Schurink *et al.*, 2011:419)

*Table 3.3: Measures taken to ensure trustworthiness of research*

<b>Construct:</b>	<b>Criteria for construct:</b>	<b>Application to this study:</b>
Credibility <i>Did the research study do what it was set out to?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Triangulation takes place to contribute to a deeper more meaningful research project.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The researcher used various references in order to obtain the data, i.e. literature, questionnaires, field notes and individual interviews.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were frequent discussions with the study-leader/ co-researcher.</li> <li>• A thorough literature review was done in order to verify the data and need for the research.</li> <li>• Well known and established qualitative research methods were used.</li> <li>• The researcher used methods to ensure the honesty of participants.</li> <li>• Some questions were repeated to confirm answers given.</li> </ul>	<p>The transcribed interviews were co-coded and analysed. The inputs of the study supervisor were also obtained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision over the research project was done by an experienced researcher. The study supervisor was frequented with questions and asked for inputs and opinions.</li> <li>• Literature was gathered beforehand and continuously during the research project in order to stay on topic. The literature was used together with the questionnaires to plan the programme and interviews.</li> <li>• The choice of research methods was done by consulting recognized qualitative research sources.</li> <li>• Participants took part in the programme as well as the interviews voluntarily. It was made clear during the interviews that there were no correct or incorrect answers. The researcher also explained that she was from the University and was conducting independent research.</li> <li>• Questions were repeated to other learners and occasionally the same questions were asked twice to the same learner in order to confirm whether he understood correctly.</li> </ul>
<p>Transferability <i>The ability of the research to be generalised.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full description of the participants in the sample group.</li> <li>• A rich, full description of results was given.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposive sample was taken. Sample was thoroughly described.</li> <li>• The results are discussed with quotes from the participants weighed up against the literature.</li> </ul>
<p>Dependability <i>Shows consistency in research</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is done by a following a process of verification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proof of all steps taken was kept. How decisions were made were written down, how relevant literature was found and so forth. Each decision was made by following the same steps and repeating the literature search relevant to the decision.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data reduction by means of coding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-coding was done by another qualitative researcher. Her findings were compared to the findings by the researcher.</li> </ul>
<p>Conformability <i>Compares with objectivity</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show that results are found from the data and not changed to suit the researcher.</li> <li>• Show how research was done, in order for it to be replicated by another researcher, if need be.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus between the results of the researcher and co-coder.</li> <li>• Quotes made by participants are used in results.</li> <li>• Triangulation takes place between the literature, transcribed interviews, field notes and results.</li> <li>• Full and complete research methods are described.</li> </ul>

### 3.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical consent was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (NWU), Potchefstroom Campus (NWU-00125-11S1), and informed consent was obtained from the principal of the LSEN School and the learners themselves before the onset of the intervention. The participants also had to give verbal and written consent (Appendix B) for the interview to be recorded on tape. The data gathered from the questionnaires as well as the interviews were handled confidentially and the participants remained anonymous. The data were not altered. The raw data; the completed YAR3 questionnaires, the original interview recordings and field notes will be stored in the office G14, building K4 of the NWU, Potchefstroom campus. All the data will be stored for a minimum of seven years. After the recordings have been transcribed and the information together with the field notes have been typed it will be stored on the network drive of the NWU, to ensure that it won't be damaged or lost. Only the researcher will have access to this data.

### 3.4. SUMMARY

The researcher started this chapter by explaining how a thorough literature study was done. The researcher listed the keywords used as well as the Databases' and search engines where the keyword was used. The literature was used as a guideline before

data collection. The literature was also used as part of the triangulation to prove the results valid and trustworthy.

After the literature review was explained, the researcher explained why the qualitative research design was used. The two main reasons was that the qualitative research design makes use of smaller sample sizes and the qualitative research design focuses on the participants' experiences and own views. In order for the researcher to follow the qualitative research design the researcher decided to make use of the case study method. A case study method is valuable when using this type of programme for MMLD learners because of its flexibility and rigor. The case study also makes use of various data collection methods, including qualitative methods. The YAR3 questionnaire, as well as participant observation in the form of field notes and lastly semi-structured one-on-one interviews was used to gather the data.

The results of the YAR3 were used in conjunction with the literature review to determine the outcomes for the development of the AEP. The primary outcomes that were identified include strengthening of inter-personal relationships, building trust, improving self-worth, being responsible and perseverance. The researcher developed the AEP to consist of four programmes, i.e. an orientation programme, a low-ropes course, a recap programme and lastly a high-ropes programme. The different programmes each addressed different outcomes. Each session was facilitated in order for the learners to reflect on the learning that took place.

The data was gathered before, during and after the AEP in order to form a whole picture of how the outcomes were achieved. Before the programme the learner completed the YAR3, during the programme the researcher made field notes and after the AEP the researcher conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The interviews were transcribed, where after the researcher analysed them. The researcher first indentified codes then grouped the codes together to get categories and thereafter formed the themes. The transcribed interviews were co-coded by another qualitative researcher in order to ensure that the same themes were identified. This was especially important because some of the interviews were in Afrikaans and one interview was held with the use of an interpreter. The four main themes that were identified will be used to discuss the results in chapter 4.

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# CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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- 4.1. INTRODUCTION
  - 4.2. PARTICIPANTS
  - 4.3. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
  - 4.4. TRUST
  - 4.5. SELF-WORTH
  - 4.6. PERSEVERANCE
  - 4.7. SUMMARY
- 

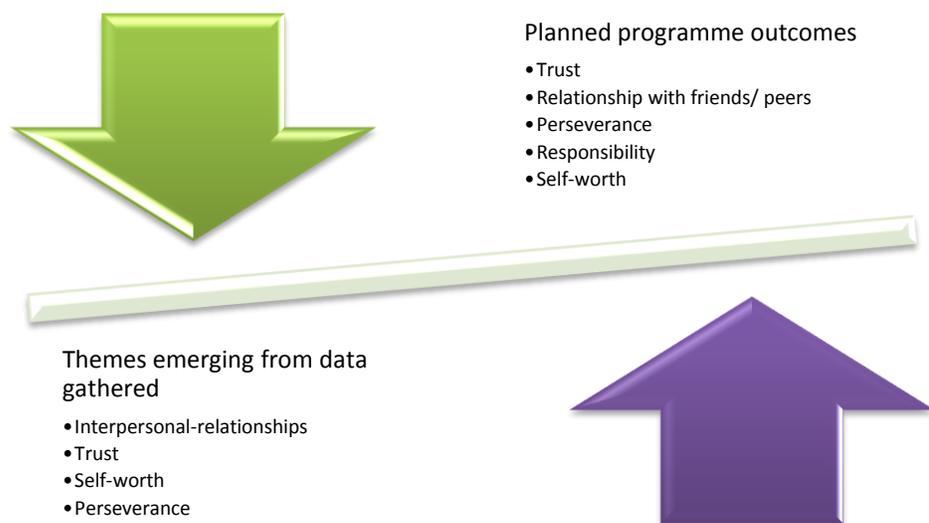
### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research results and to interpret the finding in a meaningful way through literature which stems from the literature review in Chapter 2.

For the purpose of the research findings, the planned programme outcomes was compared against the themes that emerged from the analysis of data as presented in figure 4.1. Even though the AEP was planned with the outcomes identified through the YAR3, as indicated in Chapter 3, the data analysis indicated that some themes overlapped with the intended outcomes of the AEP. These overlapping themes were used to determine if the outcomes of the AEP was met and ultimately if the AEP had a positive effect on the personal functioning of MMLD youth.

The discussion of results will firstly look at the demographic profile of the learners that participated in the AEP. The demographics of participants play an important role in establishing a profile of the learners and are discussed first. The chapter further discusses the overlapping themes/outcomes in the same order as the outcomes were planned for the AEP. Inter-personal relationships are thus discussed after the

demographic profile. This section gives insight into the learners' interpersonal relationship with each other before the AEP and how the AEP helped them improve on that relationship. The next section explains how the learners' perceive their own abilities to trust in others and why it is easy or hard for the learners to build trust in others. The following section is regarding learners' self-worth. In this section the researcher firstly determined how the learners felt about themselves and if their opinions had changed during the course of the AEP, where after it was determined whether the learners believed in themselves regardless of what they thought they were worth. The last section discusses perseverance. The researcher established what perseverance meant to the learners and how they applied it in everyday live.



*Figure 4.1: Planned outcomes in comparison to emerged themes.*

The learners are identified with a letter from (A) to (M) in order to distinguish between the interviews and the quotes taken from them.

## **4.2. PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS**

As indicated in the previous chapter, fourteen male learners from a LSEN School were selected for the study. All fourteen learners participated in the AEP. Between the AEP and the data collection, one learner left school and was therefore not available for the interviews, thus only the results of the thirteen (n=13) that were interviewed will be

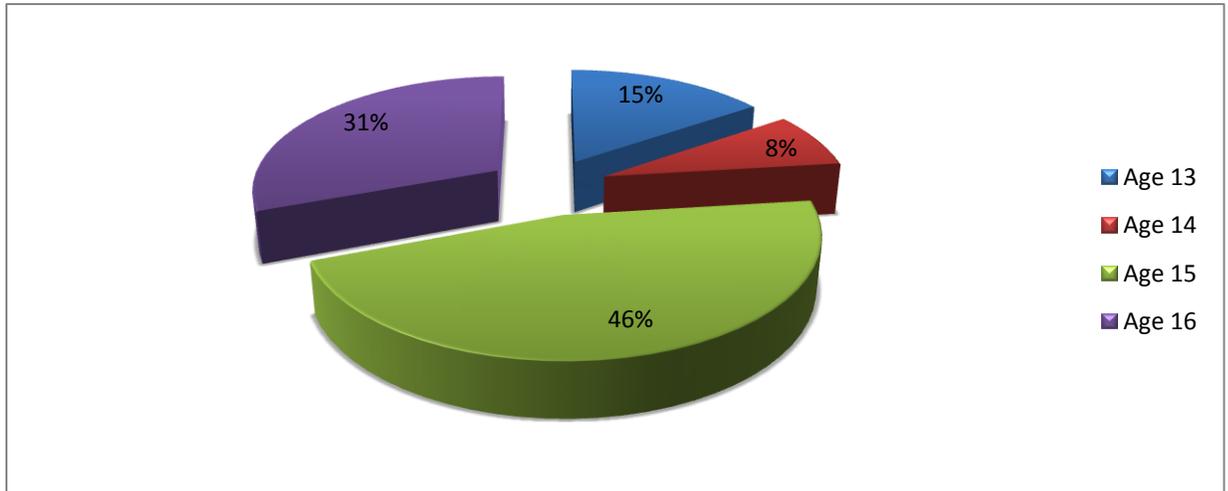
discussed. All the learners that participated in this research study lived in the school hostel, which is situated on the school grounds. From the interviews the researcher gathered that the learners' parents lived in small towns in the North-West and Free State province in South Africa.

The demographics for these learners will be categorised according to their age, language and race. The researcher selected only male participants due to suggestions from previous research that the typical risk-seeker is usually young males (Ewert, 1989:62). It is also for this reason that male learners are more prone to juvenile delinquency than female learners (Ewert, 1989:62) and seemed like the ideal population gender for the AEP.

#### **4.2.1. Age of sample group**

When looking at the age compositions of the sample group (n=13), it is apparent that the majority of MMLD learners were 15 years of age, and comprised 46% of the group. The minority of learners were 14 years of age and only comprised 8% of the total sample group (Figure 4.2). The composition of the sample group can be ascribed to the higher motivation of 15 and 16 year old youth to belong somewhere and be a part of something. As literature shows, the older youth are, the more they rely on their peer-relations and the more they want to fit in with their peers (Scheepers, 1997:40; Meyer, 2005:158).

The typical age of a learner in Grade Eight (first year of High School) in a mainstream school in South Africa, is 14 years. According to the school principal, Mr Boshoff (2013), learners are allowed to Die Wilge High School either because they have failed Grade Eight twice in a mainstream school or the learners is admitted from farm schools in the area and they are behind in normal school work. If a learner is allowed to Die Wilge High School because of failing Grade Eight twice, the learner will typically be 16 years of age. If however the learner was allowed to Die Wilge High School coming from a farm school or with no formal education thus far, he will typically be 13 years of age. It is thus clear that learners between the ages of 13 and 16 will be in the same classes or on the same level of academic functioning (Mr Boshoff, 2013).

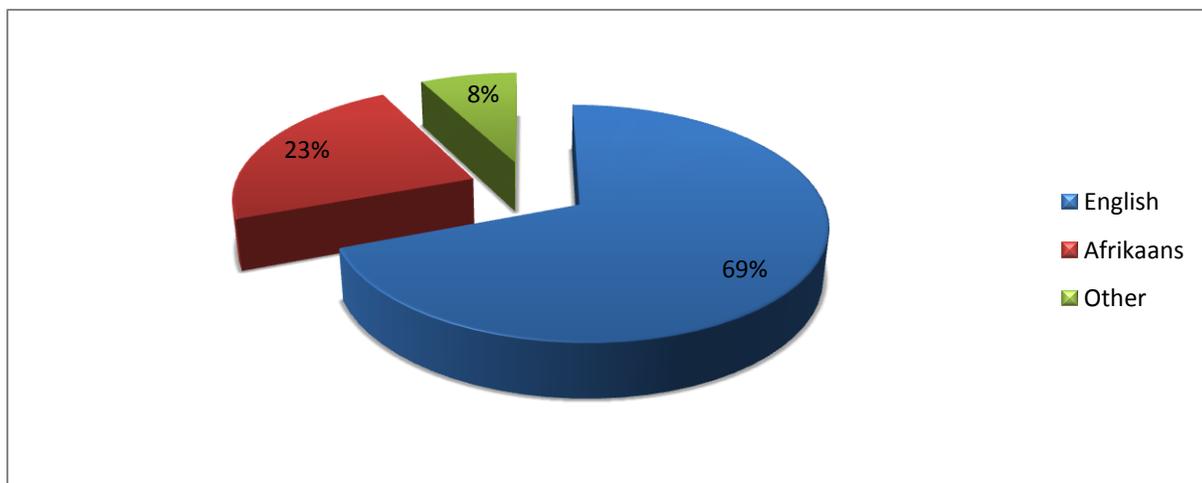


*Figure 4.2: Age of sample group.*

#### **4.2.2. Language of sample group**

The preferred language among the sample group was 69% English and 23% Afrikaans as indicated in figure 4.3. These two languages are the main languages used in the selected school for communication between teachers and learners. There was however one MMLD learner that could not speak English or Afrikaans and only understood English at a very basic level (Figure 4.3). This learner's native language is Tswana. It became clear to the researcher during the AEP, that this learner could understand enough English to complete the activities along with the other learners. It was however during the facilitation sessions that the language barrier became more troubling. The researcher noticed that when this particular learner was faced with a difficult task or a task that required cognitive functioning (i.e. the facilitation sessions and interviews), the learner took advantage of the language barrier between him and the researcher. The researcher overcame the language barrier by having another student, of this student's choosing, translate the tasks during the AEP and the questions during the interview.

Although the researcher experienced language as a small barrier, Mr.Boshoff (2013) does not see it as a problem and states that language does not influence the classes in the school on a noticeable level. This can be ascribed to the typical curriculum the learners follow in Die Wilge High School, where the focus in classes are more on skill building, rather than traditional school subjects and it is thus not crucial to communicate the theoretical knowledge to learners. It is thus easier for a teacher to explain for example a woodworks project than to teach mathematics (Mr Boshoff, 2013).

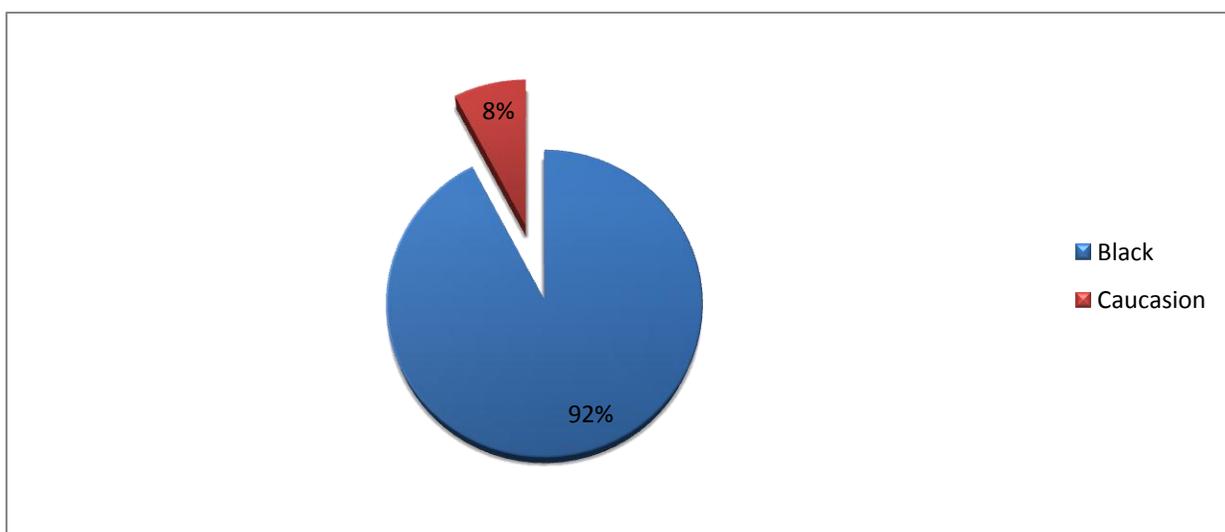


*Figure 4.3: Language of sample group.*

For the purpose of this study the interviews held in Afrikaans will also be quoted in Afrikaans, with the translations provided in English in brackets.

#### **4.2.3. Race profile of sample group**

According to figure 4.4, the sample group consisted of 92% Black MMLD learners and 8% Caucasian MMLD learners. Even though the majority of learners were black, the researcher could not find any previous research that suggested that race will have an influence on the experience of MMLD youth participating in an AEP.



*Figure 4.4: Race population of sample group*

### 4.3. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

To determine whether the learners had an established inter-personal relationship between each other, the researcher asked them if they knew each other before the programme. This question was meant to gather the perspective of each learner on the relationship they had with each other before the programme (Figure 4.5).

It was important for the researcher to understand how the learners perceived their relationship with each other before the programme, through the use of the YAR-3, in order to establish whether it had improved or not. The learners had to describe their relationship before the programme and six of the thirteen learners described it as “good”, for example learner (A) said: “yes ma’am [we have a good relationship]” while learner (K) said: “it was OK”, which could still be portrayed as a positive relationship. This is in contrast to the literature in the previous chapter, where researchers found that about 75% of MMLD learners suffered from social impairments (Kavale & Forness, 1996:233). These MMLD youth seemed to have a good interpersonal relationship with each other before the programme, but when the researcher asked if they knew each other before the programme most of the learners indicated “no [did not know all of them]” or only “some of them”.

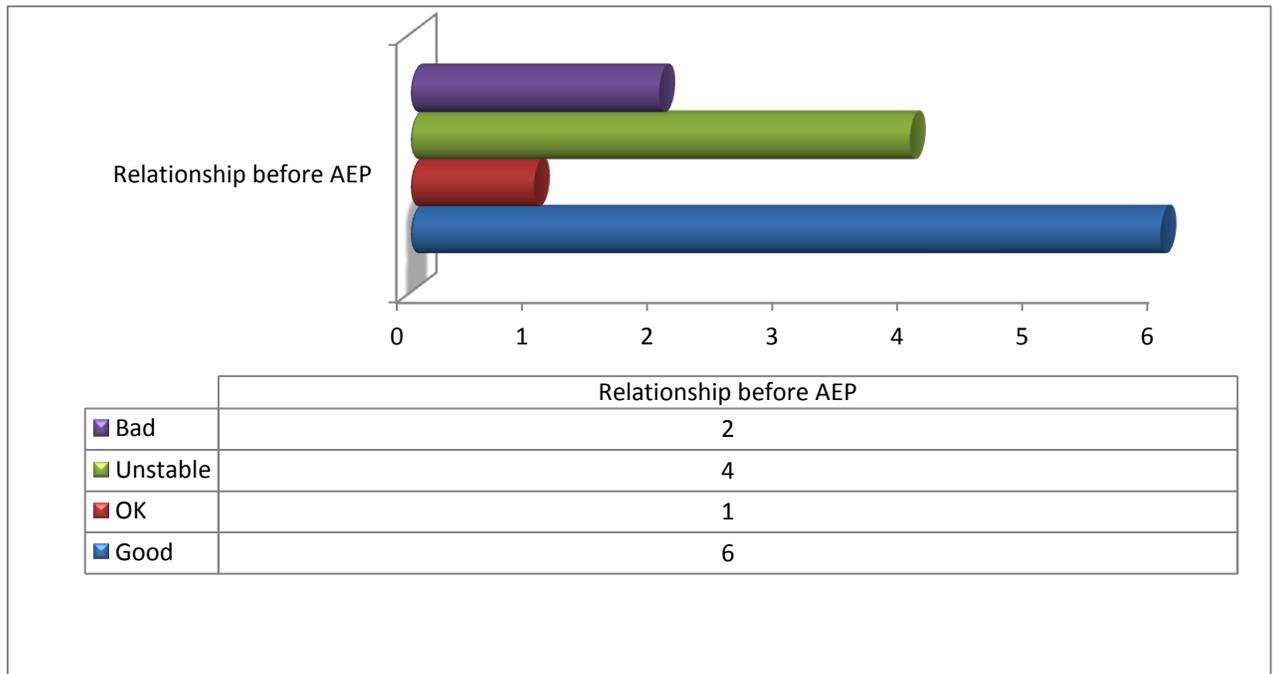


Figure 4.5: Interpersonal Relationship before AEP

It is therefore questionable if the learners truly understood the meaning of “having a good relationship” with someone else. This however justifies why the other six learners described their relationship with each other as (M) “*onstabiel* [unstable],” (B) “sometimes difficult” and “bad”. These negative feelings towards interpersonal relationships as explained by learner (M) when he said that “*wel die groep se verhouding voor die tyd was nie helemal constant nie, dit was baie onstabiel* [Well, the group’s relationship before was not always stable, it was very unstable]” and (J) “no [we did not have a good relationship]” correlates with the characteristics of MMLD youth (Inesia-Forde, 2005:9). All thirteen learners were asked individually about their experiences and the effect the programme had on their interpersonal relationships. From the results of the interviews, 92% of the learners indicated that the programme did have a positive effect on their interpersonal relationships; (D) “yes, I think that it has improved for the best”. This correlates with the research done by Louw (2008:107, 134) as well as by Witt and Crompton (1996:3) which states that an AEP is an effective scientific method used to develop intra- and interpersonal skills. As mentioned by a learner, it is these interpersonal skills that help the learners build interpersonal relationships; (B) “it is easy, cause now I know how, how can I handle them [the other learners] and how to make them listen to me”. MMLD learners tend to be hypersensitive to social cues and emotionally unstable, this leads to social mistakes such as overreaction and the incorrect interpretation of non-verbal communication (Settle & Milich, 1999:209). Other learners described their improved relationship as (E) “*ons het, ja, ons het maaitjies geword* [we became friends]”, (I) “I learn to play with friends” and “I learned to work together and to work as a team”.

When questioning them as to which aspects of the programme aided them in building interpersonal relationships they responded with (A) “because we worked together...”, (D) “we play, just like a team, we bonded” and (M) “om vriendskap te hê en deur ‘n span te werk [to have friendships and teamwork]...”. As stated in the literature, participation in an AEP can improve the social skills of youth (Gass, 1993:45; Howard & Peniston, 2002:4; Louw *et al.*, 2008:177). These social benefits include tolerance and understanding towards others, cooperation when working in teams, opportunities for youth to make their own decisions, it strengthens peer group relationships and creates a positive outlook on life (Gass, 1993:44; Long, 2001:103; Howard & Peniston, 2002:5).

Two learners mentioned that “to be all together and have, have a laugh, love each other. To not thinking of bad things, just showing us some better futures” (L) and “we did learn to help and respect, to be a kind person, to show the respect and show good manners” (D). These responses correlate with the literature and the intended outcome of the programme where the learners had to understand the importance of group relationships. Working within the group was not always the easiest task as mentioned by the literature, that the interactions and relationships that youth have may have a negative effect on their perceptions about their own competencies, skills and self-definition (Stumbo, 1999:3; Ungar, 2006:3; Masten *et al.*, 2009:118). This was evident in learner (D)’s explanations that “in the beginning it was tough together, but we must manage to get along, to complete the games”. As indicated in figure 4.6 only one learner (F) expressed that he felt the interpersonal relationship stayed the same after participation in the programme; “no madam [the relationship between us did not get better]”. But his response can also be ascribed to the fact that he felt they already had a good interpersonal relationship before the programme. This response only strengthens the researcher’s assumption that the learners do not completely understand the meaning of an interpersonal relationship.

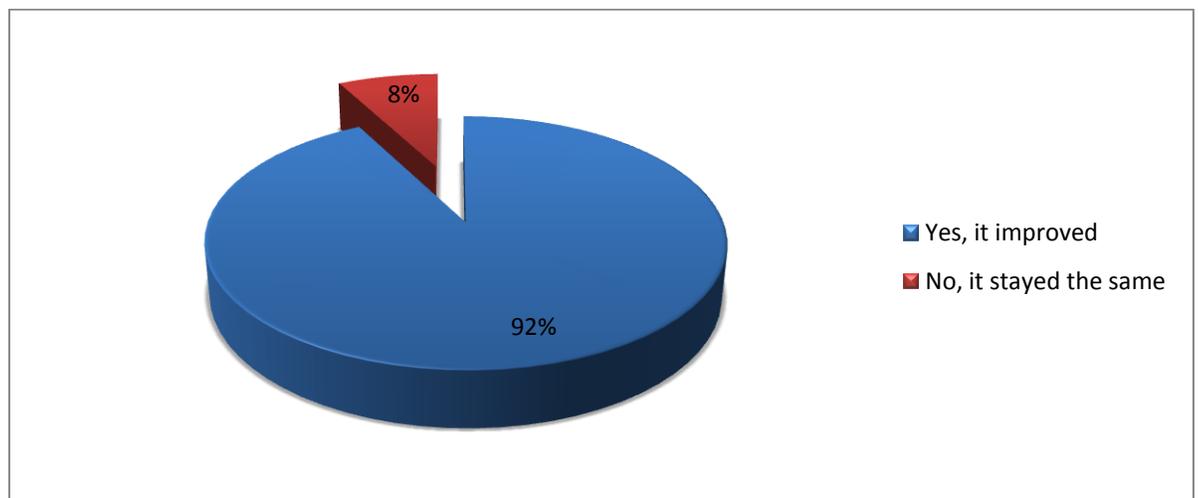


Figure 4.6: Change in Interpersonal relationship

#### 4.4. TRUST

According to Devalia (2013:1) to have trust in someone is to believe that that person will behave in the best possible way, to believe that that person will be there for you and to believe that the person will act with integrity. Trusting in one another is a fundamental part of being able to build quality relationships, and Devalia (2013:1) further describes the nature of trust as acting with honesty and integrity, communicating openly, keeping promises and meeting your obligations (Figure 4.7).

The AEP focused on trust between the learners, as well as trust in general. Figure 4.8 presents the answers to the researcher's questions related to the youths trust in others. Learners were asked if it was easy for them to trust in other people before the AEP, to which the majority of learners replied "ja [yes] it is easy". This was however in contrast to the field notes made by the researcher, where most of the learners could not trust each other at the beginning of the AEP. The researcher especially noticed this when the learners had to complete trust activities and one or more learner were blindfolded and seemed anxious or worried.

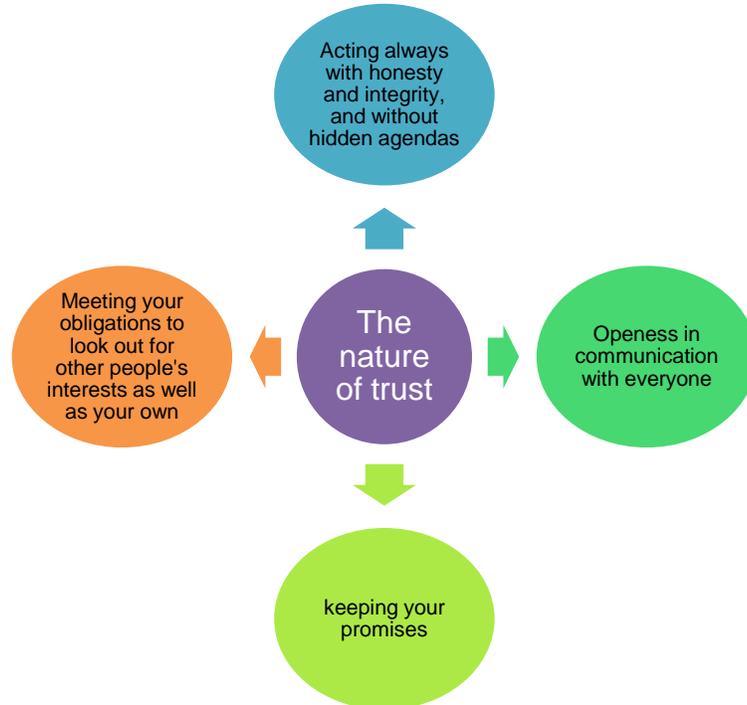


Figure 4.7: The nature of trust (Devalia, 2013:1)

After the question whether the learners trusted easily or not, the researcher further more wanted to know the reasons therefore. It was clear that the learners were more prone to put their trust in the researcher than in other learners. This can be ascribed to the learners feeling safer around the program leaders, like learner (J) explained “*hulle wil nie ek moet kry seer* [they don’t want me to get hurt]. *Dit is hoe ek hulle trust* [that’s why I trust them]”. The researcher also noticed that the learners that knew each other also trusted each other more easily. (M) “*Partykeer is dit maklik, soos, soos jou beste vriend* [sometimes it is easy trusting in others if it is your best friend]”, (L) “he is my best friend, I do trust him” and (H) “then I don’t trust him [if he is not your friend]” were some of the answers given as to why it was easier to trust certain people during the programme. This can be explained by research showing that during the adolescent years, youth gain more independence from their parents by sharing more intimacy with friends, which creates feelings of trust between them (Scheepers, 1997:40; Meyer, 2005:158). It is also easier to trust in your friends because friends keep their promises, communication is open between friends, friends are honest with each other and can depend upon each other (Devalia, 2006:1). However, trust built upon friendships can also be problematic due to youths possibly making friends with other youth whom are juvenile delinquents (Cape gateway, 2004:1).

According to the literature, MMLD youth react to their circumstances of poverty, poor family functioning and even their lower academic achievement, by mistrusting and rage (Munson, 2002:32; Mallett, 2012:10). Although the majority of learners stated that they trust easily, it is still important to note that for some learners trust did not come easily. One learner (H) explained that he does not trust people because of the “trouble” they bring or as another learner explained (M) “*want maak nie saak hoe jy mense vertrou nie, hulle sal nogsteeds goeters doen* [it doesn’t matter how much you trust someone, they will still do things]”. Although trust within the group was difficult at times, especially in the beginning with the trust activities (willows in the wind, trust run) and the low ropes, five learners still said that the AEP helped them built trust with the other learners. The learners explained the AEP (A) “helped me to get trust in people”, (D) “some, some of them, I don’t know them well. I must learn some people things before I put my trust in them” and (I) “...when I am going there [the programme] I am not trust someone, but when I am there, I am trusting someone”. This correlates with literature which states that an AEP creates an environment for youth at risk to develop new friendships and feelings,

and gives them the opportunity to raise their opinions without fear of judgement or rejection (Howard & Peniston, 2002:4). Like learner B said, “because sometimes you don’t know how does the person work, or what does he do”, and that makes it difficult to trust one another. The AEP however, did help learner B “to learn about them [the other learners]” and that helped them built trust in each other.

The researcher also observed how the learners’ trust in each other grew over the course of the programme. During the first trust activity, namely willows in the wind, the learners struggled to keep their bodies stiff and trust that the other learners would not let them get hurt. It was only once the researcher also took part in the activity that they started to relax and trust each other, but during the low-ropes there were also times when the learners couldn’t trust each other completely like with the spiders web. The larger / taller learners were also afraid that the smaller / shorter learners would not be able to pick them up and this hindered their performance during the low-ropes course. The true trust test however came with the high-ropes course, where the learners had to belay each other. They surprised both the researcher and themselves by the amount of trust they were able to put in each other. All the learners attempted at least one element on the high-ropes course and although many of the learners were afraid to go too high, they had no problem letting go and being lowered to the ground by the rest of the group.

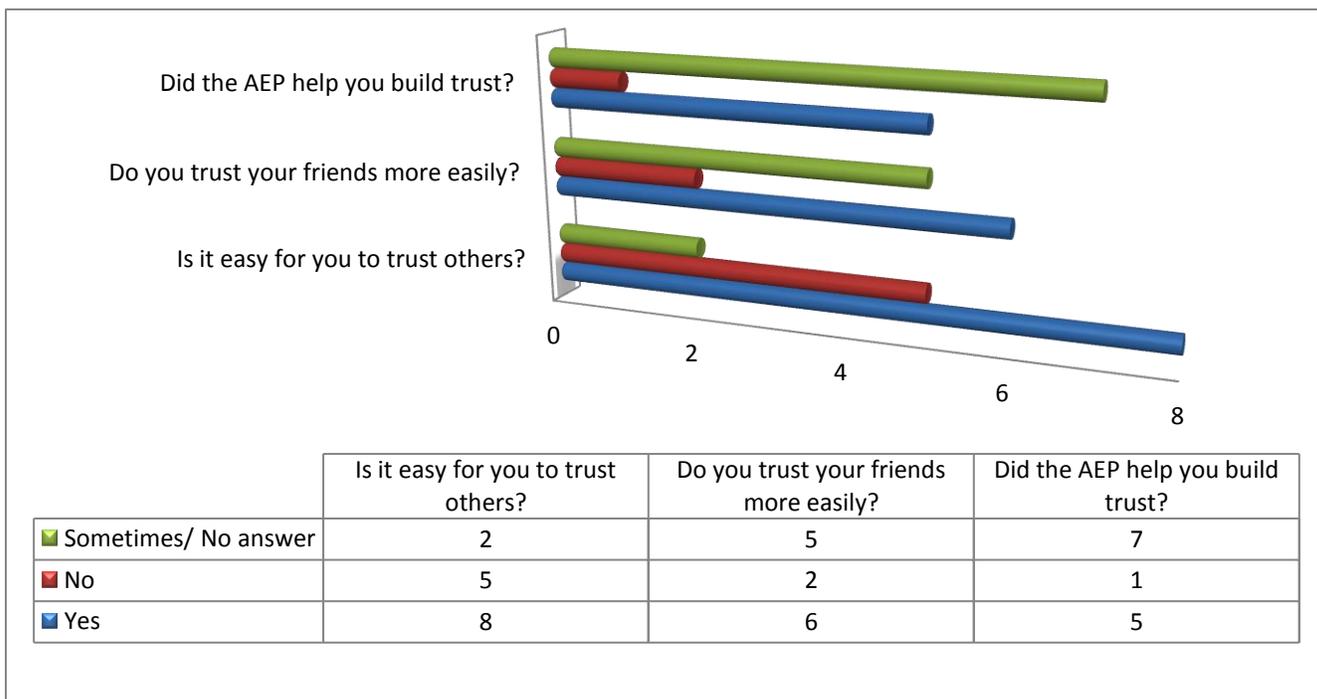


Figure 4.8: Trust in others

### 4.3. SELF-WORTH

According to literature the sense of individual self-worth as an adult depends on whether competencies were attained during the adolescent years (Moote & Wodarski, 1997:147). Youth in the high and imminent risk categories, such as MMLD youth, often have a distorted self-concept, which affects the learners' self-esteem negatively (Stumbo, 1999:3). This is however in contrast to what the learners answered when asked how they felt about themselves before the AEP. The majority of the learners said they liked themselves (Figure 4.9), which shows a positive self-image. Although most of the learners had a positive self-image before the AEP there was one learner's response about himself that can be interpreted as negative. Learner (B) described how he felt about himself as "*ek het skaam gevoel juffrou* [I was feeling shy]". The other learners described how they felt about themselves in a positive light, for instance (A) said, "I like myself Ma'am", (K) "sharp [slang for feeling awesome or good]" and (M) "*ek voel baie trots op myself* [I feel very proud of myself]". Learner (D) however described how he felt about himself as "I feel, I was feeling great, sometimes I feel not great, but I must feel great, confident". This shows that the learner had days were he felt less positive about himself. Research by Carr (2006:28) support these fluctuating emotions of the learners and describes them as emotional highs and lows. This variety of perceptions that the learners had about themselves, and even about themselves at different times through their lives, can be ascribed to the interactions they had with other people, since interactions and relationships that youth have can have a negative or positive effect on their perceptions about their own competencies, skills and self-definition (Stumbo, 1999:3; Ungar, 2006:3; Masten *et al.*, 2009:118).

Although the majority of learners already had a positive self-image, they still felt that the AEP helped them improve on that. (A) "Yes ma'am [it improved]", (B) "it improved [what I think about myself]" and (M) "*ek het geleer nie om net kwaad te word en goeters uit te sort met die vuis nie* [I learned not to get mad and not to simply sort things out with my fists]", was some of the responses the learners had regarding the change that took place as a result of the AEP. This was supported by research which found that by increasing the MMLD learner's self-esteem and emotional intelligence these learners will learn alternative methods of dealing with aggression, which in turn will lead to increased adaptability, reduced delinquency and a reduction in the misreading of social cues

(Peniston, 1998:10; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000:33; Ross-Kidder, 2000:1; Inesia-Forde, 2005:11).

Active participation in the AEP required mental involvement and action, and was designed to ultimately lead to self-development. Adventure provides the opportunity for exploration, which leads to an extension of the self, which in turn leads to growth and lets the participant move towards fulfilment of his/her life (Hansen, 2002:35). This was evident in the reply of learner (M) on the question whether he thought the programme improved what he thought of himself, when he replied “*om beter van myself te dink en meer positief te dink* [thinking better of myself and being more positive]”, the same learner also provided the reason why he thought the programme helped him with self-development as “*jy het vriende om jouself te ondersteun en te sê, jy weet wat, jy kan dit doen* [you have friends that support you and tell you, you know what, you can do this]”.

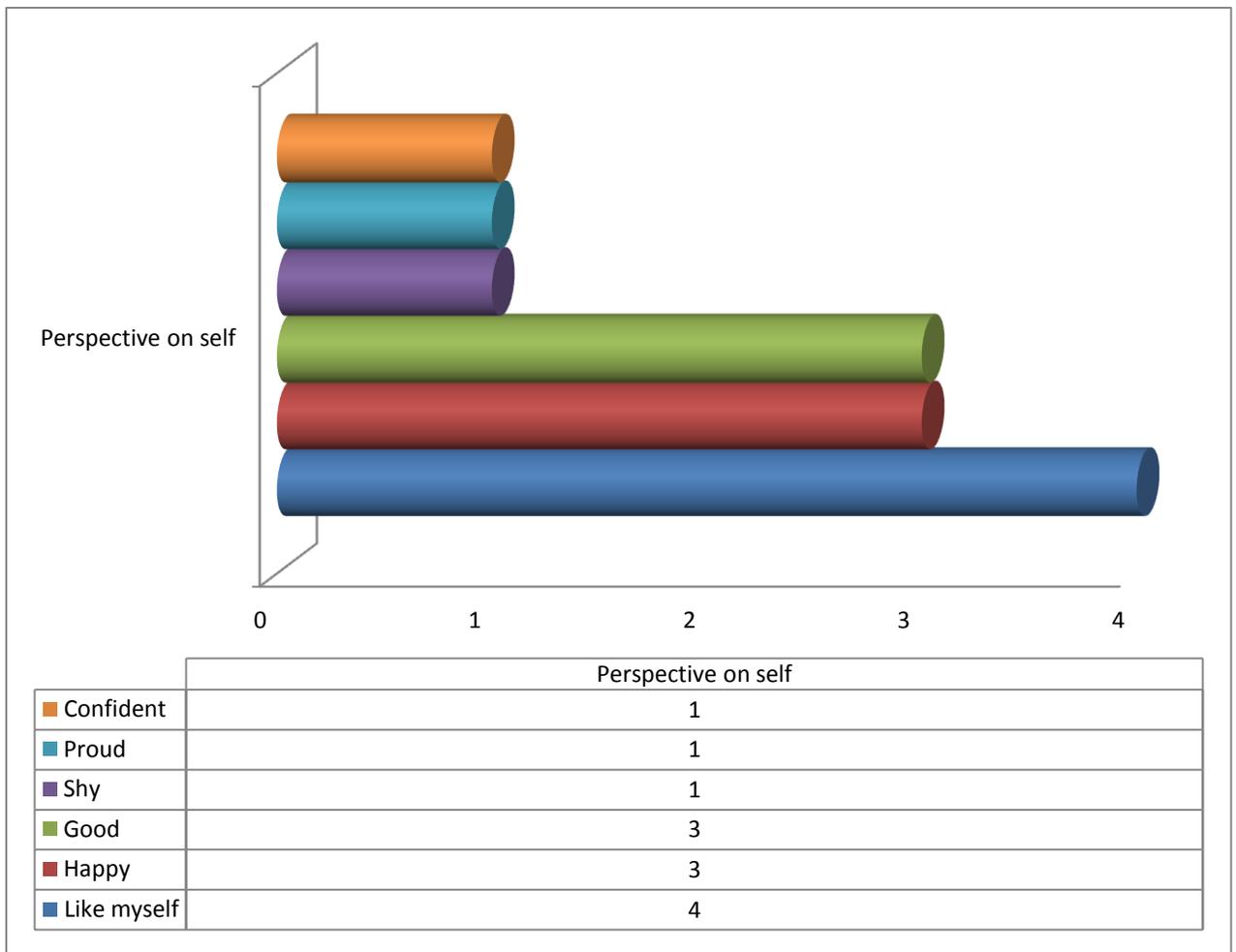


Figure 4.9: Perspective on self

After the researcher established how the learners perceived themselves, it was important to establish if they believed in themselves. When the researcher asked the learners if they always believed in themselves, all thirteen answered “yes”. This was however also in contrast to what the researcher observed during the high-ropes activity in the AEP. The learners needed a lot of support from each during this activity. It seemed that the learners believed more in each other to complete the activity, than in themselves. As learner (J) said “the others told me not to be scared, and I did it [the high-ropes course]”. It seemed that the fear of heights and not succeeding made the learners doubt themselves, one learner however conquered that fear (I) “when I got on the high ropes, I told myself I must not be scared, I must go, and I did it”. It is thus clear that the AEP provided the learners with a personal testing and learning stadium in which they improved on what they thought about themselves, subsequently improving their feelings self-worth (Ewert, 1989:79; Hansen, 2002:35).

#### **4.4. PERSEVERANCE**

Perseverance can be defined as a steady persistence in a course of action, especially in spite of difficulties or discouragement or as a method of reaching your end goal (Duckworth *et al*, 2007:1087). Working from this definition the researcher asked the learners if they normally finish something that they started with (Figure 4.10). Eleven of the thirteen learners replied “yes [I finish it]” without hesitation, but two learners (B and J) replied “no, sometimes”. This was also evident in the researcher’s observation and field notes taken during the programme, where the MMLD learners struggled with completing the spider’s web and some of the learners struggled completing the high-ropes course. However, all thirteen learners tried to complete the activities and showed perseverance. This sense of perseverance the MMLD youth experienced is however in contrast to the academic problems of MMLD learners, which include the learners’ lack of self-determination (Inesia-Forde, 2005:10). The fact that this group of MMLD youth showed a sense of perseverance can be ascribed to most of the learners having a good relationship with their teachers. This relationship is evident in learner (J)’s response that “...if I cannot *verstaan* [understand], I can, I can ask *meneer* [the teacher], he can help me. But if you don’t know, you must ask him, and, and he can help me”. Although some learners often relied upon their teachers being there to help them (especially when they struggle), learner (L) now realised that it depended on him whether or not he finished his

given tasks; “I do learn something, because at the first time I was a stubborn person. If I do something, I will not finish it. Because now, I do learn something, if I’m writing my homework, I’m finishing my homework personally”. Another learner (F) realised that it is not always easy to persevere as he described; “every time I am trying *juffrou* [the researcher]. When I don’t do enough *juffrou*, I am trying again”.

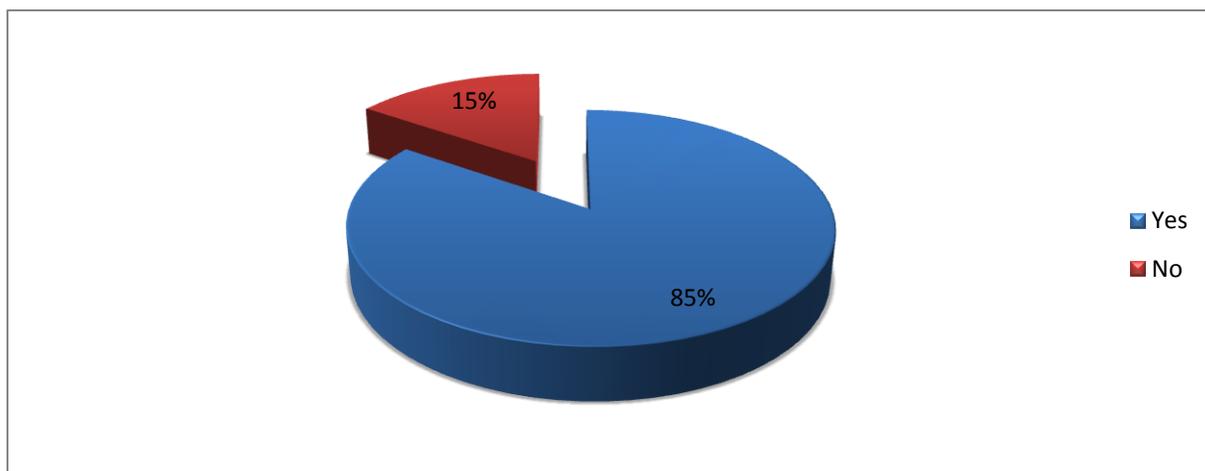


Figure 4.10: Persevering to complete a given task

According to Priest and Gass (2005:185) determination, cooperation, problem solving, and environmental awareness are often products gained through participation in an AEP. This statement can be supported by learners (D)’s statement that “the programme learns me that in life, you must complete everything. In like, I use to say, you must in school, we never finish our jobs in school, but I learned a lot. To finish things” and “*die high ropes, was ek bietjie bang gewees, bang ek val af. Toe glo ek aan myself, toe kry ek dit reg* [The high ropes, I was afraid I will fall, then I believed in myself and I completed it]”. By incorporating perceived risk in an AEP, the programme leader created the opportunity for the learners to experience fear (Ewert, 1989:70; Priest & Gass, 2005:48). Using that fear in an AEP enhanced the learners’ skills to deal with future fearful experiences (Ewert, 1989:70; Priest & Gass, 2005:48), as learner (M) pointed out “*maak nie saak hoe klein jy is nie, jy hoef nie bang te wees vir jou vreeste nie* [it doesn’t matter how small you are, you don’t have to be afraid of your fears]”.

The MMLD youth revealed in the interviews that one of the reasons they persevered was because of how it made them feel about themselves (Figure 4.11). The majority of learners experienced positive feelings when they persevered to complete the activities in

the AEP. “I feel happy” and “*ek voel trots of myself, en op my vriende* [I feel proud of myself and my friends]” were the feelings most experienced by the learners after completion of the AEP. But persevering through difficult tasks can also be tiring as one learner (L) explained “I do feel amazing and tired”. This does not necessarily show a negative feeling. Being exhausted after the completion of a task can lead to greater satisfaction (Tesnear, 2004:104). This correlates with what learners (M) said “*baie tevrede, want veral as dit moeilik is* [I feel very satisfied, especially when it was difficult]”.

Research also suggests that AEPs are a satisfying experience for youth that experience difficulties in their everyday lives, because it offers the opportunity for relaxation (Gass, 1993:44; Howard & Peniston, 2002:4). Learner (D) also explained that he “was feeling a little relieved, and proud of myself and the team”. Again, this feeling of relief does not have a negative meaning, but shows that the learner was relieved that he could finish the activities successfully. During the AEP the learners were challenged because they were taken out of their comfort zones (Priest & Gass, 2005:146), which helped improve the learners’ attitude and view of life, and made them more willing to change their behaviour (Long, 2001:103).

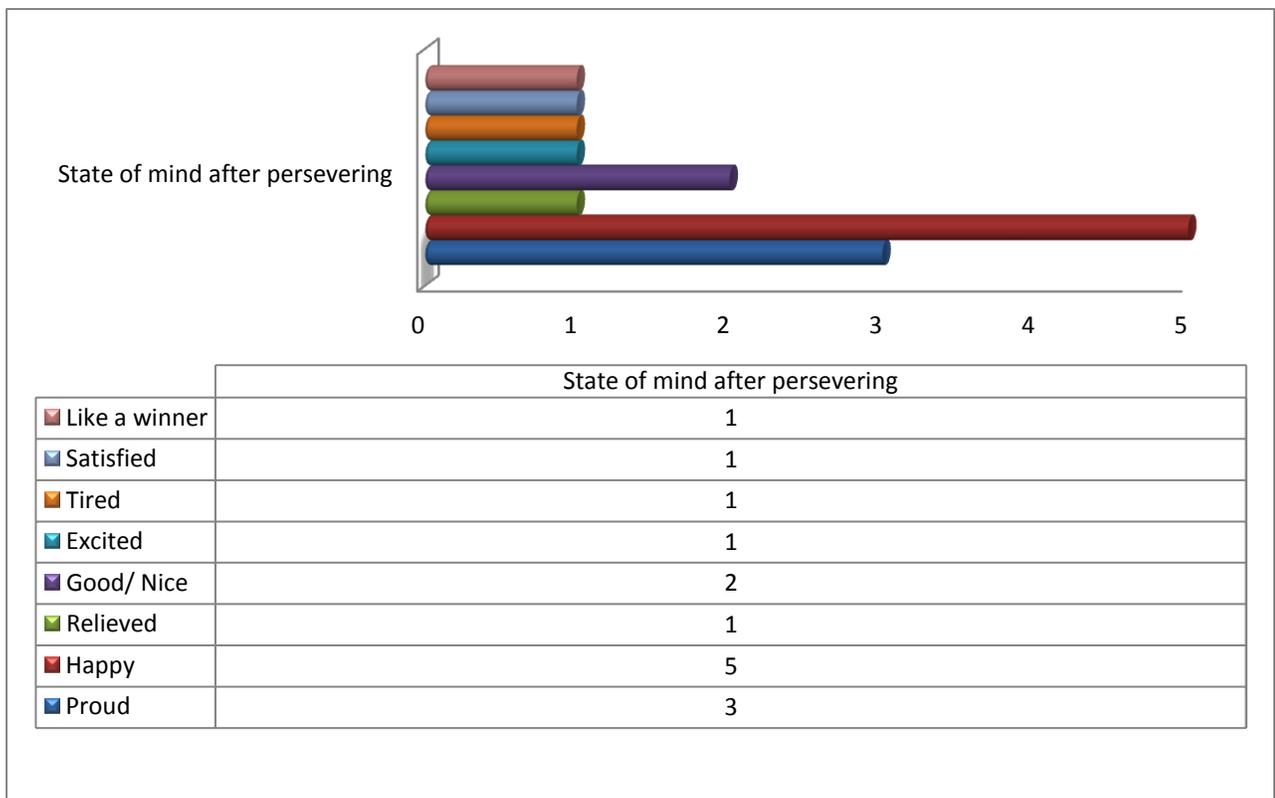


Figure 4.11: State of mind after persevering

#### **4.5. SUMMARY**

The results in this chapter were discussed in the same order as the questions were asked in during the interviews. The researcher planned this sequence to fit in with the outcomes of the AEP. The demographics were discussed first in order for the readers to understand how the learners looked that participated in AEP. It was also meant to give a more detailed description of what the circumstances of these MMLD learners are and how it came for them to be in Die Wilge High School.

The results of the interpersonal-relationships of the learners were discussed next. It was important to understand how the learners understand relationships and how they built their relationships. Since the learners are in a hostel, they have a very limited chance of building relationships with their family; this means that the relationships the learners build among each other are even more important than that of youth living at home. The results also showed that the learners depended upon their relationships with each other to complete the AEP. Although the learners felt that they trusted others easily, the results showed that the trust they had in others were sometimes superficial. The learners trusted in someone who helped them, or who was nice to them, but when the activities requested a deeper trust, many of the learners were scared that they would get hurt. The learners did however overcome that fear and in the end when the trust they had in themselves failed them, the learners trusted each other to be there for them.

In contrast to the literature (Stumbo, 1999:3) the MMLD youth of Die Wilge High School had a positive self-worth. What stood out for the researcher was that the learners were much braver and confident around each other. When they had to complete tasks on their own, especially with the high-ropes course, their confidence and bravado often failed them. This was when the encouragement of the other learners proved to be a driving force which helped them to believe in themselves again.

All the learners showed some sense of perseverance throughout the AEP. For some of the learners it was easy to persevere, as they felt confident in their abilities to complete the AEP successfully. Some of the other learners had a more difficult time persevering especially when the particular activity tested their abilities a little bit more. One of the learners wanted to quit during the balance beam element in the low-ropes course. This

student didn't have any balance and fell down almost every time. The learners was dragging down the group and felt like a failure, but the group decided on a plan to make the learner stand completely still and have everyone else move around him. In the end, the learner also finished the activity. It was also noted that when an activity took a long time to finish or if it became too difficult, the learners wanted to change the rules to make it easier, this especially happened with the spider's web. Even though the learners couldn't finish the spider's web, they still persevered with the rest of the AEP and didn't give up when it became difficult.

The AEP aimed to address the participant's cognitive, emotional and physical functioning through the use of specific, inter-connected and structured Adventure-based activities (Scheepers, 1997:71; Coatsworth *et al.*, 2005:362; Caldwell & Smith, 2006:399). Participants will be more aware of their capabilities when they have some experience than when they're just told about what they can achieve: (J) "you are going to win because you want to learn".

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## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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- 5.1. INTRODUCTION
  - 5.2. CONCLUSION
  - 5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS
  - 5.4. LIMITATIONS
  - 5.5. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH
  - 5.6. SUMMARY
- 

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

The research study set out to explore the role an AEP plays in the improving the personal function with regards to the positive psycho-social functioning, self-perception and relationships of MMLD learners. Although the positive impact of AEP on youth at risk has already been cited by many researchers (Priest & Miles, 1990:325; Witt & Crompton, 1996:35-95; Warrington & Wright, 2003:46-50; Bloemhof, 2006:1) very little research has been conducted on the role that an AEP has on MMLD youth in South Africa. This led to the research question of what role an Adventure-based Experiential Programme has on the positive psycho-social functioning elements, self-perceptions and relationships of adolescent youth with MMLD?

The results suggested that an AEP plays a positive role in the improvement of MMLD learners personal functioning. This chapter thus concludes by explaining exactly what is meant by a positive role and by determining if the research objective was met. The researcher furthermore makes recommendations, lists the limitations of this study and proposes areas for further research.

## 5.2. CONCLUSION

Learners with MMLD can be seen as youth at risk because of their academic and behavioural problems (NCD, 2003:55). Learning disabilities can increase the risk factors for delinquency and substance dependence (Ross-Kidder, 2002:1; National Council on Disability, 2003:55). MMLD is considered as an internal risk factor (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:58), however, protective factors surrounding learners with MMLD who is failing in school i.e. parental support and/or high self-esteem should be considered (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:45; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000:28). It is these feelings of low-self-esteem and confidence, need for acceptance and inability to read other people's body language, emotions and feelings that put MMLD youth at risk for delinquency and criminal behaviour (Inesia-Forde, 2005:11). In order to build resiliency, one need to build on self-esteem, peer group support and social competence of MMLD learners and by increasing the protective factors, one will automatically decrease the risk factors (Morrison & Cosden, 1997:58; Bloemhof, 2006:3).

Research has shown that by increasing the self-esteem and emotional intelligence of the MMLD youth, alternative methods to deal with aggression, increase of adaptability skills and reducing of delinquent behaviour can be taught (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000:28; Ross-Kidder, 2002:1; Inesia-Forde, 2005:11). Protective factors can be built by participation in an AEP, because AEPs are used to empower youth at risk to change their behaviour and emotions (Rosol, 2000:44; Warrington & Wright, 2003:49; Bloemhof, 2006:3; Prouty *et al.*, 2007:13; Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010:49). According to Louw (2008:107,134) and Inesia-Forde (2005:22) an AEP also has a positive effect on the development of inter- and intrapersonal skills, life effectiveness and personal effectiveness of youth at risk.

The role of the AEP could be seen as the part which the AEP played in the improvement of the personal functioning of MMLD learners. When the improvement has led to the bettering of the learners, that improvement can be seen as positive and the AEP would then have played a positive role. It was thus important to determine if the results obtained, was as a direct results of participation in the AEP. The AEP was developed with specific outcomes such as strengthening inter-personal relationships, building trust, improving self-worth, being responsible and perseverance, based on the personal function profile of MMLD learners before the onset of the programme. The AEP was

grounded in the Strengths-based Approach, which meant that the programme targeted the strengths of the MMLD learners in order to improve the personal functioning as a whole. AEPs are one of the most effective and exciting programmes to partake in with youth at risk, because it motivates youth to look at their lives, behavioural patterns and values. However, the mere participation in an AEP is not enough to make a change in youth's behaviour. Youth also have to go through Kolb's experiential learning process of planning, reflecting, follow-up and evaluation in order for the programme to really have an effect (Coetzer, 2007:64). Russel and Phillips-Miller (2002:422-424) states that the positive changes in youth can be ascribed to the following elements present in an AEP: (1) establishment of trust relationships with the facilitator and programme leader, (2) dynamics in the peer group, (3) facilitated reflection of the youth's AEP experience and (4) challenges set to the youth by the experience. The learners participated in a highly structured AEP with an element of perceived risk, which led the learners to achieve optimal arousal in order for personal growth to take place.

The objective of this study was to determine the role of an AEP on the personal functioning elements, with regards to positive psycho-social functioning elements, self-perception and relationships of adolescent youth with MMLD. The AEP helped the learners built more meaningful interpersonal relationships with each other and the AEP also helped the learners built trust based on interpersonal relationship. The AEP also led to the improvement of the learners' self-worth, which led to learners believing more in themselves and finally the AEP led to the learners realising the benefits of persevering. The AEP thus played a positive role in the improvement of the personal functioning of MMLD learners. The objective of the study was met by proving, through the results, that the improvement in the personal functioning profile of the MMLD youth was a direct result of participating in the AEP.

### **5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The researcher experienced many problems during the course of the research study. The following recommendations are made in order to simplify the process for future researchers:

- Make sure the learners understand what is expected of them. Many learners are initially interested because they think it will only be a nice-to-have programme to get them away from school.
- Set the learners at ease. Sometime the learners will simply give answers which they think is expected of them, as was the case during the first facilitation sessions where the answers and feedback were superficial. The more at ease the learners become with the researcher, the more honest the answers become.
- Lastly, make sure you gather as much data as possible, as soon as possible. It is difficult to go back to the school if you need more data. During this research study one participant took part in the AEP, but when the time came for the interviews, that learner already finished with school and the impact that the AEP had on him could unfortunately not be determined.

#### **5.4. LIMITATIONS**

The research study had certain limitations:

- A qualitative study was done, the findings can thus not be generalised to all MMLD youth in South Africa.
- The interview schedule had to be adjusted to accommodate the comprehensive language skills of the learners.
- The MMLD learners attended school during the course of the AEP. The AEP thus could not consist of only one programme over a few consecutive days.

#### **5.5. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

During this research study the researcher identified certain areas that justify further research:

- A study to determine if the same results will be found if the AEP is conducted on MMLD learners in other LSEN schools.
- Females process risk factors differently than males and react differently in group situation. A study can be undertaken to determine the effect of an AEP on different genders.

- Research to determine the effect of different adventure activities for example river rafting, horseback riding, hiking, rock climbing etc. on the personal functioning of MMLD youth.
- Research can also be done to determine how an AEP can be implemented by an LSEN school for continuous use.

## **5.6. SUMMARY**

The researcher set out to conclude the research study in Chapter 5. This chapter thus started by summarising the literature that led to the research objective, after which final remarks about the role the AEP played in the improvement of the MMLD learners' personal functioning was made. The researcher came to the conclusion that an AEP does play a positive role in the improvement of MMLD learners personal functioning, especially on the areas of interpersonal relationships, trust, self-worth and perseverance. Recommendations were made, the limitations of this study were listed and areas for further research were given.

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## APPENDIX A

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NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
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### LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

for the research project titled:

#### **The role of an Adventure-based Experiential Programme on the personal functioning of adolescent youth with Mentally Mild Learning Disability**

You are invited to take part in the research project “**The role of an Adventure-based Experiential Programme on the personal functioning of adolescent youth with Mentally Mild Learning Disability**”. The research forms part of a Masters degree study at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus.

The purpose of this study is to:

- Determine the role of an Adventure-based Experiential programme on the positive psycho-social functioning elements, self-perception and relationships of adolescent youth with Mentally Mild Learning Disability.

To be able to take part in the study, **you must be a learner at this school**. If you give your consent your name will be made available to the researcher and she may contact you for the intervention. You'll be asked by the researcher to complete a questionnaire which measures your personal functioning, you will also be asked to partake in an intervention after which there will be one-to-one interviews. The questionnaire must be completed before the intervention. It will be completed on the school grounds and in the presence of the researcher. The intervention will be held partly on the school grounds and partly on the grounds of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. The interviews will be held on the school grounds in a well-ventilated room and will last between 20 to 30 minutes. It will be very relaxed and you will be able to take a break any time you need to.

The researcher **guarantee confidentiality**, your real name will not be used, you will be asked to pick your own pseudo (fake name) and that will be used when reporting the information gathered during the questionnaire, interviews and observations. No one except the researcher will have access to the original information gathered.

What is in it for you, why would you want to participate in a study like this?

- The information gathered during this study will contribute to understanding the extent of the challenges associated with having MMLD.
- And secondly, it will provide insight into the possible necessity of Adventure-Based Experiential Programmes for MMLD learners.

When will this intervention take place?

The intervention will take place in the last term of the school year. The intervention will consist of a four part programme over the duration of three weeks.

It is important that you understand the following as well:

- The intervention will consist of Adventure-based activities, which may include **high risk activities** to take you out of your comfort zone.
- Participation in the project is completely **voluntary** and no pressure may be placed on you to take part.
- You are **free to withdraw** from the project at any time, without stating reasons and you will not be harmed by doing so. However, you are kindly requested not to withdraw from the project without careful consideration, since it may have a detrimental effect on the reliability of the project.
- By agreeing to take part in the project, you are also giving consent for the data that will be generated to be used by the researcher for scientific purposes as she sees fit, with the stipulation that it will be **confidential** and that your name will not be linked to any of the data.
- You are encouraged to **ask the researcher any questions** you may have regarding the project and the related procedures at any stage. She will gladly answer your queries. She will also discuss the project with you in detail.
- If you are a **minor**, the written consent of your parent or legal guardian is required before you participate in this project, as well as your voluntary assent to take part.
- The project objectives are always secondary to your well-being and actions taken will always place your interests above those of the project.

If you need any help, feel uncertain or have any questions regarding the project, feel victimized or have any other complaints related to the project or wish to terminate your participation to the project, please contact the researcher.

---

Yours sincerely  
Hanri Swanepoel

**THE PROVISION OF RECREATION SERVICES FOR YOUTH AT RISK WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MMLD LEARNERS**

CONSENT OF PARTICIPANT:

I, the undersigned \_\_\_\_\_  
(full name & surname) have read the information in connection with the project and have heard the oral version thereof and I declare that I understand it. I was given the opportunity to discuss relevant aspects of the project with the researcher and I hereby declare that I am taking part in the project voluntarily.

Signed at \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

LEGAL PARENT / GUARDIAN:

For all research with participants under the age of 18 year, the written consent of the parent of legal guardian is required.

I, the undersigned \_\_\_\_\_  
(Full name & surname of parent / legal guardian) the \_\_\_\_\_  
(relationship) of the participant mentioned above, hereby give consent for him / her to take part in this project and hereby exempt the NWU, as well as any employee or student of the NWU, from any liability, from any detrimental effect that may arise in the course of the project, unless such injury or damage is caused by the negligence of the NWU, its staff and / or its students. I further declare that I have read the information in connection with the project and I declare that I understand it. I was given the opportunity to discuss relevant aspects of the project with the researcher.

Signed at \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of legal parent /guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## APPENDIX B

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### Written consent to participate in the interview:

I want to thank you for meeting with me today. You already know me as Hanri. I would just like to talk to you about your experiences during the program I had with you. As you know, I am a student at the North-West University. The program we did was for my Masters degree and the interview is to capture your response to the program.

The interview should not take more than 40minutes. I will be recording the session, because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the interview, I cannot write fast enough to get everything. Because we are recording this, please speak up.

All responses will be kept confidential. You may even choose your own alias. All the information you give will only be accessed by the research team. Remember you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to and may stop the interview at any time when it gets uncomfortable.

Do you have any questions?

Are you willing to participate in the interview?

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Interviewee

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Date