

**The use of participatory visual strategies to assist grade 12 learners  
to make constructive choices for life after school**

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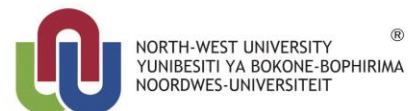
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May 2016

Potchefstroom

It all starts here <sup>™</sup>



# DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Signature

May 2016

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Date

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## I dedicate this study to:

- Almighty God. To Him be all the glory and honour:

*“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you*

*through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”. 2 Peter 1:2*

- My family, specially my husband, friends and colleagues who supported and encouraged me.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Many learners, who live in under-resourced rural and township areas under challenging socio-economic circumstances, face limited opportunities for further education and employment. This can influence their future life choices and could lead them to believe that they will not be able to realise their future career goals. If learners lose hope for their futures, they may develop a negative attitude towards life, with the possibility that they may make unhealthy and/or destructive life choices.

Life skills education, including career guidance education, is designed to play an important role in helping learners to develop in the relevant psychosocial skills to enable them to make constructive life and career choices. The compulsory subject Life Orientation in schools in South Africa aims to promote personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners through the provision of such skills. However, there is considerable evidence in literature that teachers are struggling to implement the Life Orientation syllabus in a way that would promote learner well-being and equip them with the skills to cope with life's challenges. This is particularly true for teachers who work in communities that face multiple socio-economic adversities.

Furthermore, career guidance within the subject Life Orientation is generally limited to the provision of information about specific careers and how to access them; this may be of little value to learners who need to be creative and identify ways to overcome social and structural barriers to pursuing their career choices.

Thus there is a need for life skills and career guidance intervention strategies that help learners to identify both the barriers to their career goal attainment, and the assets that they can draw on to minimise these barriers. Such strategies should be responsive to the life experiences of learners living in economically and socially disadvantaged contexts. Since the learners know their own context best, it is imperative that pedagogical interventions for this purpose should be participative and foreground the voice and experiences of the learners.

In this study, I explore the use of two participative, visual pedagogical strategies, namely mind mapping and photovoice, designed to encourage participants to make purposeful and constructive decisions concerning their future life and career choices. I implement and evaluate the strategies to determine how they could be used by teachers as a tool to help learners to think more critically, realistically and hopefully about their future life opportunities and to make constructive choices for life after school.

The study is underpinned by a socio-ecological understanding of resilience theory and the related hope theory. Both are grounded in positive psychology and give credence to local culture and context. Guided by a constructivist paradigm, my aim was to facilitate the construction of contextually relevant and useful knowledge by learners to help them to reduce their vulnerability to the risks that might derail their hopes and dreams for the future.

I worked with 13 Grade 12 Life Orientation learners, attending a life skills course I was presenting at a community centre in a rural area. Three forms of qualitative data were generated: (a) mind maps of the barriers learners thought they would face in terms of attaining their career goals, as well as the assets they could identify that would support them; (b) photo artefacts with narratives that depicted both assets and barriers and (c) a recorded group discussion. The two participatory visual strategies were chosen because they are flexible, proactive, encouraged participation and allowed participants to express perceived realities of their own lives in their lived contexts. The group discussion created a space where participants could elaborate on and discuss their visual representations of their assets and barriers to give more meaning to the various issues that affected their choices.

Analysed through the lenses of hope and resilience theory, the data revealed four themes: i) Learners can see hope for the future; ii) Relationships as assets and barriers to effective life planning; iii) Increase in sense of responsibility to plan for future; and iv) Increase in empathic awareness and willingness to help others. The findings indicated that the participatory exercises helped learners to identify risk and protective factors that could influence their future career and life choices. The

participatory exercises also helped learners to take responsibility for their futures and seek alternative pathways by making plans to minimise or overcome risk factors and draw on protective factors. The strategies inspired hope in learners; helped them to identify assets and barriers in their social ecologies; develop a sense of agency and responsibility for deciding on their futures; and to care more for other people, all of which will help them to make more constructive choices for life after school.

The use of the participatory visual strategies, mind mapping and photovoice, was effective to help orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices. The learners not only enjoyed the exercises, but it also helped them to identify hope for their futures and to unlock latent resilience. The study showed that the resilience and hope theories could be applied to help learners to plan for and make more constructive choices for life after school, contributing to the body of knowledge about resilience and hope.

The guidelines generated will help and inform future pre-service and in-service Life Orientation teachers to use alternative teaching methods so that they can adapt pedagogical strategies to be more contextually relevant.

**Keywords:** career guidance; hope theory; Life Orientation; mind maps; photovoice; resilience theory; socio-economic challenges

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
e.g.	For example
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NICE	National Institute for Health Care and Excellence
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
STI's	Sexually Transmissible Infections
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

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# CHAPTER 1: **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

In my capacity as a lecturer and teacher educator of the subject of Life Orientation, every year I offer extra classes in life skills to Grade 12 learners from five schools in the Rustenburg area of the North West province. An integral part of these extra classes is to provide learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are in the process of making choices for life after school, with appropriate and innovative guidance in career choices.

My past experience teaching life skills to Grade 12 learners from these five schools made me realise that these learners' aspirations for careers are in most cases realistically not attainable, due to the socio-economic challenges that they face. I furthermore came to realise that if I wanted to add positive value to these learners' way of thinking regarding their future life choices, I would need to know the contextual and circumstantial factors that influence learners' choices for life after school, and consequently impact the realisation thereof.

Accordingly, when the next opportunity for teaching these additional classes arose, I realised that I needed to implement innovative strategies, by which I could not only identify and understand the needs and challenges of individual learners with regard to making constructive choices for their lives, but also innovatively equip each learner with skills to make constructive choices for a better future. While searching the literature for possible strategies to use during teaching of the classes, it became apparent that Life Orientation teachers in general share a need for practical guidance intervention strategies which they can apply to equip learners with skills to make constructive life choices.

In this chapter I present a theoretical overview of the study, comprising of the orientation and the research rationale of the study, problem statement, the purpose of the study and the research questions. I elaborate on the theoretical frameworks



that guided the study and give an explanation of the terminology used. The research paradigm, design and methodology are summarised, followed by the trustworthiness of the data, the ethical considerations and the contribution of the study. I conclude the chapter with an outline of the chapters in this study.

## **1.2 ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH RATIONALE**

Learners in South Africa, particularly those in under-resourced rural and township schools, face limited opportunities for further education and training, due to socio-economic, educational and geographical barriers (Stead, Els, & Fouad, 2004). This could influence their future life choices (Botha, 2010; Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013). Learners that face such barriers may believe that they will not be able to pursue their dreams for the future (Burrow, O'Dell, & Hill, 2010). Loss of hope and negativity towards future life planning (Yu, 2013) may increase the risk that these learners may turn to negative or destructive life choices (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2006) and coping strategies (Duke, Borowsky, Pettingell, & McMorris, 2011). The destructive choices may include reckless health choices, which could increase their chances of contracting HIV or other Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) (Kelly, 2010), becoming pregnant or fathering unplanned children (Kanku & Mash, 2010), substance abuse (Seggie, 2012), becoming involved in criminal activities, juvenile delinquency (Dawson, 2009), and violence (Notshulwana, 2012; Visser & Routledge, 2007).

Worldwide, life skills and career guidance education is regarded as essential for building contextually relevant psychosocial skills (Watts & Sultana, 2003; World Health Organization, 1999). The Core Syllabus for Guidance of the Department of Education (Department of Education, 1995) explains guidance as systematic personal, scholastic-academic and career guidance to learners, so that their role in society may be meaningful (Malan, 2008).

In this study I used the term “career guidance”, as opposed to the term “career counselling”, as career counselling is regarded as a profession, according to the Medical, Dental and Supplementary Health Service Professions Act (Republic of

South Africa, 1974), regulated by the South African Medical and Dental Council. Career counsellors are thus qualified to provide career counselling, which includes counselling techniques, administration and interpretation of assessments, and career information resources (Watts, 2005). For the purposes of this study, I explore how Life Orientation teachers, who are generally not registered career counsellors, and can therefore only facilitate career guidance in accordance with the Careers and career choices outcomes in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education, 2011a), can assist learners in making constructive choices for life after school.

Life Orientation, a compulsory Grade 12 subject in schools in South Africa, proposes a holistic approach to promoting personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners. The Life Orientation Further Education and Training (FET) (Grade 10-12) curriculum aims to equip learners with knowledge and skills that they can apply meaningfully in their own lives, to respond appropriately to opportunities in life so that they can contribute to “a democratic society, productive economy and improved quality of life” (DBE, 2011a, p. 8). The six topics covered in the subject of Life Orientation are: the development of the self in society, social and environmental responsibility, democracy and human rights, careers and career choices, study skills, and physical education (DBE, 2011a, p. 8). These topics link closely with universal definitions of life skills education, which is education aimed at “facilitating the development of psychosocial skills that are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2012, p. 2). It includes “application of life skills in the context of specific risk situations and in situations where children and adolescents need to be empowered to promote and protect their rights” (WHO, 1999, p. 1). The World Health Organization’s Department of Mental Health has identified five basic areas of life skills that are relevant across cultures: decision making and problem solving, creative thinking and critical thinking, communication and interpersonal skills, self-awareness and empathy, and coping with emotions and coping with stress (WHO, 1999, p. 1).

Although many learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds manage to finish school and to matriculate, inferior schooling (Botha, 2010; Mahlangu, 2011) and high unemployment rates decrease their chances of finding a job. This scenario seems to be worse in under-resourced rural and township schools, where socio-economic challenges tend to limit learners' prospects for life (Van Deventer, 2008), and the high cost of further education precludes them from pursuing further study (Botha, 2010; Van Aardt, 2012). The life context of the youth shapes their future aspirations and degree of optimism and hopefulness, but, in general, disadvantaged youth tend to be less optimistic about possibilities for their future education and occupation than is the case with their more economically advantaged counterparts (Purtell & McLoyd, 2013). This may manifest as a lack of hope and purpose in their lives (Burrow et al., 2010), and may perpetuate despair and reinforce the negative cycle of poverty, thereby creating even more barriers that could hamper constructive life choices (Donald et al., 2012).

The usual approach to career guidance in schools does not always consider the life circumstances of the individual learner (Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck, & Van Vianen, 2009), but, rather, tends to be generalised, in accordance with CAPS outcomes. Hence the need for career guidance that is more contextually and individually relevant (Meeus, Deković, & Iedema., 2011). Realising this, I believe that life skills education can help learners to become more hopeful and resilient in the face of adverse socio-economic contexts. Life Orientation teachers can play an important role in helping learners to imagine a different future for themselves, rather than focusing on the barriers and challenges related to their contexts of poverty. It is thus crucial to equip learners with skills to make better life choices (Coetzee, 2012).

Although the literature above reveals the problems of Life Orientation, it poses potential in preparing learners to make informed choices and to prepare them for life after school. CAPS emphasises that learner diversity should be acknowledged when teaching Life Orientation (DBE, 2011a), but teachers tend to teach the same material to all learners, regardless of their socio-economic status and life opportunities (Prinsloo, 2007; Rooth, 2005). The reality is that adequate training of teachers to

master the content, aims, outcomes, and pedagogical strategies as presented in the CAPS career guidance curriculum seems to be lacking (Prinsloo, 2007, p. 159).

This creates the concern that Life Orientation as a subject does not play a leading role in promoting well-being, success, and equality among our youth (Pryor & Bright, 2009), and that learners are not equipped with skills to enable them to “identify and solve problems, and make decisions using critical and creative thinking” (DBE, 2011a, p. 5), including decisions pertaining to their life choices and future career (Stead et al., 2004). Consequently, Grade 12 learners in socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances may not be adequately equipped to make constructive life choices (Woodgate & Leach, 2010). There is a dire need that the life skills and career guidance intervention strategies used by Life Orientation teachers be tailored to address the realities of learners from economically and socially disadvantaged contexts (Dabula & Makura, 2013), which is a gap that this study intends to address. The access to contextually relevant guidance in making choices for life after school is limited for these learners, and, for this reason, more flexible, proactive (Dabula & Makura, 2013, p. 89) and alternative approaches need to be implemented to prepare these learners for life after school.

Teachers, as professionals, need to consider the context in which they teach, because they may be limited by their own focus and views, which they may have acquired from the traditional needs-based approach to teaching and learning. If teachers adopt an asset-based approach to teaching (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001; McKnight & Kretzmann, 2011), instead of merely focusing on the problems that are part of learners’ everyday lives, it will help learners to become aware of how they might deal with and overcome the many challenges in their social ecologies. The asset-based approach focuses on developing potential to access internal and environmental resources in a contextually relevant manner. The needs-based approach, by contrast, focuses mainly on the problem or defect which requires professional intervention to improve. Although identification of barriers remains an essential part of the asset-based process, and barriers should be acknowledged (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001), problems should not be the main focus, as this can lead to a climate of despair and hopelessness, rather than enabling learners to find ways to

overcome barriers. Learners unfortunately do not always recognise or acknowledge the assets at their disposal, and, as a result, do not realise the positive and strengthening effect that these assets may have on their life choices, if utilised (King & Madsen, 2007). The asset-based approach is fundamental for career guidance in the South African context (Coetzee, Ebersöhn, & Ferreira, 2009; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001), particularly if we consider the specific aim of the subject of Life Orientation, which is to prepare learners to “respond appropriately to life’s responsibilities and opportunities” (DBE, 2011a, p. 8). An asset-based approach which focuses on abilities and strengths will encourage the adoption of more empowering pedagogical strategies by Life Orientation teachers.

An asset-based approach to planning future life choices can encourage participation by learners in making purposeful decisions concerning their future life and career choices (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). This is consistent with one of the general aims of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which is to “ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives” (DBE, 2011a, p. 4). An added advantage of using an asset-based approach is that acquired strategies can become life skills for learners to apply in future problem-solving situations (DBE, 2010; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). Another important aspect of the asset-based approach is that it is based on a systems approach (Coetzee et al., 2009), underpinned by the “influences, interactions and interrelationships between the individual learner and multiple other systems” (Swart & Pettipher, 2011, p. 14).

The asset-based approach is suited to the complex South African social context (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). If used as a strategy in teaching and learning, it can have a positive effect on learners’ well-being (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001), which is a specific aim of Life Orientation (DBE, 2011a). The aim of this qualitative study is to explore the use of participatory visual strategies to assist learners to make constructive choices for life after school. The aim is to make learners aware of their assets, so that they can “mobilize these assets and create sustainable skills” (Coetzee et al., 2009) to make constructive choices for life after school.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Based on the above argument, it is evident that learners in some schools in South Africa may not be gaining the necessary life skills to make constructive life choices, and the literature clearly highlights the problems in the practical application of Life Orientation as a subject, particularly in disadvantaged socio-economic environments. Considering the very real possibility that the outcomes set by CAPS for career guidance are not being realised (DBE, 2011a), there is a need to provide teachers with strategies to realise these outcomes, and to ensure that these strategies are culturally and contextually relevant. Traditional information- and resource-based approaches to career guidance are not really suitable for learners from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds, who have limited life and career choices, and who have to develop resilient responses to overcome socio-economic challenges. There is a movement towards using new methods and techniques in the teaching of career guidance and counselling (Bernes, Bardick, & Orr, 2007), with a special focus on recognising diversity when planning career guidance and counselling programmes. The teaching of career guidance as part of Life Orientation is mostly done by traditional (conventional) teacher-centred methods, where teachers lecture or discuss content, rather than student-centred approaches, where learners are actively involved in their learning (Dimitrios, Labros, Nikolaos, Koutiva, & Athanasios, 2013). There is a need to include alternative strategies that allow for a more contextualised approach to career guidance, to equip learners to make constructive life and career choices.

In this study, I thus aim to explore the use of two participatory visual strategies to assist learners to make constructive choices for life after school, which will help to reduce learners' vulnerability to risk behaviour, by strengthening their resilience (Donald et al., 2012). From my professional experience as a Life Orientation lecturer, participatory visual strategies (Clark, 2010), in particular mind mapping (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010; Coetzee et al., 2009; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006) and photovoice (Wang, 1999), seem to have the potential to be innovative and practical strategies to orientate and guide learners to make positive life and career choices.

## **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Based on the above problem statement, the main purpose of this study is to qualitatively explore whether or not participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, can be used effectively to orientate Grade 12 Life Orientation learners to make constructive life and career choices.

The following main aims were derived from the main purpose of the study, as stated above:

- to qualitatively explore how participatory visual strategies can be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices; and
- to develop practical guidelines for Life Orientation teachers for the use of participatory visual strategies to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the above exposition, the following research question was formulated:

- How can participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?

The secondary question is:

- What guidelines can be developed for Life Orientation teachers for the use of participatory visual strategies, to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?

## 1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS GUIDING THE STUDY

The theoretical frameworks guiding this study are resilience theory (Holling, Gunderson, & Ludwig, 2002; Pisano, 2012) and the related hope theory, which are both grounded in positive psychology (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). Ungar's (2008) socio-ecological view of resilience is culturally and contextually based, and describes resilience as "a product of the interactions among external risk factors, protective factors and a person's internal resources", and the capacity of the youth to "navigate their way to the resources they need during crises, and their ability to negotiate for these resources to be provided in meaningful ways" (Ungar, Liebenberg, Dudding, Armstrong, & van de Vijver, 2013, p. 151).

Hope, as a positive motivational state, is derived from an interactive process between a person's goal-directed energy, the pathways that they plan to use to meet their set goals, and the extent to which they use these perceived pathways to reach their goals (Snyder, 2002). I aimed to give the learner participants in this study the opportunity to voice their own thoughts and experiences, to enable them to become reflective participants in their own lives (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006). Positive youth development aims to emphasise the assets and strengths of the youth, rather than their deficits; thus, if this thinking can be hopeful thinking, it could contribute to learners identifying and using alternative pathways (National Institute for Health Care and Excellence (NICE), 2014) to make positive choices and changes (Snyder, 2002). Hopeful thinking contributes to resilience (Larson, 2013). Hope is the thoughts or belief that individuals have that they will find pathways to reach their goals, and how they motivate themselves to use these pathways in order to reach their goals.

Resilience sustains the chosen pathways, particularly in changing circumstances (Pisano, 2012). When problems are encountered, they become barriers to reaching desired goals (Snyder, 2002). When problems are the main focus, this can create a climate of despair and hopelessness, rather than enabling the individual to find pathways to overcome the problems (King & Madsen, 2007). The asset-based approach is in opposition to the problem-based, or the deficiency-based, approach (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001); the asset-based approach enables the individual to identify



protective factors that can be utilised as resources to strengthen their coping abilities, and, in turn, foster resilience (Malik, 2013). Such resilience can be realised by using asset-based approaches in the form of visual strategies, so that learners can be assisted to become aware of other possibilities, increase hope, and make them more able to make resilient choices to reach their future goals.

## **1.7 EXPLANATION OF TERMINOLOGY USED**

### **“Participatory visual strategies”**

Realising the value of visual strategies, researchers are increasingly using visual approaches in social research (De Lange, Mitchell, & Stuart, 2007), because visual strategies allow the researcher to “see through the eyes of the participant” (De Lange et al., 2007, p. 3). Visual strategies may have therapeutic value, they are non-threatening, and they may enhance social change (De Lange et al., 2007).

For the purposes of this study, the term “participatory visual strategies” refers to ways to make ideas visual, to enable both the researcher and the participants to form new insights, which can transform experiences into knowledge. The participatory visual strategies that will be used in this study are mind mapping (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010) and photovoice (Wang, 1999).

### **“Learner”**

The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) defines a learner as any person who is receiving education, or is obliged to receive education, and who is learning or acquiring knowledge, experience, or a skill. For the purposes of this study, the term “learner” refers to a Grade 12 Life Orientation learner who is attending extra classes to acquire more knowledge and skills through life skills education.

### **“Constructive choices for life after school”**

The youth need to make constructive, or healthy, life choices, in order to ensure that they are able to maximise the resources in their social ecologies, rather than resort to

negative coping behaviour, which will limit their life opportunities (Wood & Olivier, 2007).

For the purposes of this study, the term “constructive choices for life after school” refers to positive life choices, behaviours, or decisions that the youth make about life after school, and whether they intend to study further or enter the workforce.

## **1.8 RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The following subsections will describe the research paradigm that guided the study, the procedure followed in selecting participants, the methods of inquiry used (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2005, p. 268), and the way the data was categorised, analysed, and interpreted.

### **1.8.1 Research paradigm**

A research paradigm underpins a world view, or a framework of beliefs, values, and methods within which research takes place (Joubish, Khurran, Haider, Fatima, & Ahmed, 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2012). The research paradigm serves as the lens through which reality is interpreted. This study was guided by a constructivist paradigm, which is an interpretive approach where participants construct and represent their own knowledge (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). This paradigm is discussed in greater depth in chapter 3.

### **1.8.2 Research design**

A research design is a systematic plan to study a scientific problem. In this study, a qualitative case-study research design (Creswell, 2003) was used, which enabled me to develop a holistic view of the study in a natural setting, where participants portrayed their own experiences of the phenomenon under investigation (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). The focus in this study was on exploring the usefulness of participatory visual strategies with Grade 12 learners, to help them to make more constructive choices for life after school; for this reason, a qualitative research design was suited to this study (Creswell, 2009). I aimed to understand, through generation

of qualitative data, how these strategies have helped the learners to think more hopefully about their future. This is consistent with Neuman's (1994) assertion that "the aim of qualitative research is not to explain human behaviour in terms of universally valid laws or generalizations, but rather to understand and interpret the meaning and intentions that underlie everyday human behaviour" (Neuman, 1994, p. 41).

### **1.8.3 Participant selection**

Participants in this qualitative study were Grade 12 Life Orientation learners who attended an additional course on life skills, which included a career guidance component in which learners were guided in making career choices. As a Life Orientation lecturer I am invited to facilitate the above-mentioned life skills course as part of a community service to a gathering of Grade 12 learners that are representative of five schools in the Rustenburg area, at a selected venue near Rustenburg. Sixty learners attended this non-compulsory session of 12 hours.

As participation in this qualitative study was voluntary, a purposefully selected availability sampling strategy was used. Attending Grade 12 learners of both genders were invited to participate. The following selection criteria were used:

- Due to logistical factors, some learners stayed over in nearby accommodation, and did not go home during the week of the course. For this reason, unavailability of parents or legal guardians to provide informed consent for under-age learners to participate was a problem. This made it necessary for an age criterion of 18 years or older to be obligatory for these participants if they wished to participate in the research project, since it was not possible to obtain parental consent (see Addendums C and D).
- All learners did the mind map exercise, but only the ones who met the criteria were part of the research. Thirteen participants volunteered to participate.

#### **1.8.4 Qualitative data generation and analysis**

Data was generated by using two participatory visual methods (Clark, 2010), namely mind mapping (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010) and photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), and through a recorded group discussion (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). For the mind-mapping exercise participants were given a prompt to create a mind map of their perceived assets and barriers with regard to their future careers. For the photovoice exercise they were given a prompt to take photographs of the assets and barriers reflected in the mind maps. The prompt for the group discussion was that learners had to choose at least five photographs with narratives, which they were prepared to share with the group during the group discussion.

The motivation for choosing the two participatory visual strategies was that the strategies are flexible and proactive (Dabula & Makura, 2013), and they promote participation. Mind mapping is concrete, visual, and colourful, and it is suitable for the diverse literacy levels of the participants (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2012). The use of photovoice enabled participants to express perceived and true realities of life in a photograph, it recorded both strengths and concerns, and it opened a way for dialogue between participants and the researcher (Wang, 1999). Participatory visual strategies enhance the potential for critical reflection on the possibility of change in thinking (Cleland & Wyborn, 2010), and, in addition, they should be helpful for participants to document the assets and barriers in their ecologies, as well as in promoting the construction of culturally and contextually relevant knowledge (Wang & Burris, 1997). Through interrogation of visual evidence during the group discussion, collaborative learning among participants was encouraged (Eison, 2010). The group discussion was designed to create a space where participants could talk about their respective visual representations of their assets and barriers, in order to enhance deeper understanding of their life circumstances, and the discussion of complex personal issues (Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2009). The data-generation strategies are discussed in detail in chapter 3.

The researcher and an independent re-coder independently coded the data, and then compared it, to reach consensus and to ensure that themes were consistent and

reliable (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). A thematic analysis was done of the qualitative data from the mind maps, photovoice, and group discussion (Mouton, 2006), to identify emergent themes, guided by hope theory (Snyder, 2002) and resilience theory (Lee, Kwong, Cheung, Ungar, & Cheung, 2010). Relevant literature was consulted to substantiate the findings.

As researcher, I adopted the role of a facilitator to guide the research (Mouton, 2006). My tasks were to:

- facilitate the drawing of the mind maps;
- train participants in the use of photovoice;
- facilitate and structure the group discussion;
- analyse and code the data; and
- triangulate the data (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2012; Wang, 1999).

## **1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE DATA**

Trustworthiness of the data were ensured by verification and triangulation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) of verbatim quotations of participants from the mind maps, voice narratives, and the discussion (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I used an independent re-coder to code the data, and then we compared our findings to reach consensus (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Findings were compared with the relevant literature (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011), and assessed for trustworthiness or merit of qualitative inquiry, according to Guba's (1981) model. The model describes four general criteria for evaluation, based on the philosophy of qualitative approaches: truth value (credibility), applicability (transferability), consistency (dependability), and neutrality (confirmability) (Guba, 1981). A detailed explanation of how I applied this model is given in chapter 3.

## **1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical measures were ensured by obtaining informed consent (see Addendums C and D), and providing the option of voluntary participation, and the option to withdraw from the study at any stage. Participants were assured of confidentiality. I obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the university (see Addendum E), granting of which attests to the ethical rigour of the study. For the photovoice exercise, participants were made aware of the ethics of taking photographs, not to intrude on people's privacy, and to obtain written consent if they photographed other people (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In addition to the above ethical measures, researchers using visual methods need to have consent for the collection and dissemination of visual material, and, if relevant to the situation, need to consider the importance of copyright clearance, for legal considerations. Written consent is needed for the use of images that identify individuals (Wiles, Prosser, Bagnoli, Clark, Davies, Holland, & Renold, 2008), and I obtained such consent.

## **1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A limitation of the study is that the findings cannot be generalised (Mouton, 2006), although this was not the intention of the research. Participant numbers were small as they were the only learners who volunteered. Due to the time constraint a smaller group was easy to accommodate during the group discussion.

## **1.12 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

This study makes contributions on three levels:

- On a theoretical level, it adds to the body of knowledge about how resilience theory and hope theory could be applied to understand how to better prepare learners for life after school.
- On a practical level, the study generates guidelines to help Life Orientation teachers to enhance their teaching methods, and consequently to inform

them of how participatory visual methods can be used as pedagogical tools in teaching and learning.

- Thirdly, this research answers the call to be more innovative when conducting qualitative research (Coetzee et al., 2009). No evidence could be found in the literature of use of the two proposed visual strategies in the classroom situation to assist learners to make constructive choices for life after school. Hence, the findings from this qualitative enquiry provide insight into how participatory visual methods might contribute to change in the thinking of learners.

### **1.13 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

This research is presented according to the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Overview of the study

This chapter summarises the orientation and research rationale for this study of qualitatively exploring how participatory visual strategies could be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make more constructive life and career choices.

Chapter 2 The preparation of learners for life after school: a critical discussion of the literature

This chapter gives an overview of the literature on career education and guidance in South Africa, and the topic of careers and career choices in the subject of Life Orientation. The chapter conceptualises the important role of career education and guidance in preparing Grade 12 learners for life after school. The chapter provides an explanation of terminology with regard to career education, career guidance, and career counselling. A discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of a life skills approach is followed by a discussion of the need for career education and guidance to be included as part of life skills education.

The school curriculum in South Africa focuses on careers and career choices as a topic in Life Orientation, as stipulated in the general aims of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). I elaborate on the problems and challenges in the subject in terms of preparing learners for life after school, and I argue for the need for alternative pedagogical strategies for teaching and learning in career education and guidance. The use of an asset-based approach in career education and guidance to prepare learners for making constructive choices for life after school is motivated, underpinned by the hope theory and the resilience theory.

### Chapter 3 Theoretical discussion of the research design and methodology

This chapter describes the qualitative research methodology employed in the study. I explain and justify the interpretive research paradigm used, drawing on constructivist theory which guided this study in answering the main research question of “How can participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?” and the secondary research question of “What guidelines can be given to Life Orientation teachers for the use of participatory visual strategies, to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?”

I explain the procedure followed in selecting participants, and I discuss the method of qualitative data collection chosen, providing reasons for the method chosen. The strategies for the methods of inquiry that I used to capture, code, categorise, and analyse the data are described, and I discuss the trustworthiness of the data generated, as well as ethical considerations observed.

### Chapter 4: Discussion of the findings

In this chapter I report on the findings deduced from the data analysis, to provide an overview of the patterns and themes that emerged from the data generated. Four themes from the data allowed me to address the research questions pertaining to the use of participatory visual strategies to orientate and guide learners to make constructive choices for life after school.



## Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions, and recommendations

This chapter concludes and summarises the study, it discusses the value of the topic of career guidance within the subject of Life Orientation, and it offers recommendations for the teaching of this topic.

**CHAPTER 2:**  
**PREPARATION OF LEARNERS FOR LIFE AFTER SCHOOL:  
A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE LITERATURE**

**2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on career education and guidance in South Africa. “Careers and career choices” as a topic in Life Orientation is discussed, to conceptualise the important role of career education and guidance in preparing Grade 12 learners for life after school. The chapter includes a brief explanation of the terms “career education”, “career guidance”, and “career counselling”. The theoretical underpinnings of a life skills approach are explained, followed by a discussion of the need for career education and guidance as part of life skills education. The discussion of career education and guidance in the South African school curriculum focuses on “Careers and career choices” as a topic in Life Orientation, as stated in the general aims of CAPS. I will elaborate on the problems and challenges experienced in the subject in preparing learners for life after school, so as to problematise the current position of career education and guidance, and I argue for the need for alternative pedagogical strategies for teaching and learning in career education and guidance. The chapter concludes with a motivation for using an asset-based approach in career education and guidance, underpinned by hope theory and resilience theory, as an opportunity to prepare learners for making constructive choices for life after school.

**2.2 EXPLANATION OF TERMINOLOGY: “CAREER EDUCATION”, “CAREER COUNSELLING”, AND “CAREER GUIDANCE”**

Across countries, terminology with regard to career education, career counselling, and career guidance varies, and terms are used interchangeably (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2014). Therefore, a distinction should be made

between the terms “career education”, “career counselling”, and “career guidance”, as the terms are used interchangeably in the literature. For the purposes of this study, the following explanations of these terms will apply.

*Career education* consists of strategies for career awareness and the development of knowledge, self-help skills, and attitudes through planned strategies for learning experiences that will help individuals to make informed decisions about career choices (Education Bureau, 2011), managing their career development (Watts, 2010), and the transition from school to work (Patton, 2005).

*Career counselling* enables the individual to come to a better understanding (Education Bureau, 2011) and management of issues related to career planning (Australian Government, 2010). Counselling can be on a one-on-one basis or in a small group, and is done by a professional career counsellor (Australian Government, 2010). In South Africa, career counselling is regarded as a profession under the Health Service Professions Act (Republic of South Africa, 1974), and is regulated by the South African Medical and Dental Council. Career counselling is provided by career counsellors who are qualified to do interventions, which include counselling techniques, administration and interpretation of assessments, and career information resources (Watts, 2005). Life Orientation teachers are generally not registered career counsellors, and can therefore only facilitate career guidance in accordance with the “Careers and career choices” outcomes in CAPS (DBE, 2011a) to assist learners in making constructive choices for life after school.

*Career guidance* is an umbrella term that refers to different interventions, including career education and career counselling (Education Bureau, 2011; Watts, 2010) and career information (Watts, 2010). These interventions are any activities, treatments, or efforts that are designed for the purpose of helping learners to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable them to make informed and constructive decisions and choices about work and/or further studies, which may promote a healthy and productive life (Education Bureau, 2011; United Nations Children’s Fund, 2012). Guidance can derive from a variety of sources, such as teachers, parents, friends, and mentors (United Kingdom Government, 2000).

In the Report on the Survey of Career Development Activities 2013/2014, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa uses the term “career guidance” when referring to guidance at school level (DHET, 2014), but it offers no definitions for the concepts related to the term.

The terms are interrelated and intertwined (Education Bureau, 2011; Watts, 2010), and because the holistic development of learners is promoted (DBE, 2011a), the terms should not be seen as separate entities. For the purposes of this study, the encompassing term “career guidance and orientation” will be used, and will refer to the facilitated education and guidance that is given to learners by teachers, and not by professionals or counsellors, “to assist individuals, of any age and any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers” (Watts, 2013, p. 242).

### **2.3 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF A LIFE SKILLS APPROACH**

The United Nations Children’s Fund (2012, p. 18) suggests that life skills education currently lacks a clear empirically based theory on the relationship between life skills and learning in institutional settings. There are some challenges in developing a theoretical framework for life skills education. The various different definitions of the concept of life skills portray the multiple meanings attached to life skills education, the planned interventions, and how the successes of the interventions are measured. The proliferation of terms associated with life skills, such as “emotional intelligence”, “assertiveness”, and “resilience”, complicates the development of a universally accepted theoretical framework for life skills. These terms or constructs inform life skills (Hodge, Danish, & Martin, 2012), are theories to develop life skills (Mangrulkar, Whitman, & Posner, 2001), or are the outcome goals of life skills education (Hodge et al., 2012). Whether a construct or an example of a life skill, they all contribute to healthy learner development, positive behaviours, and resilience (Mangrulkar et al., 2001), so that learners can make constructive choices for life after school.

The Pan American Health Organization (2001) advocates a life skills approach to child and adolescent healthy human development (Mangrulkar et al., 2001). There are many theoretical foundations for the life skills approach, based on how the child grows, learns, and behaves (Mangrulkar et al., 2001). For the purposes of this study, I foreground the theoretical underpinnings of cognitive theory, social cognitive theory, and constructivist theory.

The term *cognition* refers to the process where the individual attaches meaning to their experiences, and decides whether to disregard information or pay attention to it. *Cognitive theory* emphasises the importance of information processing, aptitude, the capacity to learn, and learning styles (Schunk, 2012). In contrast to behaviourist theory, cognitive theory acknowledges that learners actively construct their own understanding, and are not passive recipients of information (Schunk, 2012). This is important in this study, because when learners make choices for life after school, it involves creative and critical thinking, such as problem solving, decision making, and self-evaluation (Mangrulkar et al., 2001; UNICEF, 2012). Learners need these skills so that they can reason and come up with solutions to problems, while taking into consideration the consequences of their decisions. Interpersonal cognitive problem-solving skills can prevent or reduce the making of negative or ill-judged decisions. When learners are actively involved in learning these skills, such as when participatory visual strategies are used (Mangrulkar et al., 2001), the teacher becomes a facilitator of learning, and learners act on information in ways that make learning more meaningful for them (Ausubel, 2000). The two visual exercises that will be performed with learners in this study will involve learners actively constructing their own understanding of the barriers and assets that may influence their future career choices.

Social cognitive theory explains behaviour by using a psychological model. Bandura (1977; Bandura, 1986) emphasised that behaviours can be learned through observation of the behaviour of others in social contexts (so-called “vicarious learning”). Children learn both through what they are taught, for example by parents and teachers and through what they observe from social role models (Mangrulkar et al., 2001).

Traditionally, the family and cultural factors are the mechanisms responsible for passing on life skills to the next generation (WHO, 1999, p. 9), but if parents neglect to educate their children and equip them with skills on their road to adulthood (Nel & Pyne-van Staden, 2014), or model poor coping mechanisms, the development of relevant skills and behaviours can be negatively affected. Many family structures in South Africa are unstable, disintegrated, and/or dysfunctional (Nel & Pyne-van Staden, 2014). Parents who have only experienced life in a context of disadvantage are often not able to offer adequate career advice to their children, and often have unrealistic goals for them, thinking that a matriculation certificate is all that is needed to access a better life (Batterham & Levesley, 2011).

Social cognitive theory acknowledges the important role of motivation in learning and achievement (Pajares, 1996; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994), so in the absence of positive parental or social role models, learners have to be helped to increase intrinsic motivation, to help them to build hope for the future (Yu, 2013). Social cognitive theory is based on the assumption that learning and behaviour are products of interaction between cognitive, behavioural and contextual factors, although they are also influenced by learners' own beliefs and interpretations (Denler, Wolters, & Benzon, 2014). An important assumption of social cognitive theory is that individuals have the agency to regulate and influence their own behaviour and the environment, through goal-directedness, forethought, self-reflection, and self-regulatory processes (Bandura, 2001). Learners learn from their own and other individuals' experiences, when they observe and give meaning to the consequences of the behaviour that arises from the experiences (WHO, 1999).

Thus, if teachers engage learners in activities that promote collaborative learning to explore the possibilities and pitfalls of their contexts in terms of choosing what to do after school, it will better enable them to make constructive choices as to how to maximise their assets and minimise socio-economic barriers. Examples of such activities are the visual methods of mind mapping and photovoice, where learners can acknowledge barriers and assets (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001) related to their future careers. According to the assumption that individuals have the agency to regulate and influence their own behaviour and environment, this will mean that they are in a

better position to make constructive choices for life after school, by becoming actively engaged in problem solving through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978) within a participatory classroom. Social norms and peer influence affect individual behaviours (UNICEF, 2012). Therefore, the participatory pedagogical strategies used in this study will help to shift thinking and open learners up to new ideas while they interact with others. Part of this process is for learners to question, explore, assess, and evaluate their ideas against those of others (Christie, 2006).

By identifying barriers and assets that might hamper their future careers, and then comparing their learned information with that of others, learners can better identify and navigate the barriers influencing their future careers, while maximising the assets at their disposal (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001), to make constructive choices for life after school. The development of self-evaluation about their abilities, and goals concerning their future career choices, may enable learners to make decisions that will shape and determine the outcomes of their future career choices and behaviours (Mangrulkar et al., 2001).

Constructivist theory underwrites the individual's ability to construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world (Mangrulkar et al., 2001). Although environmental factors, such as relationships with parents, peers, teachers, and other individuals in society, are determinants of and influence and shape learners' career choices (Gikopoulou, 2008), the learner is central in the process of choosing a career. Notwithstanding the complexity of the contexts in which social cognition is developed, and in which career choices are made (Mangrulkar et al., 2001), social construction of knowledge results in culturally relevant knowledge (Young & Collin, 2004). Through cognitive processes and interaction with the cultural and contextual factors that influence career choices (Zimmerman & Kontosh, 2007), as well as through life skills education and the appropriate guidance, learners are able to develop the ability to construct their own meanings from these experiences (Mangrulkar et al., 2001), to make constructive choices for their future careers.

The UNICEF (2003) definition of life skills education specifically mentions that life skills education, as a structured programme, consists of needs-based and outcomes-

based participatory learning. To prevent career guidance from being only remedial (WHO, 2004), a more comprehensive approach to guidance, which is aligned with learners' individual developmental needs, is needed (Education Bureau, 2011). Acquiring life skills is part of the learning process, and effective learning does not take place when the curriculum is simply divided into subject matter (Zaalouk, 2006). Conceptualisation of the curriculum, so that it includes knowledge, skills, behaviour, attitudes, and values, is dependent on more participatory and interactive teaching and learning and assessment pedagogies (UNICEF, 2012).

Participatory approaches are interactive, and therefore require a move away from didactic, passive instructional approaches (Martin, Nelson, & Lynch, 2013; Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac, & Lawton, 2012). Pedagogical strategies to equip learners with skills for careers and career choices need to be innovative, they need to grab learners' attention, they should be geared towards learners' particular needs (UNICEF, 2012), and they should be contextually relevant, so that new pathways can be found for personal growth (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011), to prepare learners to make constructive choices for life after school. Through the processes of accommodation and assimilation, which are part of the adaptation process when learning (Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, & Chinn, 2007), learners become aware of and internalise the world they live in.

Constructivist approaches conform to these requirements, as they promote active and experiential learning, they are more participatory and encourage exploration, they provide feedback, and they cultivate reflection, motivation, and engagement in learning, which are all core life skills (Education Bureau, 2011). Experiential learning is the process by which the teacher purposefully engages with learners so that they, through experience, discovery, exploration and reflection, develop skills and knowledge based on their own value system. Furthermore, experiential learning focuses more on the process of learning than the end product. In contrast to traditional teaching methods, experiential learning is cooperative and learners learn from their fellow classmates. Experiential learning is suited to situations where real life problems need to be addressed in varied contexts. Experiential learning is self-



directed and motivational to the learner. The teacher becomes a facilitator rather than a director of learning (Northern Illinois University, 2011).

Experiential learning is an experience that includes reflection, critical analysis and synthesis (Kolb, 1984). The learner is actively involved because the process entails questioning, investigating, experimenting, provoking curiosity, problem solving, creativity and taking responsibility for own learning by constructing meaning to authentic learning. Learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually in the learning process (Association for Experiential Education, 2011).

For this reason, teachers can enhance learning by using pedagogies that are underpinned by Piaget's (1967) theory of constructivist and experiential learning, such as the visual strategies and focus group discussion utilised in this study (UNICEF, 2012). This will ensure that the psychosocial aims of career guidance are achieved, and that learners are guided in making constructive choices for life after school.

## **2.4 THE NEED FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE AS PART OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION**

Career education and guidance forms an integral part of life skills education. There is a need to improve the career education and guidance offered to learners, because the necessary career knowledge and skills are not adequately developed in many of South Africa's schools (South African Qualifications Authority, 2012). The lack of career education and guidance is mainly attributed to a lack of leadership to implement national policy, lack of coordination, specifically in career guidance and counselling services, and also the diverse socio-economic contexts in the country (SAQA, 2012).

Watts, as cited in South African Qualifications Authority (2009), asserts that individuals in contemporary society do not just choose careers, but rather construct knowledge from information and opportunities related to careers, to make constructive career choices. Grade 12 learners need information on different

occupations and educational opportunities, so that they can keep up with trends in the labour market (Hansen, 2006), because the effectiveness of the South African labour market is dependent on the quality of the decisions and choices that Grade 12 learners make for their future careers (SAQA, 2009). Constant technological development, changes in the labour market, and rapidly transforming society pose challenges to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes conveyed in career education and guidance to learners. Maree (2009) emphasises the need that exists for career education and guidance to prepare learners to make quality and informed decisions about their future careers.

The lack of opportunities for disadvantaged groups to access career information (Hansen, 2006) might deprive learners of access to tertiary education or job opportunities. There seems to be a greater number of diverse students of all ages entering the labour market, and a broader range of educational opportunities, which places pressure not only on training institutions, but also on learners, who have to access and assess numerous information systems to assist them in making informed choices about their future after school (Debono, Camilleri, Galea, & Gravina, 2007).

The life context of learners, and the problematic circumstances that arise from the challenges that they face, shapes their future hopes and dreams, as well as their degree of optimism regarding education and occupation possibilities (Purtell & McLoyd, 2013). When learners are at risk due to negative social and economic circumstances, they may be more likely to make destructive life choices and adopt negative coping strategies (Burrow et al., 2010; Duke et al., 2011), such as reckless health choices which endanger their psychosocial health. Reckless health choices may include increasing one's chances of contracting HIV or other STIs (Kelly, 2010), teenage pregnancy or fathering unplanned children (Kanku & Mash, 2010; Maholo, Maja, & Wright, 2009) substance abuse (Seggie, 2012), involvement in criminal activities (Dawson, 2009), juvenile delinquency, and violence (Notshulwana, 2012; Visser & Routledge, 2007).

There is a need to reduce risk factors (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004), so that learners can counteract the demands and stress that they encounter concerning

their future careers due to the difficulties that they face (World Health Organization, 1997). Through career education and guidance, learners can be equipped to manage emotional states through developing coping and self-management or interpersonal skills (WHO, 1994; UNICEF, 2012) in the diverse environments in which they live and attend school (Danish et al., 2004). These skills can be preventive in situations where destructive behaviours militate against health and well-being (Rooth, 2003), and they can assist learners to make informed decisions and constructive choices for a healthy, active, safe, and productive life after school (WHO, 1994; UNICEF, 2012).

For learners that live in adverse socio-economic circumstances, such as the participants in this study, it is essential that they find purpose in their lives (Hereford, 2009; World Health Organization, 2003) and learn how to deal with challenging, even controversial, issues concerning their future careers, in ways that are responsible and responsive (Nel & Pyne-van Staden, 2014, p. 189). This requires the development of decision-making skills, communication and interpersonal skills, critical thinking skills, and coping and self-management skills, so that learners can address their specific barriers and assets when they constructively plan and make decisions about life after school. If learners are not equipped with skills to negotiate and mediate challenges and risks in their lives, they may not be able to participate productively in their societies (UNICEF, 2012) or make constructive life and career choices. They can build resilience (a psychosocial capacity) through taking care of their physical and mental health, learning to deal with problems and stressful situations, and maintaining good relationships (Hereford, 2009; WHO, 2003).

If career education and guidance fails in its purpose to equip learners with certain important context-relevant skills to make constructive career choices to counteract these challenges, learners will not develop personal potential, and they will not be empowered to deal with challenges when they face an uncertain future (Singh & Youngman, 2005). This will be contrary to the aims of Life Orientation, as stated in CAPS (DBE, 2011a), which are to equip learners with the skills to make constructive career choices, and become useful and functioning members of a diverse society

(Sapon-Shevin, 2010), so as to impact not only their own lives, but also the lives of their families and other persons in their lives (Nel & Pyne-van Staden, 2014).

## **2.5 CAREER EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

Globally, career education and guidance as part of life skills is introduced in different ways in schools, that is, as a subject on its own, as part of the content of other subjects, or as an extracurricular activity (UNICEF, 2012). Over the past two decades, career education and guidance has become an integral focus to equip youth to negotiate and mediate everyday challenges and risks (UNICEF, 2012) concerning their future career, so that they become balanced, active, and productive contributors to a democratic society (DBE, 2011a). Although certain risk behaviours require content-specific life skills, which should be delivered together with relevant information about human rights and environmental education, the life skills identified by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1999) are considered to be universally relevant.

In schools in South Africa, Life Orientation, as a compulsory subject, is one of four fundamental subjects required for the National Senior Certificate. The holistic approach that Life Orientation as a subject proposes aims to promote the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners (DBE, 2011a). The general aims of Life Orientation in South Africa are underpinned by the general aims of life skills education (UNICEF, 2012; DBE, 2011a). The curriculum is based on the values and aims of the Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), which reflects norms with regard to diversity and equality, and considers ethnic, cultural and language differences, so as to emphasise democracy and responsible citizenship.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Life Orientation (DBE, 2011a) came into effect in 2012 as an amendment to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades 10-12 (General) Life Orientation, and serves as guidelines for the teaching of career education and guidance. CAPS is a concise policy

document, which replaced the Subject and Learning Area Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines, and Subject Assessment Guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (DBE, 2011a), but it still embraces an inclusive approach (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2010).

The CAPS document emphasises the general focus of the South African curriculum, which is the importance of “knowledge, skills and values for learning and teaching in South African schools”, but also the importance of making the knowledge, skills, and values “applicable and meaningful to learners’ respective lives, in local and global contexts”(DBE, 2011a, p. 4), so that learners have equal opportunity to be equipped to live meaningfully, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, or physical or intellectual ability (DBE, 2011a). This would imply the need to promote inclusivity, so that diversity of learners can be considered (Donald et al., 2012), to enhance personal achievement and participation in a democratic society and country. This would further imply equal access to higher education, and an easy transition from school to the workplace (DBE, 2011a).

The specific aims of Life Orientation are to equip learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, to act on life’s responsibilities and opportunities, to make constructive life choices, and to interact optimally and holistically, so as to make informed and responsible choices about their own health and well-being, within their and others’ constitutional rights. Life Orientation aims to develop learners who are “balanced, confident and who can contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life for all” (DBE, 2011a, p. 8).

In essence, Life Orientation is “the study of the self in relation to others and to society” (DBE, 2011a, p. 8), to develop learners who are well-adjusted, self-confident, balanced (DBE, 2011a), and hopeful (DBE, 2010) for the future, and who can contribute to “a democratic society, productive economy and improved quality of life” (DBE, 2011a, p. 8). Life Orientation as a subject covers various life skills, including career education and guidance, and poses unlimited opportunities to equip learners with the necessary skills to “guide and prepare learners for life and its possibilities and to equip them for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly

changing and transforming society” (DBE, 2011a, p. 8). One of the six topics (see table 2.1), namely “Careers and career choices”, aims to equip learners with knowledge, skills, and values to make informed decisions about subject choices, possible future careers, and the transition to higher education and the world of work (DBE, 2011a).

**Table: 2.1: The six topics in the subject of Life Orientation in Grade 12**

	TOPIC	OVERVIEW OF TOPIC
1	Development of the self in society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life skills required to adapt to change, as part of ongoing healthy lifestyle choices</li> <li>• Stress management</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Human factors that cause ill health</li> <li>• An action plan for lifelong participation in physical activity</li> </ul>
2	Social and environmental responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environments and services which promote safe and healthy living</li> <li>• Responsibilities of various levels of government</li> <li>• A personal mission statement for life</li> </ul>
3	Democracy and human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible citizenship</li> <li>• The role of the media in a democratic society</li> <li>• Ideologies, beliefs, and world views on the construction of recreation and physical activity across cultures and genders</li> </ul>
4	Careers and career choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to a decision taken: locate appropriate work or study opportunities in various sources</li> <li>• Reasons for and impact of unemployment, and innovative solutions to counteract unemployment</li> <li>• Core elements of a job contract</li> <li>• Refinement of portfolio of plans for life after school</li> </ul>
5	Study skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection on own study and examination-writing skills</li> <li>• Strategies to follow in order to succeed in Grade 12</li> </ul>
6	Physical education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement of own personal fitness and health goals</li> <li>• Long-term engagement in traditional and/or non-traditional sport or playground and/or community and/or indigenous games or relaxation and recreational activities</li> <li>• Safety issues</li> </ul>

Source: (DBE, 2011a).

However, although the intended outcomes are admirable, the implementation of Life Orientation is not without its problems. Life Orientation teaching for Grade 12 is

allocated only two hours per week on the school timetable, which amounts to a total of 56 hours per year, excluding examinations. Of the 56 hours of teaching time, only 8 hours are allocated for teaching of the topic of “Careers and career choices”. The topics for Career and career choices for Grade 12 include decision making, investigating appropriate work or study opportunities, understanding the reasons for and the impact of unemployment and finding ways to counteract unemployment, knowledge about the requirements for a sound job contract and to complete a portfolio on their plans for life after school (DBE, 2011a).

Although the CAPS guidelines claim that the six topics are interdependent and of the same value (DBE, 2011a), the teaching time that they have been allocated does not seem to reflect this. For instance, the topic of “Physical education” has been allocated 28 hours, three times the amount of time that the topic of “Development of the self in the society” has been allocated. I do not wish to suggest that the topic of “Physical education” does not warrant the considerable amount of teaching time that has been allocated to it, but rather that the comparatively smaller amount of time that has been allocated to the other topics may be insufficient, and thus unrealistic.

The psychosocial aims of life skills education, including career guidance, ensure that conceptualisation of the curriculum includes not only knowledge and skills development, but also the development of positive attitudes, values, and behaviours (UNICEF, 2012, p. viii). This is optimally achieved through adopting a process approach to life skills education, which allows learners to have a choice in learning, includes critical thinking and reflection, and promotes integration of skills across all curriculum areas. The process approach supports the goals and aims of career guidance. Although this approach is preferred for the teaching of career guidance, it poses challenges to the traditional (UNICEF, 2012) needs-based approach (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001), which is used in education systems by teachers, particularly in disadvantaged contexts, where professional teaching capacity is restricted, and resources are limited (UNICEF, 2012). The asset-based approach is an example of the process approach. I contend that application of the process approach would require use of more innovative, participatory, and interactive teaching and learning methodologies in the teaching of career education and guidance.

The continual transformation that this century has undergone so far, and the many life difficulties that have resulted from this transformation (Nel & Pyne-van Staden, 2014), necessitates continual adaptation of the curriculum (UNICEF, 2012) for the teaching of career education and guidance, particularly for youth making choices for life after school. I argue that the curriculum of career education and guidance should be adapted in such a way that it is more contextually relevant, so that it can provide learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to assist them when they make choices for life after school. This can benefit the choices of the youth concerning the self, the environment, and responsibilities as citizens to promote healthy and productive lives (DBE, 2011a), and it can help the youth to make constructive career choices for life after school. A further benefit of contextually relevant career education in the curriculum is that it can help the youth to improve their self-concept, and to prevent or cope with some of the problems that they encounter. It can help them to focus on their holistic development, to equip them with, for example, study skills, communication skills, self-employment skills, skills related to lifestyle choices and health, development of an internal locus of control regarding their own life and the environment, and an ability to make informed and constructive decisions (Rooth, 2012, pp. 39-41) for life after school.

From the literature, I conclude that to successfully implement the life skills curriculum, there are some requirements that should be met. The curriculum should focus on life skills in career education and guidance development, so as to equip learners to make constructive choices for life after school. The specific goals of career education and guidance are to enable learners

- to apply lifelong learning, succeed in interpersonal relationships, and do effective career planning;
- to acquire learning and study skills, show social skills and responsibility, and to set goals for their futures; and
- to *apply* the skills they acquire to their lives, at school, in their community, and in their future after school (Canadian Ministry of Education, 2006).



If the above-mentioned career education and guidance goals assist learners to become confident and motivated to pursue their personal and career goals more effectively, this will create the opportunity for them to make informed and constructive choices for life after school, and to manage the transition from school to life after school (Canadian Ministry of Education, 2006).

For learners to achieve the career education and guidance goals mentioned above, career education and guidance programmes should cater for learner diversity, and should consider both internal and external factors that can influence the abilities, strengths, and weaknesses of learners (Canadian Ministry of Education, 2006). There seems though to be a lack of contextually-based teaching of career education and guidance in schools.

## **2.6 SPECIFIC CHALLENGES CONCERNING CAREER EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE**

Although CAPS (DBE, 2011a), in theory, seems to comply with international standards, career education and guidance has been developed from a Western perspective, which raises the question of the relevance of this instructional content in the context of the diverse cultural settings in our country (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Maree, 2013; Patton, 2005). For instance, teaching of the topic “Careers and career choices” often consists merely of providing information on how to access available services, and very little is done to “explore to understand who the learner is” (SAQA, 2009, p. 33). As a result, the practical teaching and learning of this instructional content poses several problems, which have been attributed to various reasons.

In most schools, career guidance consists of merely providing information on the many careers available. In under-resourced schools, in particular, little opportunity is given for the learner to explore personal suitability for a particular career (Maree & Beck, 2004; Maree, Ebersöhn, & Molepo, 2006). Encouraging and supporting the strengths of the individual learner in career goal settings often does not happen (Education Bureau, 2011). Learners live in diverse contexts (Donald et al., 2012), where some learners have little hope for the future (Yu, 2013), since in many of our

communities unemployment is rife (Botha, 2010), people have to rely on creating informal jobs (King & Madsen, 2007; Yu, 2013), and there is increased competitiveness in the workplace (Theunissen, Van Vuuren, & Visser, 2003). Thus, for learners that face severe financial and social barriers in their career choices, mere provision of career information and explanation of requirements is of little use. It is not enough for teachers to merely provide information about different careers and/or how to apply for higher education, when learners may not have the financial or social capital to follow up on these career choices (Stead et al., 2004).

Career education and guidance should further equip learners with skills to be able to access higher education (SAQA, 2009), to help them to make a successful transition from school education to the workplace or higher education (Yu, 2013), and should play a supportive role in promoting the well-being, success, and equality of our youth (Pryor & Bright, 2009). In contexts where learners can easily access higher education, as a logical next step for life after school, or when employment is readily available, the 8 hours per year officially allocated in the curriculum to teaching of the topic of “Careers and career choices” (DBE, 2011a) may be sufficient to learn about the different options available. However, in contexts of social and economic disadvantage, where access to higher education is a more complex matter, due to the need to find alternative ways to finance further studies (Jones, Coetzee, Bailey, & Wickham, 2008), or the need to find alternative routes to desired career paths, there is a need to focus less on knowledge about specific courses and how to apply for them.

Learners in disadvantaged environments are more likely to be faced with socio-economic challenges which tend to limit their prospects for life (Van Deventer, 2008). This, in turn, could lead to various barriers being created as a result of these socio-economic challenges (DBE, 2011a). The question now arises as to whether learners are indeed equipped with the necessary skills to make constructive choices for life after school, when considering the various problems in careers and career education that are revealed in the literature. This may call for an alternative approach, and the use of other methods when teaching career education and guidance.

Unequal distribution of resources may create obstacles for learners in achieving their dreams for their lives, and will influence the choices that they make for life after school. For example, if a learner from an affluent area wishes to become a doctor, it is relatively easy for them to access information about the career online, to speak to practising doctors, and even to do work shadowing, to decide if that is the career that they would like to pursue. The teacher would only have to help them to decide which university to apply to, and perhaps help them to complete the application form. In contrast, a child from a rural community may not have access to the considerable financial support needed for further education, or may not be able to research the field online, due to lack of connectivity, and may not possess the social capital to enable them to interact personally with people in this career. If learners are not supported at school to find ways to overcome these barriers, their dreams might not be realised.

Various problems have been mentioned in the literature, both nationally and internationally, with regard to career education in life skills education programmes (WHO, 1997). Guidance and career education, as part of the Life Orientation programme, is an important topic, and it has a place in the programme. There seems to be no problem with the programme itself, but the implementation of life skills programmes in South African schools has been problematic. The diverse cultural and socio economic environments learners live in do not make this easier (Donald et al., 2012). This becomes problematic when life skills education needs to accommodate learners across cultures, and teachers have to decide on the inclusion of certain life skills above others when they teach (UNICEF, 2012). Furthermore, sustainable long-term support seems to be a problem when implementing new life skills programmes (Hanbury, 2008; WHO, 1997) in schools.

As a result, there is little evidence that learners are being equipped with the skills that they need to cope with and make constructive choices for their future careers and life after school (Canadian Ministry of Education, 2006), or that the diverse abilities and contexts of learners are being considered (DBE, 2011a; Canada Ministry of Education, 2006). Furthermore, there is no evidence that learners' strengths (DoE, 2006) are being built on to stimulate hope for the future, and to provide them with

knowledge and skills to make constructive choices for life after school. Although the CAPS guidelines for Life Orientation in Grades 10-12 propose that the curriculum “promote knowledge in local contexts” (DBE, 2011a:4), to ensure that all learners acquire and apply knowledge and skills (DBE, 2011a), I argue that teachers do not take into consideration the different needs of different learners, in terms of prospects for life (National Youth Policy, 2014), social capital, and financial support (Kariem & Mbete, 2012).

Teachers are generally not trained to deal with the problematic situations that learners face in their contexts of disadvantage. Circumstantial problems of learners arise in the classroom, and they challenge teachers to deal with these problems, which places an enormous responsibility on teachers (Wood, Ntaote, & Theron, 2012a). The literature reveals that some teachers may cover topics superficially, and in a way that does not relate to learners’ real-life situations (Jacobs, 2011), which contradicts the CAPS general aims for Life Orientation (DBE, 2011a). In addition, career education and guidance is influenced by teachers’ interests and the subjects taught by them, and learners’ aptitudes, interests, and natural strengths and abilities are often not taken into consideration (Khan, Murtaza, & Shafa, 2012).

Based on my own experience, and conversations that I have had with Life Orientation teachers, it seems possible that the subject of Life Orientation in disadvantaged schools is more likely to be side lined, or taught by teachers that are underqualified, few of whom have been trained to teach Life Orientation (Jacobs, 2011). There is a lack of research evidence concerning the effectiveness of career education and guidance; nevertheless, most teachers are not positive about the effects of career education and guidance on learners (Jacobs, 2011). This negative attitude of teachers towards career education and guidance could contribute to the lack of interest shown by teachers in teaching of the topic, and the poor quality of teaching in this topic.

All the problems and challenges of career education and guidance mentioned above seem to result in Life Orientation not being able to “*produce learners that are able to demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by*

*recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation*” (DBE, 2011a, p. 5). The problems faced in career education and guidance seem to directly contradict the general aims of Life Orientation, as stated in CAPS (DBE, 2011a), but in spite of all the negative factors, there is potential and opportunities in the subject of Life Orientation to prepare learners for life after school.

Although efforts from government to make the youth aware of making more constructive life choices seem not to have borne fruit, and the holistic development of learners is neglected in our schools (Nel & Pyne-van Staden, 2014), I believe it is possible to promote the teaching of career education and guidance within the subject of Life Orientation. Learners can be empowered to maximise available opportunities to help them make constructive choices for life after school, so that they become well-adjusted, self-confident, and hopeful, so that they can contribute to “a democratic society, productive economy and improved quality of life” (DBE, 2011a, p. 8). Addressing the diverse needs of learners through an asset-based approach to life skills education can be a preventive measure to overcome barriers that hamper learners’ future life and career choices after school (DBE, 2011a; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001; Nel & Pyne-van Staden, 2014; World Health Organization, 1994), so that they can live healthy, resilient lives in the face of adverse socio-economic contexts.

Effective career education and guidance may help learners become more resilient in challenging circumstances (Pryor & Bright, 2009), if learners are provided with relevant and contextualised knowledge to enable them to identify and develop their assets and strengths (Coetzee et al., 2009). Life Orientation teachers, when teaching the topic of “Careers and career choices”, can help learners to imagine their futures differently, and be more optimistic regarding their futures, rather than focus on the barriers and problems related to their contexts of poverty. Acquiring life skills will help learners to access psychosocial resources, which will create a path for them to navigate their way through challenges and adversities that they may face (WHO, 1999).

For career education and guidance to be effective, it will require a change in teaching approaches in schools, particularly in under-resourced schools, from merely

providing information on the many careers available (Stead et al., 2004), to affording learners opportunities to explore personal suitability for a particular career, or to formulate a personal career trajectory, given the paucity of financial and social resources in their contexts (Maree & Beck, 2004; Maree et al., 2006). This will imply the implementation of innovative pedagogical strategies for teaching and learning in career education and guidance.

There should be more focus on skills education, so that learners can be helped not to focus on the barriers to future careers, but to utilise their assets, so that they can overcome their barriers and still make constructive choices for life after school. This can be achieved through changing pedagogical strategies.

## **2.7 ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES NEEDED FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE**

The main aim of teaching is not to have learners that only achieve academically (Nel & Pyne-van Staden, 2014). If learners do not have the necessary skills to cope with life, they may possibly, despite their academic achievements, not be equipped to overcome personal and social barriers related to their future careers. Many teachers act and teach as though all learners are the same (DBE, 2011b), and this may dispose teachers to stick strictly to teaching of curriculum content, instead of recognising and considering the contextual barriers in which teaching and learning takes place (Mahlangu, 2011).

Limited access to skills education does not mean that learners will learn nothing; rather, it means that they may possibly not experience their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Nel & Pyne-van Staden, 2014). ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) is the difference between what a learner is capable of doing on their own, through independent problem solving, and the potential development the learner is capable of with the help of more capable individuals, where this process is referred to as “scaffolding”. Through the process of scaffolding, the learner gradually develops the ability to master the task (McLeod, 2012). Without the teacher’s scaffolding and mentorship or facilitation in career education and guidance, learners might not break

through their zone of proximal development, to explore their own assets and to develop in the world around them (Communications Division for Early Childhood Strategy, 2012), and to make constructive choices for life after school. For teachers teaching in disadvantaged socio-economic contexts and diverse cultural contexts, a different career education and guidance approach with learners is needed to supplement the prescribed content, to serve as a strategy to stimulate hope in the learners for their future, because “hope, purpose, and a meaningful life” enhance well-being, positive goal orientation, and good life choices (Duke et al., 2011, p. 87).

Teachers can assist learners to perceive the contexts in which they live, and then to accommodate the perceived evidence which they are confronted with, by using participatory pedagogical skills. Participatory methods could equip learners with skills to identify barriers and assets, so that they can adapt to contextual circumstances and make constructive choices for life after school (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

## **2.8 THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO CAREER GUIDANCE**

The asset-based approach is based on the ecosystemic perspective (Donald et al., 2012) and the asset-based theory (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The ecosystemic perspective describes the interaction between the learner and systems that influence the learner (such as the social system, the community, the family, school, friends, and the peer group) in various environments (Donald et al., 2012; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). By determining the assets in each of these ecosystems and levels, the focus is on assets, rather than on barriers (Donald et al., 2012; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006)). The purpose of the participatory visual method, namely the mind map exercise on the barriers and assets that learners perceive with regard to their future careers, which will be used for data generation in this study, is to help learners to identify assets and barriers on the three levels mentioned above. From previous experience, it is evident that learners focus on assets, which highlights the interactive, interdependent, and reciprocal action that takes place between the individual and their social context (Donald et al., 2012; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

The transition from school to work or further studies is a time when career barriers become a reality for learners having to make choices for life after school (Pryor & Bright, 2009; Stead et al., 2004). Learners' career choices may be negatively influenced by career barriers, whether these perceived barriers are real or imaginary (Stead et al., 2004), hence the need for career education and guidance to increase positive and adaptive behaviour, by minimising factors that place individuals at risk, and maximising protective factors, for a positive career outcome. Where career barriers are a reality for learners (Pryor & Bright, 2009; Stead et al., 2004), an asset-based approach to life planning could be beneficial for constructive life and career choices and planning.

There is a relationship between barriers, contextual influences, and personal factors (Stead et al., 2004). By focusing on assets, rather than on the problems that learners encounter (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011), I aim to explore how the use of participatory visual strategies could stimulate hope for the future, by developing resilient coping mechanisms through an asset-based approach, so that learners can make constructive choices for life after school. This could assist learners in terms of planning for a successful future in the transition from school to career or further education (Dawson, 2009).

The asset-based approach acknowledges the social context from which problems arise, while the needs-based approach is based on the medical model, and mainly focuses on the need, problem, or defect that requires professional intervention (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). In contrast to the needs-based approach, the asset-based approach (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) is innovative, capacity-building, a more holistic approach, and it considers contextual influences (Donald et al., 2012; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). The asset-based approach opens the possibility of participation, building relationships, and collaboration (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) in any setting, including the classroom. The asset-based approach utilises and strengthens internal assets of the individual (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006), which are referred to as "protective factors". These protective factors support the development of relationship building, problem-solving skills, goal-directedness, creativity, and an internal locus of control (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001).



Learners have internal resources or assets (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001) at their disposal, but often the assets are not used calculatedly, or with intent (McLean, 2011:2). It is possible that learners do not realise the positive and strengthening effect that their internal resources may have on their future life choices if utilised (King & Madsen, 2007). Therefore, it is important to help learners to recognise their internal (personal) resources. This could help them to identify assets, through use of the asset-based approach, which will enable them to identify and utilise protective factors that could support them through risks and hardships (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

The asset-based approach is fundamental for career interventions in the South African context (Coetzee et al., 2009; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). I make the assumption that the asset-based approach, which focuses on abilities and strengths, opens the likelihood of different, yet empowering, interventions by teachers in career education and guidance. Internal protective factors can be developed when teachers engage learners in “conversations and interactions”, and can guide learners to “recognize and grow” them (Henderson, 2013, p. 22).

Although the asset-based approach focuses on learners’ strengths, the identification of barriers remains an essential part of the asset-based process (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001) and therefore exploring assets will form part of the visual methods used in this research. If barriers remain the main focus, it could lead to despair and hopelessness among learners. Internal focus and empowerment leads to hopeful thinking (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006), and there is potential in the asset-based approach to enable learners to rather find pathways (resilience) to overcome their barriers (King & Madsen, 2007).

Teachers can build on learners’ abilities (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003) through an asset-based approach, to counteract feelings of hopelessness among learners. If teachers, through using participatory visual methods, can stimulate optimism and hope in learners regarding their future careers, it could encourage enthusiasm to plan, to act on these plans, and to recognise and maximise personal, family and community assets (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

Hope theory and resilience theory are both grounded in positive psychology (Snyder, 2002). When individuals think and believe that they will find pathways to reach the goals they set, it is referred to as hope. Hope is an emotional state that helps to motivate the individual to use these pathways in order to reach their goals. During changing circumstances, resilience sustains the chosen pathways (Pisano, 2012).

## **2.9 HOPE AND RESILIENCE**

Snyder (2002) defines hope as a positive motivational state derived from the interaction between goal-directedness, pathways, and agency. Goal setting, whether short-term or long-term, is the cognitive aspect of hope theory, although hope is both a cognitive and an emotional construct (Dew-Reeves, Athay, & Kelley, 2012). To reach goals, individuals make plans or search for pathways to meet the set goals (Snyder, 2002), and hope is one of these pathways (Dew-Reeves et al., 2012). A high-hope individual has confidence in the chosen pathway, and is more decisive about it than is a low-hope individual. A high-hope individual plans alternative routes, and is more flexible to adapt to changes, while a low-hope individual plans as needed, and is less flexible in adapting plans. Agency is utilisation of the pathways to reach the desired goals. High-hope individuals have positive thoughts about the chosen pathway, and are motivated to reach the set goals (Snyder, 2002). High-hope individuals also have more expectancy for a better career and future (Stoddard & Garcia, 2011).

When learners experience barriers, the emotions resulting from the experiences may affect hopeful thinking, because hopeful thinking depends on identifying pathways and positive agency thoughts. Negative thoughts could interfere with goal setting and the finding of pathways to realise these goals, which, in turn, could affect agency thinking. Individuals that are high in hope show positive emotions, while individuals that are low in hope show negative emotions (Snyder, 2002). In this study, I aim to explore whether participatory visual strategies could stimulate hopeful thinking, to orientate and guide learners to make more constructive life and career choices.

Larson (2013) argues that hope is more than survival, that survival is not necessarily an indicator of thriving, and that to thrive, youth need to find hope. In conclusion, when learners are hopeful, life should become more meaningful and purposeful for them, thereby increasing their resilience. This may contribute to personal wellness, and will serve as a buffer against the making of negative choices for life after school (Duke et al., 2011). If learners are made aware of both personal and environmental protective factors as resources to strengthen their coping abilities, they can be empowered to build resilience in severe adverse circumstances.

Resilience is a product of the interactions between and among external risk factors, protective factors, and a person's internal resources (Ungar et al., 2013). When learners are exposed to adversity, resilience is the ability of youth to negotiate for and find ways to utilise resources, to steer a way through the adverse circumstances, towards the available internal and external resources, so as to sustain personal well-being (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011; Ungar et al., 2013). Research (Ungar, 2008) shows that resilience has universal common influential factors, but that these factors can be culture- and context-specific. Seven cross-cultural qualitative aspects that contribute to young people's resilience can be identified, but the amount of influence on the young person, the interaction between the influential factor and the young person, and the way the young person navigates their way through barriers differs, and is culture- and context-specific. Aspects of internal and external assets can be placed under strain in adverse circumstances, a phenomenon that has been referred to as a "tension" by Ungar (2008, p. 231). The tensions identified by Ungar (2008, p. 231) are listed in table 2.2:

**Table 2:2: Tensions identified by Ungar**

<b>TENSION</b>	<b>EXPLANATION</b>
<b>Access to material resources</b>	Availability of financial, educational, medical and employment assistance, resources, or opportunities, as well as access to food, clothing, and shelter
<b>Relationships</b>	Relationships with significant others, peers, and adults within one's family and community
<b>Identity</b>	Personal and collective senses of purpose, self-appraisal of strengths and weaknesses, aspirations, beliefs, and values, including spiritual and religious identification
<b>Power and control</b>	Experiences of caring for oneself and others; ability to effect change in one's social and physical environment, in order to access health resources
<b>Cultural adherence</b>	Adherence to one's local and/or global cultural practices, values, and beliefs
<b>Social justice</b>	Experiences related to finding a meaningful role in community and social equality
<b>Cohesion</b>	Balancing one's personal interests with a sense of responsibility towards the greater good; a feeling of being part of something larger than oneself, socially and spiritually

Source: (Ungar, 2008, p. 231).

Several studies have shown that teachers are perfectly able to influence resilient coping in learners, given the correct professional guidance (Wood et al., 2012a; Wood, Theron, & Mayaba, 2012b). Thus I wanted to explore how teachers could help learners develop this skill in relation to planning for their life after school (Coetzee et al., 2009) and to help learners understand the balance between their risk factors (their barriers) and their protective factors (their assets) (King & Madsen, 2007), to acquire a skill that they could use in making constructive life choices, both now and in the future.

It is of value to explore two strategies for this research, to help learners identify and explore assets which can be utilised as resources. This could stimulate learners to hope, since hope is an important indicator of resilience (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011) and resilience strengthens coping abilities (Malik, 2013).

## **2.10 SUMMARY**

This chapter elaborated on the importance of career education and guidance in preparing Grade 12 learners for life after school. Career education and guidance in South Africa, and specifically the topic of “Careers and career choices” within the subject of Life Orientation, was discussed, to conceptualise the important role of career education and guidance for Grade 12 learners. A brief explanation of the terms “career education”, “career guidance”, and “career counselling” was given, followed by a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of a life skills approach and a motivation for the need for career education and guidance to be included as part of life skills education. “Careers and career choices” as a topic in Life Orientation, as stated in the general aims of CAPS, was placed under focus, with a discussion of career education and guidance in the South African school curriculum. Challenges encountered in the teaching of career education and guidance were discussed, and then compared with the stated aims of this part of life skills education. Motivation was made for a new approach in pedagogical strategies in the South African context to help Grade 12 learners make constructive choices for life after school. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the asset-based approach, with hope theory and resilience theory as theoretical underpinnings, to motivate that it is possible for teachers to influence resilient coping in learners, and as an opportunity to prepare learners for making constructive choices for life after school.

**CHAPTER 3:**  
**THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN  
AND METHODOLOGY**

**3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Research is a systematic process of inquiry within a specific context, to try to find answers to questions, or to empower individuals to understand, describe, predict, control, or change a phenomenon under investigation. This is achieved through the design of a research protocol, including collection, analysis, and interpretation of gathered data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 11).

In this chapter I explain and justify my choice of an interpretive research paradigm, which is suited to a qualitative research design (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). I draw on constructivism and critical theory to answer my research question, namely “How can participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, be used to effectively orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?”, and the secondary question, namely “What guidelines can be developed for Life Orientation teachers for the use of participatory visual strategies to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?”

I justify the participant selection criteria used, the procedure that I followed in choosing the participants, the methods of inquiry that I used to capture, code, and categorise the data, and the methods that I used to analyse the data. I also discuss the trustworthiness of the data generated, and I explain the ethical considerations relevant to this study.

**3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

In the search for new knowledge, research serves as a means to gain knowledge, so as to enable a better understanding of the world we live in. Our view of the world determines how we understand the world (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2012) and

our research paradigms are based on this world view or set of assumptions, beliefs (Nieuwenhuis, 2012), perceptions, and ideas to justify how the world works, and the behaviours that result from these assumptions, perceptions, and ideas (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Huitt, 2011). A world view, in turn, allows for the construction of a universal representation or framework for a research methodology paradigm (Huitt, 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2012). These principles or beliefs incorporate assumptions about ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge), and methodology (the procedure followed when conducting research) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Nieuwenhuis, 2012), as the basis for establishing a research paradigm (Scotland, 2012).

The paradigm adopted by the researcher influences how they formulate the research problem, and how they will search for information to answer the research question or questions. The paradigm also determines the research approach, and it influences the choice of methodology and methods (Scotland, 2012). The chosen paradigm for the research will also influence the way the researcher navigates their way through the research, and the research material (De Vos, 2005).

Qualitative approaches to research have foundations in philosophical traditions, but with different epistemological and ontological assumptions and methodological considerations (Creswell, 2013; Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2012). The main underlying paradigms of qualitative approaches are constructivism and critical theory (Nieuwenhuis, 2012, pp. 56-57). The constructivist paradigm is rooted in interpretivism (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). This qualitative study was guided by a constructivist paradigm, where the participating learners had to try to understand, construct, and represent their own knowledge of the world they live in (Nieuwenhuis, 2012), individually and/or collaboratively (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The interpretive approach assumes that we can access reality only when individuals socially construct meaning from their subjective experiences (Huitt, 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2012). The two visual research methods, namely mind mapping and photovoice, and the focus group discussion used in this study allowed me to generate and interpret data that allowed Grade 12 learners to construct meaning about their lived context. This gave me insight into their social world, to help me to answer the research

questions (see section 3.1). Diverse paradigms are interpreted from a framework of varying ontological and epistemological views and assumptions (Creswell, 2013). The constructivist paradigm considers and underwrites *relativist ontology* (relativism), *subjectivist epistemology*, and a *naturalistic methodology* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

*Ontology* is the study of the human being and the nature of reality (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) in the social world (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). Ontology refers to what underpins reality or being (Scotland, 2012, p. 9), and it accepts that reality has multiple facets (Creswell, 2013). Ontology comprises the assumptions about what there is in the world that we may try to know or understand (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011) – in short, ontology asks the *What is?* question. According to relativism, reality is subjective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scotland, 2012), and can only be known through socially constructed meaning (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). Reality is interpreted differently by different individuals (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011; Scotland, 2012), and is constructed by the individual through interaction between them and the social world (Scotland, 2012). The ontological question is whether reality can subsist without the human individual's own assumptions, apprehensions, and interpretations of their lived reality. The ontological question furthermore has to explore if there are similar or shared social realities among individuals, which gives meaning to how the individual constructs reality through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially (De Gialdino, 2009), or if there are numerous context-bound realities, and whether these realities are inflexible, or whether they can be flexible and generalised (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). If the realities are flexible, it will result in multiple constructed realities rather than a single reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Ritchie & Lewis, 2011).

The ontological position in this study is that the individual and the social world exist independently, but that the individual subjectively forms an understanding of the social world, as I can access understanding of the research problem through interpretation of the data gathered from the Grade 12 learners that participated in the research. The diverse understandings of reality by the research participants in the social world will assist me as the researcher to capture the various conceptions of how the participants see their reality (Creswell, 2013; Ritchie & Lewis, 2011).



*Epistemology* is concerned with what contributes to and constitutes knowledge (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), how knowledge is obtained, the nature of knowledge, and the different forms of knowledge. Epistemology asks the question *What is the nature of the relationship between the individual who inquires and what can supposedly be known?* (Scotland, 2012, p. 9). Epistemological assumptions explain the way knowledge is created, acquired, and communicated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scotland, 2012), and how we justify knowledge (Creswell, 2013). Epistemology will lead the researcher to also ask *What does it mean to know?* (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scotland, 2012)

Subjectivist epistemology is concerned with what constitutes social knowledge (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011), and how it is obtained (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and justified (Creswell, 2013). It assumes that the individual cannot separate themselves from what they know, and how they understand the connection between who they are and how they understand themselves and others in society. Understandings are therefore co-created (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The constructivist paradigm that I adopt in this study underwrites subjectivist epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Individuals have their own assumptions and beliefs about the world they live in (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). I can access these assumptions and beliefs through my analysis of the visual data provided by the participants in the study.

*Methodology* is the process that is followed in research (Creswell, 2013), and it involves the mode of enquiry, location of the research site, selection of participants, data-collection and -analysis techniques, the role of the researcher, and the validity of the findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2012). The constructivist paradigm underwrites a naturalistic methodology, which means that the research takes place in the natural social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The naturalistic methodology in this qualitative case study influenced the choice of research methods, namely mind mapping, photovoice, and a focus group discussion. I chose these methods, because in a naturalistic methodology, the researcher only observes or facilitates the data-collection process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Data was generated in the Grade 12 learners' natural context of the classroom. The interpretive paradigm is thus suited to the characteristics of a qualitative research

design, since it focuses on social phenomena in specific contexts or situations (De Gialdino, 2009).

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is the plan that will be followed by the researcher when conducting a study (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). In seeking answers to explore or explain a phenomenon or problem (Creswell, 2013), the research design will determine the methods of data collection and interpretation, and the way the data is related to the research questions. This enables the researcher to draw conclusions, considering the purpose of the study (Fouché & Delport, 2005). Careful planning of the research design is therefore important, so that the data collected as evidence, and the interpretation of the data, will answer the research questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In this study, influenced by my constructivist paradigm, I chose to use a qualitative research design.

Qualitative research uses a “wide and deep angle lens” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 35) to investigate individuals’ choices and behaviours in their contexts. When the researcher studies the complexities of a phenomenon or situation that exists in the contexts of individuals, they have to find reasons or explanations for the phenomenon or situation explored.

Although qualitative research allows for different approaches and philosophical assumptions, there are common features of qualitative research designs. The common features include characteristics related to who and what is being studied, methodological characteristics, and characteristics related to the goal of the inquiry (De Gialdino, 2009). In the paragraphs that follow I motivate my choice of a qualitative enquiry, by discussing the common characteristics of qualitative research designs.

Qualitative research as a scientific method is *exploratory*, and it aims to generate or construct new knowledge from the data that is collected during fieldwork (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), so as to develop new grounded theories or modify and/or expand on the theories that underpin a study (De Gialdino, 2009). As a result, new

perspectives can be added to what is already known (Gobo, 2005; Morse, 2003). This was attempted in this study, where the aim was to understand each participant's view and thinking regarding life choices after school, in the participant's own context, influenced by the constructs of hope and resilience, as theoretical underpinnings of the study. Using a qualitative design, the study can give a holistic picture of how context influences the participants' choices for life after school, but also of how the participants respond to these influences (Donald et al., 2012; Maxwell, 2004).

Qualitative research is an *interactive* process (Creswell, 2013), which strives to understand and explore how individuals understand the world, and how this understanding is portrayed in individuals' lives, in their behaviour, and in the way they interact with each other in the world (De Gialdino, 2009). As is the case in this study, a qualitative research approach allows participants to attach meaning to and give account of their own personal viewpoints of life experiences (Atkinson, 2005; De Gialdino, 2009), and to share these experiences with each other (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to gather data in participants' *natural settings* or environments, using interactive modes of enquiry (Nieuwenhuis, 2012) and multiple methods of data collection (Creswell, 2013). The data gathered is situational and contextual, which makes it unpredictable (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The fieldwork in this study was conducted at the venue where the life skills course was conducted, so learners participated in the research in their natural setting.

Qualitative research is *interpretive* (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The qualitative researcher aims to understand the many facets of reality and phenomena under investigation, to learn more about them, without being biased (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). When a phenomenon is explored, multiple truths are uncovered (Nieuwenhuis, 2012); for this reason, the role of the researcher should be made clear (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In this study, my role will be to gather and interpret data on whether the use of visual methods can help learners to make constructive choices for life after school. I will be careful not to let my personal views influence the views of the participant learners.

Researchers can use both inductive and deductive reasoning (Creswell, 2013), although qualitative researchers prefer an *inductive* approach to data analysis, as a deductive approach fits better with a positivist paradigm (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Inductive analysis and creative synthesis enables the researcher to explore the detail in the data, which allows for identification of patterns, themes, and interrelationships among the units of analysis. This helps the researcher to have a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In this study, inductive data analysis was done. Furthermore, inductive reasoning is more flexible, which allowed me to be sensitive to both the participants and the context in which the data was collected (De Gialdino, 2009; Gobo, 2005).

Qualitative data is *descriptive* in nature (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Qualitative researchers are not looking for one truth, but, rather, are exploring the complex nature of a particular phenomenon, or the complexity of a situation that individuals find themselves in, to find reasons or explanations for the situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The views and opinions of the participants regarding the phenomenon in question are accommodated (Creswell, 2013), and meaning and significance is attached to the outcome of the thinking process (Ellis, 2004). The researcher can draw conclusions from the meanings that participants attach to their experiences, so that the holistic nature of the experience or problem is accounted for (Creswell, 2013; De Gialdino, 2009). In this study I analysed and interpreted the data for characteristics of hope and resilience, so that I could draw conclusions from the participants' own interpretation of their lived contexts, and I then reported my conclusions in the form of a descriptive narrative.

Lastly, qualitative research allows the researcher to gather, interpret, and report on information through research in a *constantly changing world* (Creswell, 2013), considering the different processes and changes that take place in social contexts, and how these processes and changes are perceived by the individual (De Gialdino, 2009; Mason, 2006). The qualitative approach used in this study allowed the participants to interrogate their experiences in this context.

### **3.3.1 Research methods**

Research methods are the techniques used when data is collected (Nieuwenhuis, 2012) for the purpose of answering the research question (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Research methods provide the procedures to be followed by the researcher to select the participants and collect and analyse the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In the following sections, I describe the methods I used to select participants and gather and analyse the data.

#### ***3.3.1.1 Participant selection***

In my capacity as a Life Orientation lecturer, every year I facilitate a life skills course of 12 hours in total, as part of a community service to a gathering of Grade 12 learners from five rural and disadvantaged schools in the Rustenburg area, at a selected venue near Rustenburg. The course is non-compulsory. The course includes a career guidance component, in which learners are guided in making career choices. The participants in this qualitative study are Grade 12 Life Orientation learners who attended this course on life skills. Participation in this qualitative study was voluntary; hence, a purposefully selected availability sampling strategy (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) was used.

I asked for volunteers of 18 years of age and older, since the course was a week-long residential one, and the learners were thus not able to ask their parents to give consent. Thirteen learners volunteered to participate in the research, nine females and four males.

The first intervention, namely the mind-mapping exercise, was compulsory. All learners had to participate, since this is part of my planned presentation in all the courses I present. However, I only analysed the mind maps of the thirteen learners over 18 who volunteered.

For the second intervention, where I aimed to generate data by means of photovoice and a focus group discussion, Those learners of 18 years of age and older were able to give their own consent. No other criteria were set.

**Table 3.1: Demographic characteristics of the learners that participated in the research**

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<b>SCHOOL AREA</b>
1	Female	18	Setswana	Mogwase
2	Female	18	Setswana	Mogwase
3	Male	18	Setswana	Mogwase
4	Female	18	Setswana	Mogwase
5	Female	18	Setswana	Mogwase
6	Female	18	Setswana	Mogwase
7	Female	18	Setswana	Mogwase
8	Female	18	Setswana	Mogwase
9	Male	18	Setswana	Mogwase
10	Female	18	Setswana	Mogwase
11	Male	18	Setswana	Saulspoort
12	Male	18	Setswana	Not indicated
13	Female	18	Setswana	Not indicated

### **3.3.1.2 Qualitative data generation**

There are several data-generation methods that are suited to a qualitative research design, such as interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2012), focus group discussions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2012), observations, field notes (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), document analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Nieuwenhuis, 2012), and other more participatory strategies, such as visual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) and arts-based methods (Greenwood, 2012). Leedy and Ormrod (2013, p. 80) propose that there are four fundamental questions to be answered relating to data, namely what data is needed, the location of the data, how the data will be obtained, and how the data will be interpreted.

In this study I use participatory methods, and so I will use the term “data generation”, rather than “data collection”, as the participants were actively involved in generating the artefacts that served as data. I opted to use visual methods, namely mind maps and photo artefacts with narratives (Wang, 1999) followed by a focus group discussion of the participants’ visual artefacts and narratives, in accordance with my interpretive methodological paradigm (see section 3.2).

I used three qualitative *data-generation methods* to generate the data needed to explore the research questions: (a) mind maps drawn by and collected from the 13 Grade 12 learners attending the life skills session; (b) photo artefacts with narratives (Wang, 1999), created by the 13 participating Grade 12 learners; and (c) a recorded focus group discussion of the 13 participants’ experiences of creating the mind map and doing the photovoice exercise.

I used visual methods, because they make data more explicit, and they contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the research problem (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). Visual methods are predicated on assumptions of constructivism, since the participant is actively involved in knowledge construction (Novak & Cañas, 2008), and knowledge is constructed through multiple realities and co-constructed views, through individuals interacting about perceived realities (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010; Novak & Cañas, 2008). I was working with youth, so I used these methods to keep them interested in the activity. Visual methods are participatory (Mannay, 2013;

Richards, 2011), and they can be created without the influence of the researcher (Mannay, 2013).

Visual methods are fun for youth to use (Allen, 2013; Richards, 2011), and data from visual methods represents both *what* the participant wants to reveal, and *how* they want to reveal it. This gives them control over the research process, which, in turn, motivates participation (Richards, 2011). Visual methods are especially popular to use with children and youth (Skovdal, 2011), since they promote collaboration (Allen, 2013), and they are a non-threatening way to reveal or talk about sensitive issues (De Lange, 2012). Furthermore, they provide concrete artefacts which can be discussed at a later stage (Enright, 2013; Petheram, High, Campbell, & Stacey, 2011).

The two visual representations of assets and barriers that were used were flexible strategies (Dabula & Makura, 2013), as learners could choose the assets and/or the barriers that they wanted to mind-map and photograph. Furthermore, these two visual strategies can be applied in any social context, so they are culturally appropriate, they stimulate critical reflection (Cleland & Wyborn, 2010), they are proactive (Dabula & Makura, 2013), and they can act as a stimulus for the potential for change (Cleland & Wyborn, 2010). Both these strategies are colourful, visual, concrete, and interactive (Wang & Burris, 1997), and they are suitable for the varied literacy levels of the participants (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012).

#### 3.3.1.2.1 Mind maps

Joseph Novak developed the technique of concept mapping in 1970 (Novak & Musonda, 1991), which was based on assimilation (cognitive theory) (Novak & Cañas, 2008). Concept mapping, or the use of conceptual diagrams, is a visual approach in qualitative enquiry (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). A mind map is a diagram (Buzan, 2012) or graphic tool (Novak & Cañas, 2008) that is used to categorise information or ideas (Buzan, 2012), to show the relationships between concepts, and to organise and structure perceived knowledge (Novak & Cañas, 2008). In this study, I used mind maps to help learners identify the assets and the



barriers influencing their future careers. My motivation for choosing mind mapping was that this method suited the situation and time constraints for data generation. Another motivation for choosing mind mapping is that it reflects personal views, and it helps to unlock creative thinking (Novak & Cañas, 2008). Mind maps also help people to think about the links between concepts and structures (Abdelraheem & Asan, 2006; Villalon & Calvo, 2011). A mind map also serves as a stimulus for later in-depth discussion (Novak & Cañas, 2008; Villalon & Calvo, 2011).

Relevant prior knowledge is needed before a mind map can be drawn (Birbili, 2006; Villalon & Calvo, 2011); consequently, I explained to the learners how different aspects or systems in their lives interact with each other (Donald et al., 2012) to create prior knowledge. Participants were given the following prompt: “*Reflect on and consider the interaction and interdependence within the subsystems (family, school, peers or friends) where you live. Classify the influences of each subsystem as either an asset or a barrier to your future career, and draw a mind map.*” All the learners knew how to draw mind maps, so the technique of drawing mind maps was not part of the explanation.

#### 3.3.1.2.2 Photovoice

The second method of data generation used was photovoice. Photovoice, developed by Caroline Wang and Ann Burris (Wang & Burris, 1997), is a participatory visual method, also known as picture voice, which was initially used for community-based participatory action research. It has been successfully used with youth (Skovdal, 2011) in the fields of public health and education, although it is not exclusive to these fields. Photovoice is a technique used by individuals to “identify, represent and enhance their community” through the experience of taking photographs of their lived realities (Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000). Photovoice is based on the assumption that an individual understands their own life best. Photovoice is used to question problems or situations, to discuss these with other individuals (including policy makers), and through this, bring about change (Wang, Morel-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004).

Participants were shown some examples of photographs and narratives, to illustrate the use of photovoice. Participants were trained in photography techniques, how to operate the disposable camera, and ethical considerations in the taking of photographs (Lal, Jarus, & Suto, 2012; Wang, 1999). The strategy that I used in this study is indicated in table 3.2.

Participants were given a prompt to take photographs of images that reflect the assets and the barriers related to their future careers, as reflected in their own mind maps. Participants then had to choose at least five photographs and write narratives about them, in accordance with the SHOWED method (Wang, 1999) (see table 3.2), bearing in mind that they would have to share their narratives with the group in the group discussion. Narratives provide information that can assist an individual, group, or community to address problems (Lal et al., 2012; Wang, 1999). Participants then participated in a group discussion to discuss their photographs and their narratives.

The use of photovoice as visual method guided participants to capture and express perceived and true realities of life, as reflected in a photograph, and it helped them to document the assets and the barriers influencing the participants' future careers. The participants were able to explore and reflect on realities in interactive systems (Le Dantec & Poole, 2008) in their individual ecologies. Another advantage of using photovoice as a research method was that it encouraged dialogue between the participants and myself as researcher (Wang, 1999). Furthermore, photovoice is often used as a tool to engage children and youth as a way for them to communicate their views (Skovdal, 2011).

#### 3.3.1.2.3 Focus group discussion

I used a focus group discussion, since this is an interactive way for participants to voice their own ideas, and through discussion respond to one another's comments (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). It is a useful strategy, as it complements other methods of collecting data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), since the responses of the participants initiate discussion of the issue, and this, in turn, creates detailed and in-depth data (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). A focus group discussion is a group interview

which, ideally, is conducted in a group of five to 12 participants. Through a focus group discussion, new views and ideas can be aired concerning the phenomenon under investigation (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). There are, however, limitations to focus group discussions. Although some participants may find the focus group discussion threatening, they may, on the other hand, be encouraged by the dynamics of the group to share their views as result of the responsiveness of other participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Care was taken to include all the participants, by asking them whether they would like to respond, but if they did not, they were not pressured into responding.

Participants in this study took part in a group discussion to share and discuss the five photographs and narratives that they had chosen, as well as the mind map that they had drawn (see table 3.2). I facilitated the discussion and posed unstructured open-ended questions (Nieuwenhuis, 2012), based on the course of the discussion. I asked learners about their mind maps and photographs and narratives, with the purpose of engaging them in sharing their views, and encouraging participation and discussion, e.g. I asked any voluntary participant to start the discussion by choosing a photograph and to tell us what it is about. During the discussion I posed questions like: “why is it a barrier to you?”; “how do you feel it influences your future career?” and “how does it motivate you?”

The discussion allowed the learners to elaborate on their own thinking, and learn from the thinking of others, to help them think critically about the choices they have to make for life after school. Hearing how others have coped with certain barriers could make learners aware of coping strategies that could enable them to protect themselves from barriers that they foresee (Bonanno, Field, Kovacevic, & Kaltman, 2002; Community and Regional Resilience Institute (CARRI), 2013). The discussion was audio-recorded. Each participant used the same number allocated to them for the two visual exercises, so that I would be able to identify the participant when I transcribed the recording.

My motivation for choosing a focus group discussion as research method was that it created a space where participants could talk about their respective visual

representations of the assets and the barriers that influence their future careers, and what meaning they held for them. I wanted this to lead to a deeper understanding of their life circumstances, through the discussion of complex personal issues (Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2009) so as to construct social knowledge (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Collaborative learning among participants could be encouraged during the participants' interrogation of the visual evidence during the group discussion (Eison, 2010). When the participants critically reflected on the mind maps and the photographs (Cleland & Wyborn, 2010) in the focus group discussion, it generated views and perspectives which could enhance the possibility of change to more constructive thinking about participants' choices for life after school.

Table 3.2 gives an overview of the data-generation strategies and interventions used, mind mapping and photovoice, and the focus group discussion.

**Table 3.2: An overview of the data-generation strategies and interventions used**

DATA-GENERATION STRATEGIES	PROCESS	PURPOSE
Mind mapping	All the learners plotted their perceived barriers and assets concerning their future career on a mind map (Wheeldon, 2011).	To help the learners visualise their barriers and their assets to increase their self-knowledge about influences on their future career and prospects for life.
Photovoice	<p>The concept of photovoice (Wang, 1999) was explained to the learners.</p> <p>Disposable cameras were issued to the 13 participants. Instructions for use were given, and ethical considerations in the taking of photographs were explained (Wang, 1999).</p> <p>A prompt was given to the group: to take at least 12 photographs representing the barriers and/or the assets related to their future career (Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock, &amp; Havelock, 2009; Wang, 1999).</p> <p>Photographs were printed and handed back to the learners.</p> <p>Each participant had to choose at least five photographs to discuss in the group. Each photograph was numbered, and participants had to write a narrative to explain each photograph, in accordance with the SHOWED method (see Wang, 1999), where the narrative had to include answers to the following questions:</p>	

DATA-GENERATION STRATEGIES	PROCESS	PURPOSE
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you see?</li> <li>2. What is really happening?</li> <li>3. How does this relate to your life?</li> <li>4. Why does this problem/issue or strength exist?</li> <li>5. How can you be empowered by your understanding?</li> <li>6. What can you do to address this problem/ issue? (Adapted from Wang, 1999).</li> </ol> <p>Learners also had to write a short narrative on their experience of taking the photographs.</p>	
<p><b>Focus group discussion</b></p>	<p>An unstructured focus group discussion (Nieuwenhuis, 2012) was conducted, where participants were facilitated to discuss their mind maps, their photographs, and their narratives with each other.</p>	<p>For learners to share ideas, elaborate on own experiences, and engage in dialogue, so as to promote deep learning (Palibroda et al., 2009).</p> <p>To deepen learners' understanding of their own choices regarding career and life planning.</p> <p>To raise awareness of positive coping strategies, which could protect learners from the barriers that they foresee.</p>

### 3.3.2 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process used to bring order, structure (Strydom & Delport, 2005), and meaning (Merriam, 2009) to data. The researcher observes individual sets of data to identify patterns or categories within the data, with the purpose of organising the data. Qualitative data analysis allows the researcher to make use of inductive reasoning to provide evidence for the conclusions made from the data that was generated, by seeking patterns that the data reflects (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Inductive data analysis is suited to the interpretive paradigm, as multiple realities are revealed from the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2012).

In this study, I used an inductive approach to data analysis, by studying the themes derived from the individual data sets, guided by hope theory and resilience theory. I tried to be as objective and neutral as possible during generation, interpretation, and reporting of the data (Creswell, 2013), and I aimed to represent clearly the participants' views and understandings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011).

Coding is a process through which units of data are segmented and labelled with a symbol, word, or category name (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), so as to facilitate analysis (Saldana, 2009). Coding makes data more manageable, and multiple coding minimises errors and increases the reliability of the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). An independent re-coder and I individually coded the data, generating inductive codes directly from the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), before coming together to reach consensus about the themes that emerged (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). The steps followed in the thematic analysis were in accordance with Tesch's (1990) eight steps in data analysis (Creswell, 2013), which are summarised in table 3.3.

**Table 3.3: Tesch’s (1990) eight steps in data analysis, adapted from Creswell (2008)**

<b>STEPS</b>	
<b>1</b>	Read the mind maps, photovoice narratives, and the transcript from the focus group discussion, to get a general picture of the data.
<b>2</b>	Work from one document, and determine what it is about. Repeat with all the other documents. List the emerging topics in clusters, according to similar topics.
<b>3</b>	Categorise the topics in columns: major topics, unique topics, and outlying topics.
<b>4</b>	Refer back to the data. Code each topic, and write the codes next to relevant parts in the text. New topics/codes and categories could emerge.
<b>5</b>	Write a description of each topic, and place them in categories. Reduce the number of categories, by placing topics which relate to each other in groups. Draw lines between categories, so as to show any interrelationships.
<b>6</b>	Make a final decision on the abbreviation that will be used for each category, then list the abbreviations in alphabetical order.
<b>7</b>	Data from each category must be placed together, to enable preliminary analysis.
<b>8</b>	Recode the data if necessary.

### **3.4 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

As researcher, I adopted the role of a facilitator, so as to guide the research (Mouton, 2006). My tasks were:



- to be as unbiased as possible through the entire research process. Bias is any interference that will influence sampling or the data, whether during collection or analysis of the data, e.g. the researcher's tone of voice when posing questions during the group discussion (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).
- to facilitate the drawing of the mind maps. I explained the procedure to the participants, but tried to resist giving them examples that could influence their views. Although the systems theory format, which was the theoretical basis for the mind map construction, could have limited their creativity.
- to explain to participants what photovoice is, to train them on how to operate the disposable camera, and to explain the ethical considerations in the taking of photographs.
- to facilitate and structure the group discussion. I aimed to stay unbiased, and avoid posing leading questions. All participants were encouraged to participate in the discussion.
- to triangulate the data, to ensure interpretive validity and trustworthiness of the data (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2012).

### **3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE DATA**

I used Guba's (1981) model to ensure trustworthiness of the data in the study. The model describes the four general criteria for evaluation of data, based on the philosophy of qualitative approaches, namely truth value (credibility), applicability (transferability), consistency (dependability), and neutrality (confirmability) (Guba, 1981).

Truth value refers to the researcher's confidence in whether the findings were presented adequately, as derived from multiple understandings in a specific context. Truth value in this study was ensured by using multiple sources of data generation, detailed description of the data analysis, and the use of a re-coder.

Applicability refers to the possibility of applying the findings to other groups in other contexts (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991). Transferability, as a criterion of applicability, is met when the research can be conducted in other similar contexts and the same research aims are met (Krefting, 1991). The research methods used in this study were explained in detail, so that another researcher can apply the same research process to other groups, although the purpose of qualitative research is not to make generalisations to other contexts, but rather to describe the research process well, so that other researchers can transfer to other contexts, should they wish (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991).

Consistency refers to whether the same findings can be expected if the research were to be repeated in the same group or context, or by another person with the same group. The criterion of dependability was enhanced by careful description of the research process, and also by the consistent results that I have experienced, as I do the mind-mapping exercise with every Grade 12 group that I teach. The use of an independent re-coder also increased consistency (Nieuwenhuis, 2012), as it helped to prevent misinterpretation of the data (Stake, 2010).

Confirmability refers to the extent that the findings of a study are the result of participants' input, and have not been influenced by the researcher, or any other bias, motivation, or interest (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991). I attempted to enhance the criterion of neutrality by verification and triangulation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) of verbatim quotations of participants from the mind maps, photovoice narratives, and discussion (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) by the researcher and the independent re-coder. I kept an open mind, so as not to be selective when data was coded and interpreted, and I did not let my personal views and perceptions influence how the data was collected and analysed (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Use of different methods of data collection increases validity (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2002). This was done in this study, where two visual methods were used, namely mind mapping and photovoice, as well as a focus group discussion.

The qualitative researcher makes use of a literature control, to ensure that they have no preconceived assumptions or notions concerning the findings of the research

(Creswell, 2013), and so that the research findings can be presented in a systematic and objective manner (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, & Kyngäs, 2014). This contributes to the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2013). I looked for patterns and categories that emanated from the data generated, so that I could establish similarities to and differences from the findings in the literature.

### **3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

When research includes people, ethical issues are critical. Participants should not be exposed to any harm, physical or psychological, and it is the duty of the researcher to oversee that participants are not placed in a potentially harmful situation. Participants must be treated with consideration and respect. Participants should be informed if psychological discomfort is foreseen during the research, and the appropriate debriefing should be given. The principle of voluntary and informed participation should be explained to participants, and participants should be assured of their right to privacy (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Ethical measures in this research were ensured by obtaining informed consent, as research participants have the right to be fully informed about the nature and procedures of the research that will be undertaken with them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Informed consent in this study included an oral explanation to the participants, as well as a written explanation in the letter of consent, regarding the purpose of the study, what the role of the participants would be, and the fact that participation was voluntary and that all information would be kept anonymous and confidential (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Participants were given the option of voluntary participation and the option to withdraw from the research at any stage (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

The participants were a group of learners who had volunteered to take part in the research. They were 18 years of age or older, and were therefore able to give their own informed consent. The learners were not assessed on the exercises, and no participation marks were allocated (see Addendum B). Participants were assured of privacy and confidentiality, so as to protect their identity, and also to protect them

from unwanted exposure, particularly since research portrays personal views (Stake, 2010). Personal data was secured through anonymity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the university (see Addendum E).

Mitchell (2011) refers to limitations and challenges when using visual methods. Not all research questions can be sufficiently answered when using visual methods and confidentiality and anonymity might become an issue e.g. when the participant makes use of family photographs or drawings.

Participants taking photographs for the photovoice exercise were made aware of ethical considerations in the taking of photographs, such as not to intrude on people's privacy (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013), as confidentiality is compromised if a person's face is depicted on a photograph (Gubrium & Harper, 2013), unless written consent has been given by the photographed person (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). When a participant cannot obtain the necessary permission, from the photographed person, to take the photograph, the participant's creative thinking may be hampered (Mitchell, 2011). Mitchell (2011) suggests that participants be informed about making the identity of the photographed person less apparent e.g. by taking the image from the back or from a distance. Participants can be informed about taking photographs which are symbolic or abstract. This was explained to the participants in this study by showing them examples, as illustration, on a power point presentation.

Photographs cannot be used to create false information or to expose embarrassing information (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) and therefore the necessity to make sure that the photographed person is informed about what he or she is agreeing to (Mitchell, 2011).

### **3.7 SUMMARY**

This chapter described the research paradigm that guided the study, the research design, the participant selection criteria that were used, the procedure that was followed in choosing the participants, the methods of inquiry that were used to

capture the data, the coding and categorisation of the data, and how the data was analysed and evaluated. The chapter also elaborated on the issue of trustworthiness of the data generated, and the importance of ethical considerations in qualitative research. The following chapter will present a discussion of the findings of the research.

## CHAPTER 4: **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I report on the findings of the study, to provide an overview of the patterns and themes that emerged from the data generated through the two visual methods and the focus group discussion. This enables me to address the research question “How can participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make positive life and career choices?”

### **4.2 DISCUSSION OF THEMES**

The four main themes that emerged from the data were: (i) *Learners can see hope for the future*; (ii) *Learners identify relationships as assets or as barriers to effective life planning*; (iii) *A sense of responsibility and agency to plan one’s own future*; and (iv) *An increase in empathic awareness and willingness to help others*. I will elaborate on each theme, and support this by citing relevant literature, verbatim quotations from the mind maps (MM), photovoice narratives (PN), and the focus group discussion (FGD), and visual evidence from the mind maps and the photographs.

#### **4.2.1 Theme 1: Learners can see hope for the future**

Hope was conveyed in the data in the form of resilience, motivation, optimism, and self-efficacy. Having to think about barriers that could stand in the way of reaching their career goals helped learners to adapt their way of thinking, be creative, and think of alternative paths to attain their goals.

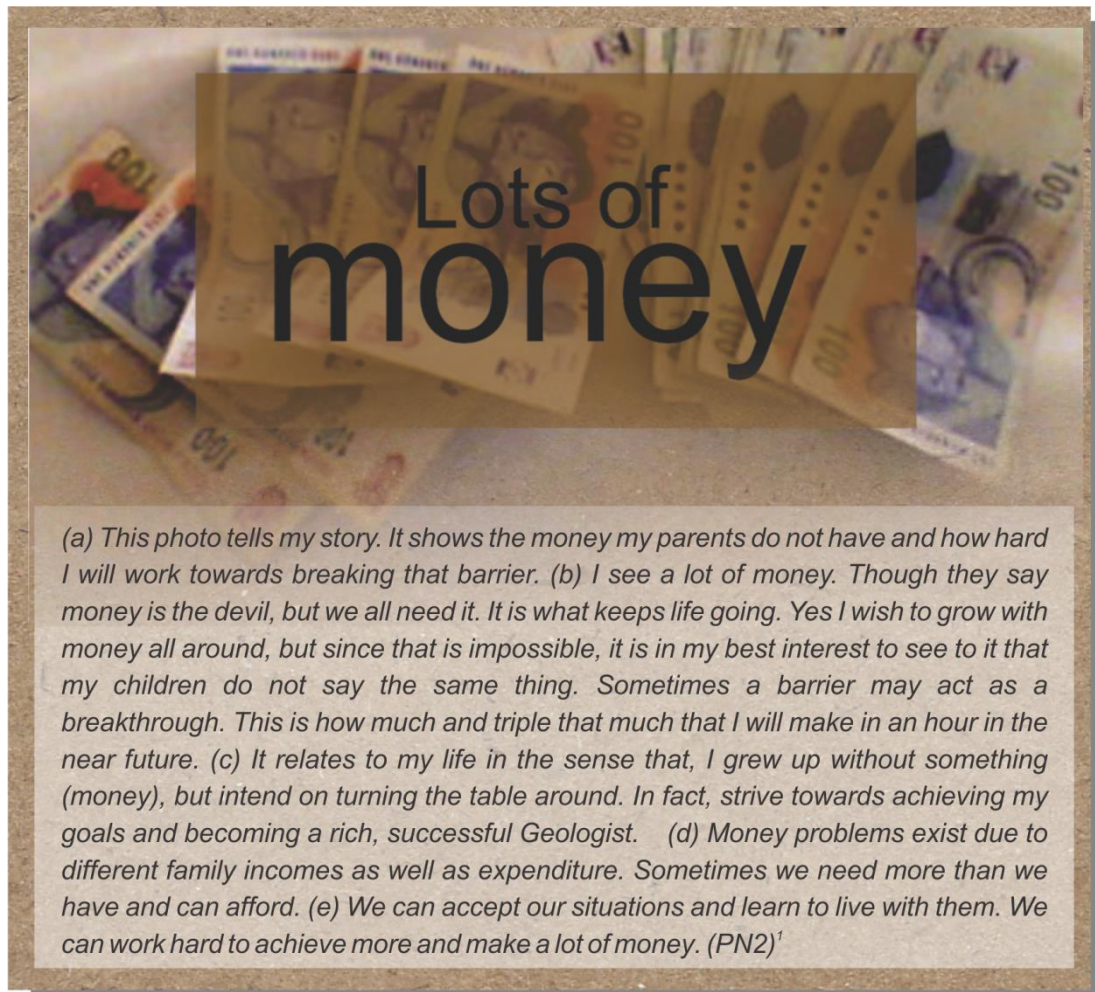
The following extracts from the photovoice narratives illustrate how the taking of photographs seemed to help learners to think more hopefully and optimistically about their future choices:

*I did not only imagine my future. I pictured it. (PN6)*

*Taking this photographs [sic] helped me to think about what I want, and how it will be possible for me to achieve my dreams [...] my future is waiting for me. (PN11)*

I understand hope in similar terms to Václav Havel (1990): hope offers no guarantee that something will have a positive outcome, but, rather, hope enables us to derive meaning from what happens to and around us, regardless of the outcomes. The purpose of the strategies I used was not to instill a sense of false or misplaced hope in learners, by suggesting that it would be easy for them to achieve their career aspirations, but to assist them to understand that they have many assets, which constitute protective factors that they can draw on to help them to explore alternative choices and make constructive future life choices, in spite of facing barriers.

Some of the photographs portrayed an image of a barrier, and the photovoice narratives often started with an explanation of the barrier. However, using the SHOWED<sup>1</sup> (table 3.2) framework enabled participants to change their thinking to create positive meaning about the barrier, as illustrated in figure 4.1.



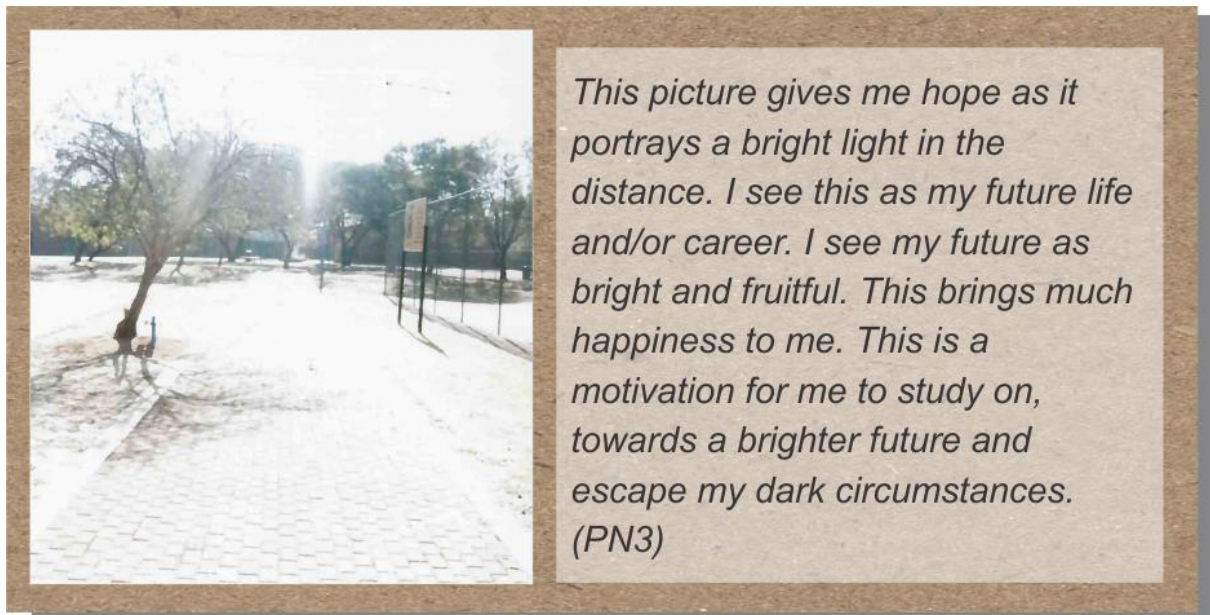
**Figure 4.1      Creating positive meaning about a barrier**

The taking of the photographs and the narratives initiated hopeful thinking as portrayed by the photograph of participant 3 (see Figure 4.2). She could view her future as bright as the light shining on the tree tops, although it is in the distance. This served as motivation to her, demonstrating agentic thinking, which is the motivational component in hope theory (Marques, Lopez & Ribeiro, 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> (a) A narrative about the photograph. (b) What do you **see**? (c) What is really **happening**? (d) How does this relate to **our** life? (e) **Why** does this problem/issue or strength exist? (f) How can we be **empowered** by our understanding? (g) What can we **do** to address this problem/issue? (Adapted from Wang, 1999)





**Figure 4.2 A brighter future**

The youth who participated in these exercises, identified many barriers to their proposed career choices, but were able to remain optimistic, and gave indications of self-efficacy in that they believed they could minimise those barriers through mobilising assets. The mind map exercise enabled participants to identify both the barriers and assets inherent in their career choices. In figure 4.3 participant 4 says that her family is financially unstable:

*This stops me because of having no money to study for my career. (MM4)*

But she was also able to see how her family have prepared her well to be successful in the future:

*Positive family communication: this will help me to build my confidence and be able to take risks of reaching my career. (MM4)*

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 provide examples of mind maps showing both assets and barriers.

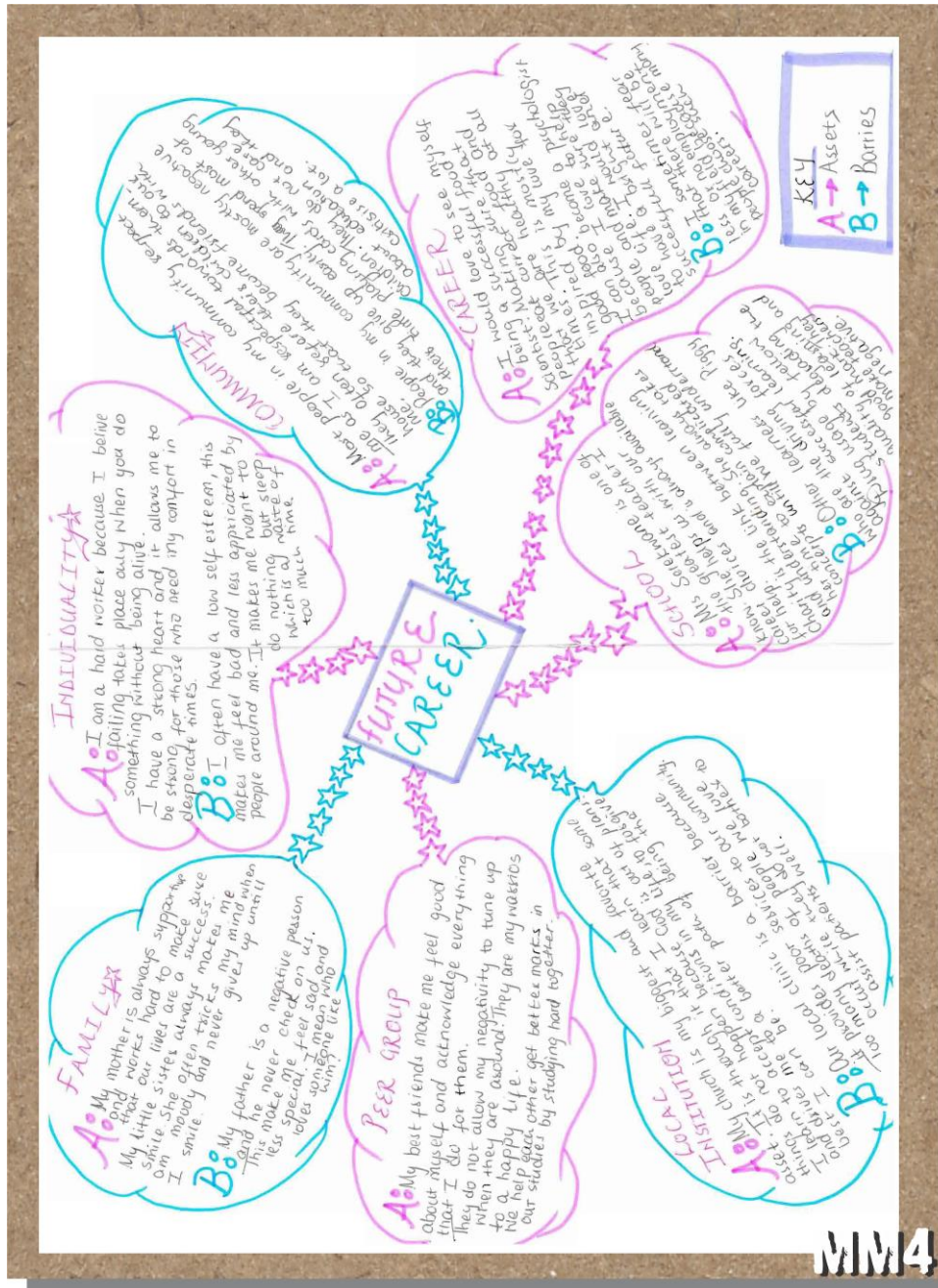
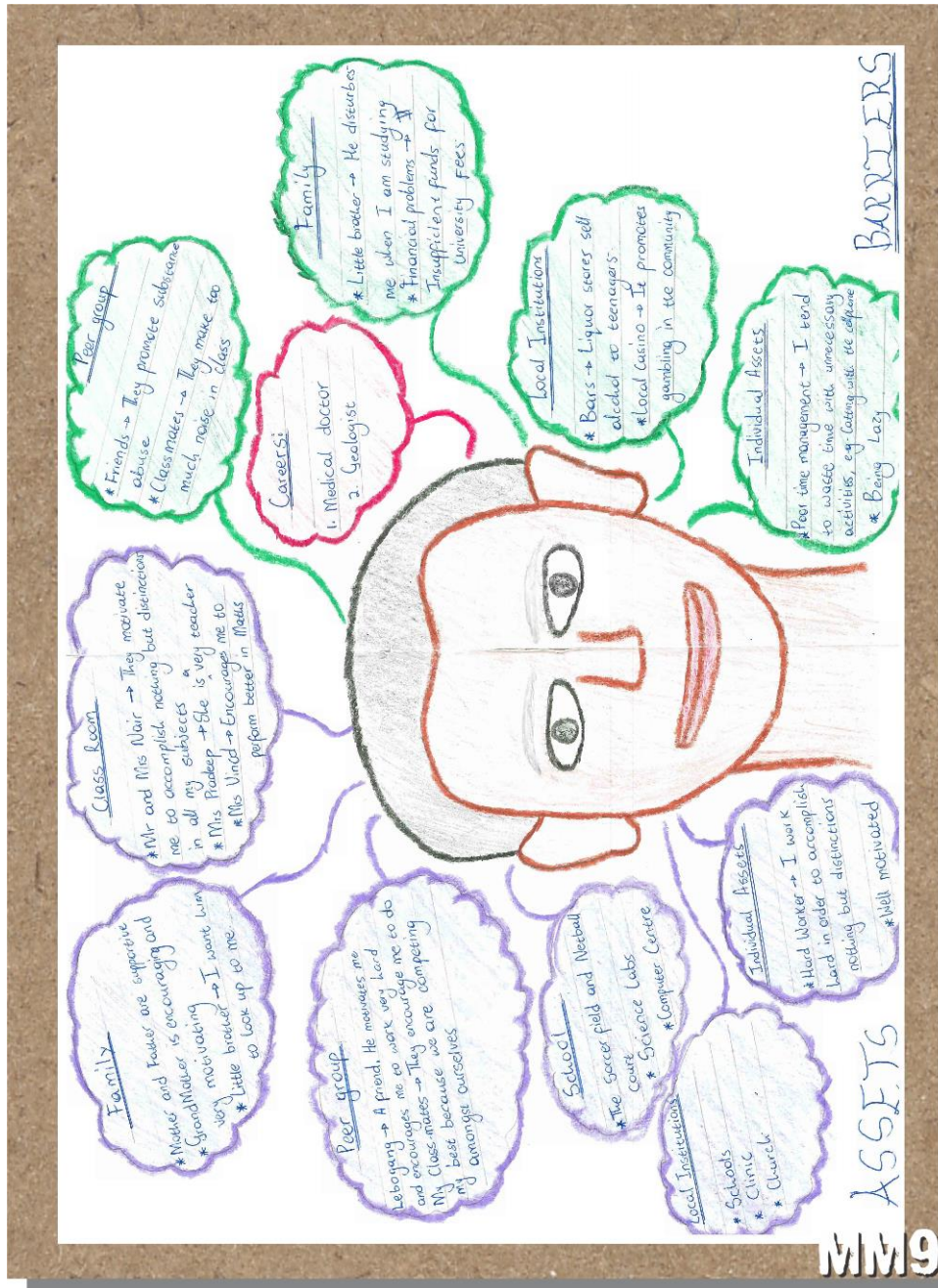


Figure 4.3 Mind map of assets and barriers





**Figure 4.4 Mind map of barriers and assets**

Visualising their assets helped learners to be more hopeful and develop a more resilient attitude:

*I am able to overcome all my challenges and always have a little more hope for the future (MM8).*

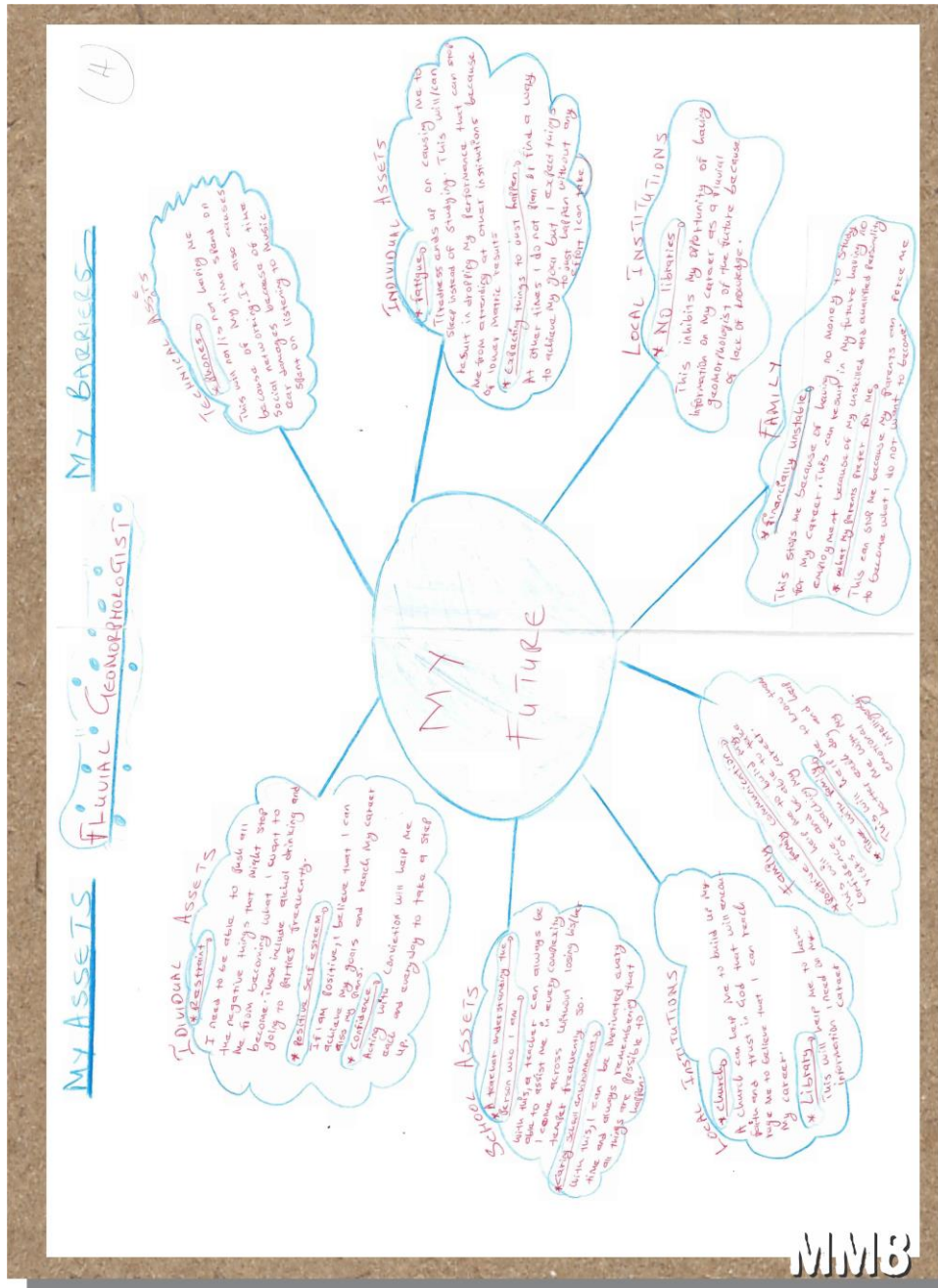
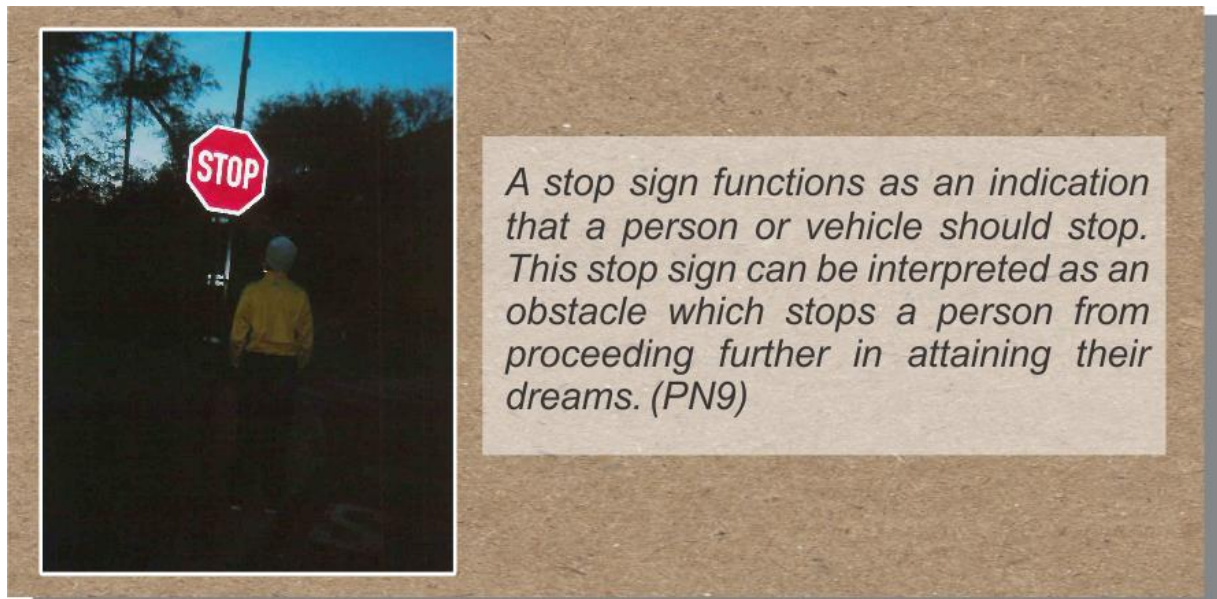


Figure 4.5 Hope for the future.

Participant 9 took a photograph of a stop sign at night (see figure 4.5). In the photo narrative, he explains that the stop sign is a barrier, but in the focus group discussion comes to the conclusion that barriers can be reversed into an asset when the barrier is acknowledged. The darkness depicted in the photograph represents the seriousness of the barrier.



**Figure 4.5 Stop streets in life**

The participant then discussed the barrier in the focus group discussion:

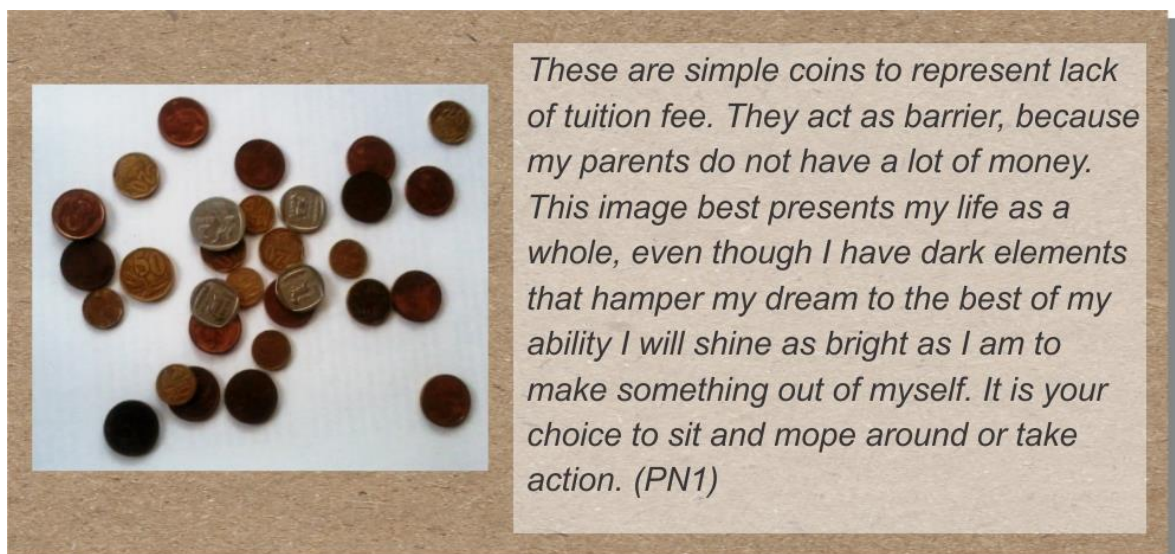
*It is, I see it as a barrier because alcohol is mostly sold in, um, local bars over the counter to teenagers, and I have seen this. It has also happened to me. It has also happened to the most people who I know. It is very, it is a very, um, um, difficult, difficult scene in life to get out of, because we are, we are exposed to alcohol and other substances, but in my mind map I, I chose to specifically concentrate on alcohol, because it can be a barrier in my progression in achieving my dream, because it distracts me, and it makes me become ill-disciplined, which is really disadvantage in achieving my dreams. And I believe that, that, um, I believe that highlighting this can also help other people, because it's not only me; it's a lot of us actually who are really affected by this. So I believe that if we can strive to becoming very disciplined and avoiding this, this substances and other substances which I couldn't get hold of, which don't necessarily affect me, we can become disciplined, and this, this barrier can actually not, it can actually help us in other factors, we, which can be our assets to attain our dreams (FGD9)*



Another barrier to goal attainment indicated by participants was jealousy, although it was also framed as an asset:

*I see jealousy as another thing, because most people are jealous for different reasons, for example, I, in my Consumer class, I am kind of good at it, so most of the boys there, not, ja, most of the boys 'cause girls are fine, most of the boys tend to hate me for being good at something, so [...] it, it's actually encouraging, because you can work hard to show them that [...] something you just [...] are good at. I think jealousy [...] makes people [...] more [...] stronger. (FGD13)*

Figure 4.6 provides a good example of how hope promotes resilient thinking. Coins were used as a symbol to represent the barrier of lack of tuition fees. The photograph depicts bronze coins and silver coins. The bronze coins, which have less value than the silver coins, symbolise the barrier. The silver coins, which have greater value than the bronze coins, symbolise hope in the face of adversity.



**Figure 4.6** Showing resilience through expressing hope

Hope, as a thinking process, is goal-orientated (Snyder, 2002). Goal orientation creates a sense of purpose, which guides human life and motivates an individual towards goal attainment (Schunk, 2012). When a goal is accomplished, it positively contributes to all the dimensions of development and well-being (Burrow et al., 2010).

Hope contributes to general well-being (Caunt, Franklin, Brodaty, & Brodaty, 2013; Malik, 2013), and strengthens the ability to cope with adversity (Malik, 2013). It is therefore important in the development of resilience (Masten & Wright, 1998). High-hope individuals should rebound more quickly (show more resilience) than low-hope individuals (Snyder, 2002). It was thus important that participants identify both the barriers and the assets related to their career goals. Identifying and understanding barriers and assets helps youth to mobilise protective factors that they have, and to think about how they can reduce their risk factors (Coetzee et al., 2009).

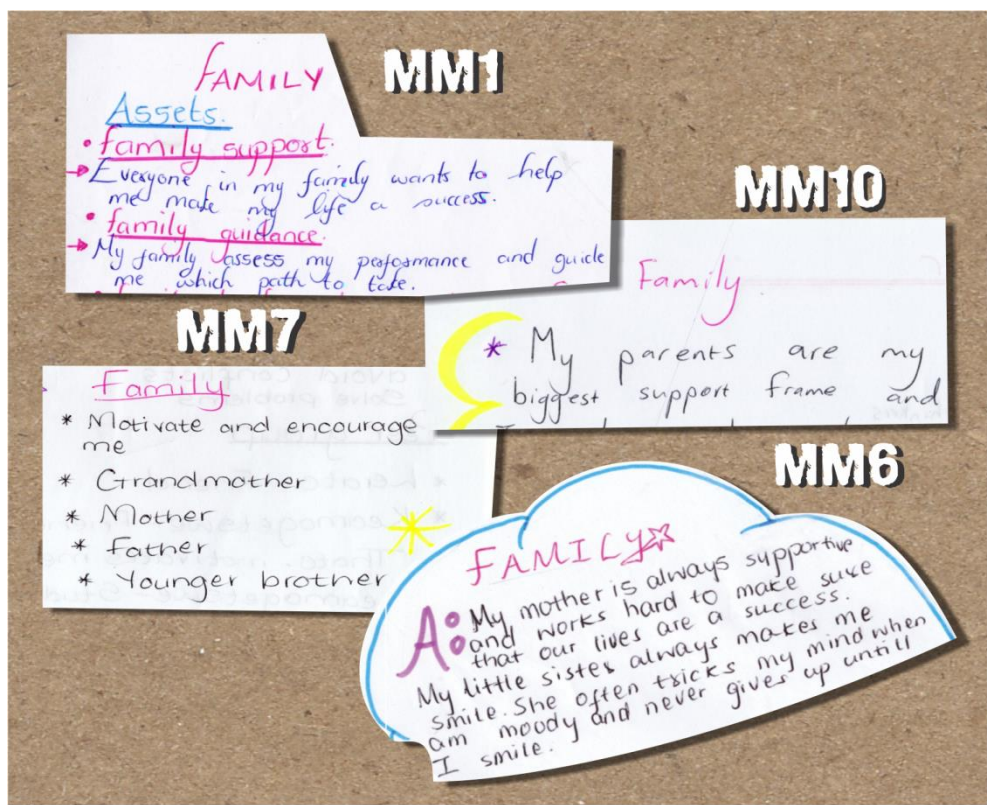
Resilience manifests in a sense of purpose, which serves as a stimulator for realising hope in times of difficulty (Burrow et al., 2010; Snyder, 2002), and it may determine outcome expectations of the individual (Schunk, 2012). My knowledge of the importance of hope in building resilience in the face of adversity guided me in the design of these pedagogical interventions. The exercises enabled the participants to explore not only personal protective factors, but also environmental protective factors. I agree with Henderson (2013) that if learners are made aware of protective factors, they can be empowered to strengthen themselves, and so build resilience, although I realise that teachers cannot eliminate all the barriers that learners encounter.

In spite of adolescence being a time of emotional turmoil, negative thoughts and experiences, and hopelessness (Smetana, 2010), doing these exercises seemed to help the learners to identify hope, and so become more optimistic and develop self-efficacy beliefs. Hope is not only reflected in an individual's personal agency to reach their goals, but also in the ways that the individual invents to seek alternative possibilities and plans to reach their goals and dreams in the face of often severe adversity (Herbert, 2011).

The youth who participated in these exercises identified many barriers to their proposed career choices, but they were still able to remain hopeful, and they showed a belief in their agency to minimise their barriers through mobilising their assets. One of the assets that they mobilised was supportive relationships, including family, friends, and peers, their school and teachers, their religion, and their community.

## 4.2.2 Theme 2: Learners identify relationships as assets and barriers to effective life planning

Different relationships played an important role in the lives of the participant learners, mostly in a positive way, but in some cases in a negative way. The learners' relationships with their immediate and extended family, friends, teachers, and God indicated a strong sense of connection and bonding. *Family* was cited as a very strong source of support and a protective factor, and it provided participants with feelings of belonging, acceptance, security, and trust, which contributed to them having hope for the future, as shown in the mind maps (see figure 4.7).



**Figure 4.7** The family as a strong source of support

In some cases where relationship difficulties and risk factors in the family were identified as a barrier, participants were able to visualise strategies for preventing and confronting the barrier. Although participant 8 thought his grandmother was not particularly involved in his education, during the group discussion related to his mind map, he was able to see that she does support him in other ways:



*Yes, she does have other ways. Like, the thing she does, she always makes sure that all school meetings, she is always there. That is one thing she makes sure of, and then I'm very appreciative of that, 'cause like even though she cannot help me in other ways that which other parents help their kids, she can attend the meetings and represent me at school. Like it, like it, gives me something to dream of. I know that, OK, she is the only parent I'm left with, and she is doing what she can to help me. So, like it makes me be better man, be a hard worker, which is one of my assets in my mind map. (FGD8)*

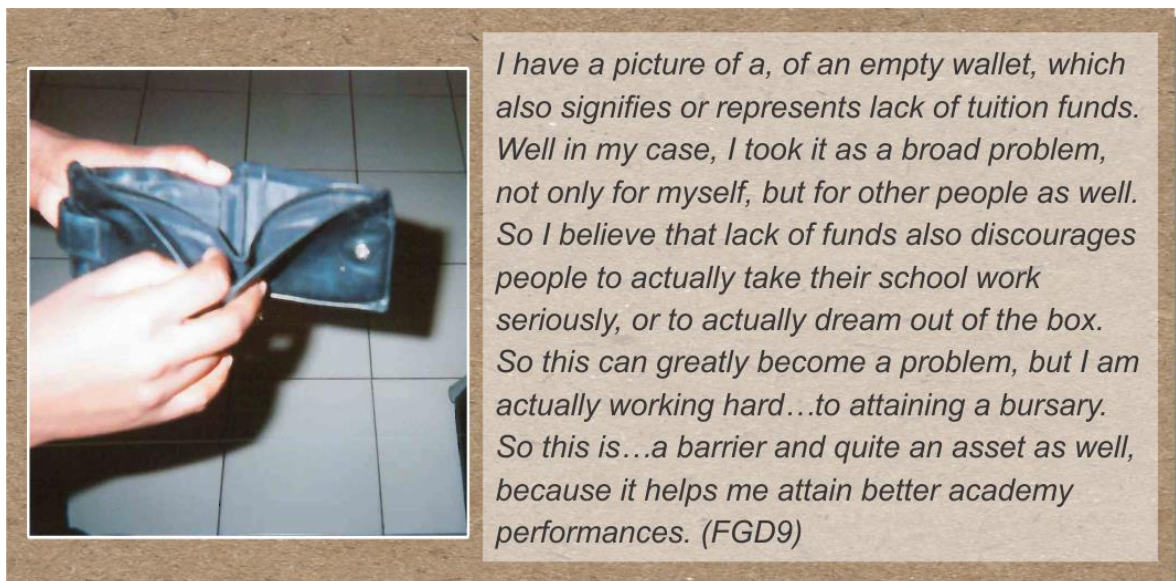
Although participants seem to regard poverty as part of their lives, the poor economic status of parents in poverty-stricken communities was perceived as a barrier which limits their access to material resources, and therefore their further career opportunities. Yet, despite these barriers, the narratives indicate that participants prevented a negative goal outcome by reframing the barriers as motivation to pursue their dreams concerning their future careers:

*[...] we will get past it. (PN3)*

Participant 1 indicated that her parents do not support her dream to become a veterinarian, but shows inner strength and determination, to reach her career goal:

*Oh, in a way it makes me stronger, because I always pursue and tell them that what they want it's not what I want [...] and I won't go for that. (FGD1)*

Visualising the barriers enabled the participants to make plans to cope with them and search for other pathways to solve the problem. They began to see that they had to take responsibility for overcoming the barrier of poverty:



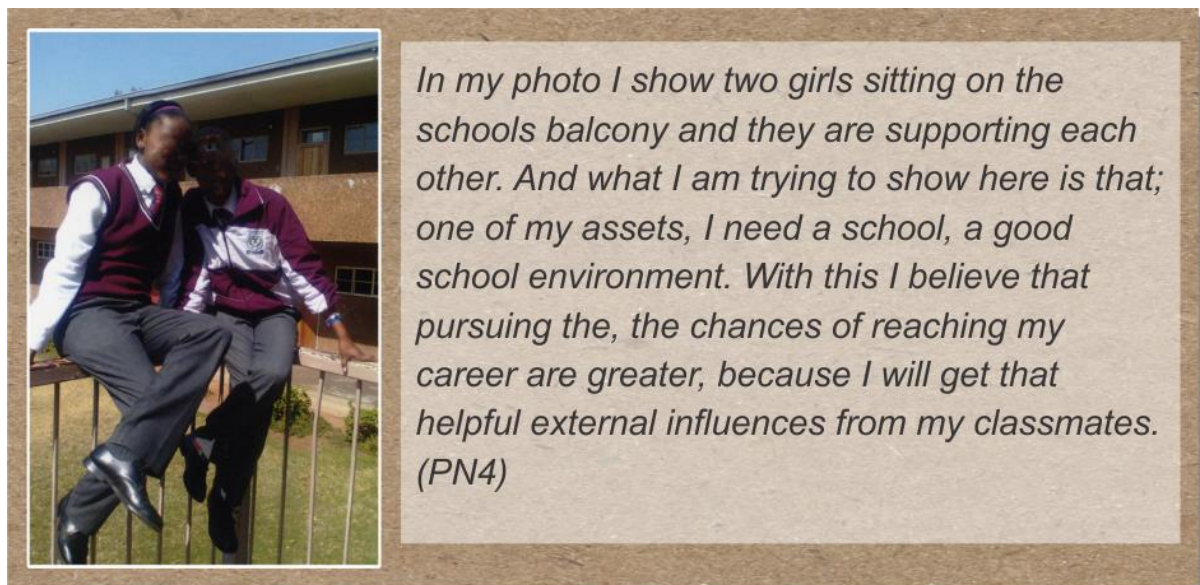
**Figure 4.8**      **Turning barriers into assets**

Despite the fact that we live in a democratic country, the reality is that the far-reaching effects of poverty on the youth in South Africa means inadequate and unequal access to education (Donald et al., 2012). To enhance resilience in youth they need to be able to access material resources e.g. basic human needs, availability of financial, medical and health, educational resources and career opportunities (Lee et al., 2010; Ungar, 2008). The financial difficulties families encounter limit access to material resources and this might have a negative influence on resilience (Lee et al., 2010) in youth. On the other hand, resilience can be strengthened when the whole family engages in problem solving, because they face the challenge in unity (Black & Lobo, 2008; White, Richter, Koeckeritz, Munch, & Walter, 2004). Access to supportive family relationships is thus an important protective factor in resilience (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011).

Participants also visualised the value of supportive relationships with friends. Positive support in the form of encouragement from friends helped participants to visualise a more positive future. This encouraged them to see themselves as able to take action to improve their own situation, instead of staying a victim of their circumstances.

*They, they always give me positive advices. (FGD4)*

*I have an asset of a best friend, who always supports me, no matter what is happening, and she encourages me to become who I really am, and to realise my best potential. (FGD1)*

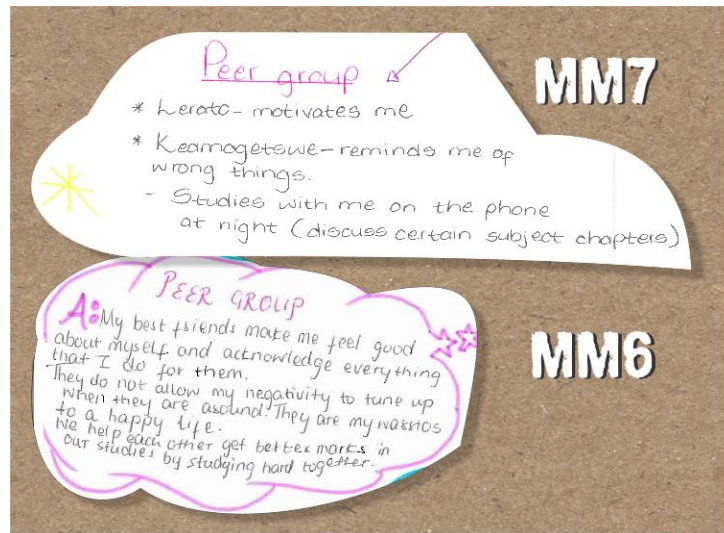


**Figure 4.9 Friendship as an asset**

The inputs and attitudes of classmates were described as an important asset:

*Me and my classmates work together [...] it helps me to go through most of my obstacles. Yes, so like, my classmates understand that for me to get where I want to be, I have to be who I am, and who I am is the type of learner who learns by speaking along. So it started off like irritating them in class, that every time I read something I have to say it out loud, but then they've learned to accept me, and then, when we, like, discuss something, like, we read something, I have to discuss with one of them, and then it's just, ja, like they have accepted me, like, so my peer group they are my assets, my classmates. (PN8)*

The following figure, which was assembled from participants' mind maps, provides more examples to illustrate the importance of friendships and peer relations:



**Figure 4.10** Extracts of mind map showing the importance of peer groups

The exercises helped participants to visualise negative friendships as barriers that could harm their future goals, but having to identify them as barriers helped them to recognise personal assets that could help to counter the negative influences:

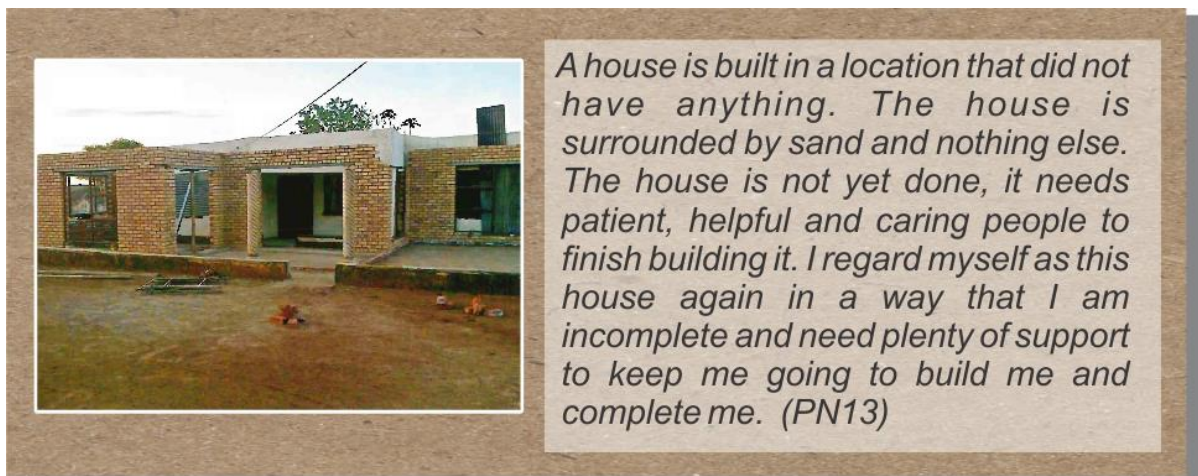
*Most of my friends have a negative mindset, and always want to play, and not study. They do not enjoy books, and always want to party and have fun, where I am more interested in learning more. I am a hard worker, and I perform to the best of my abilities. (MM8)*

Friendships are particularly important to the youth (Cunningham, Hurley, Foney, & Hayes, 2002), and when friendships indicate positive peer relations, there is a strong possibility of an increase in hope regarding future life opportunities, including careers (Nguyen, Cohen, & Hines, 2012). Friendships can be a motivating factor, as optimistic friends influence the adolescent to be optimistic, and vice versa (Prinstein, 2010). The social support that the youth draw on through friendships serves as a resource for self-exploration. This assists them to develop a sense of personal identity, it gives meaning to their lives, and it helps them to discover personal strengths and voice their aspirations and beliefs; all of these factors are important for developing resilient coping responses (Ungar, 2008).



Relationships with community members were not mentioned as much as relationships with family and friends, which suggests that the former could have less influence on the learners. Protective assets in the learners' communities which were identified were the clinic, which distributes interesting health magazines, a good library, and the elders in the community, who support and believe in them.

Participant 13 took a photograph of an uncompleted house, which represented the fact that she needs the support of her community to become a successful person.



**Figure 4.11 The importance of friendships.**

Participant 10 stated in the focus group discussion how members of the community support her:

*Well, many of the people in my community, I, I don't know them, but they just keep on supporting me for various reasons. Um, there are some women, I don't know, I've never met, but they know me, because they used to be my mother's friends. (FGD10)*

Community perceptions played an important role in the self-identity of some of the youth:

*Like right now, I feel [...] my aim in life is [...] to move away from my community. 'Cause I feel that if I can move away from my community, then [...] everything might be OK, because I'll be meeting new people, people who [...]*

*who I don't see every day. So if someone says to me [...] "you're getting great marks", you know, or says a comment which is negative, then I can be, like [...] "I don't know you ... you know. I know you for today only [...] I don't know you, so what your comment don't, I don't care about it". But because it's people who I live with every day, I think that is why it tends to just get to me. (FGD10)*

This sense of identity can be a protective factor, but it can also limit the aspirations and dreams of the youth, when they are expected to conform strictly to the expectations of their society and their community (Ungar, 2008). The community can influence the goals that individuals choose, but it can also limit aspirations (Feldman & Snyder, 2005). Thus, the use of visual strategies can help the youth to aspire to goals that are not part of the traditional choices of their community. Both hope and optimism are greatly influenced by cultural and environmental influences (Bailis & Chipperfield, 2012). Exposure to the limited life experiences available in a small community does not encourage the youth to 'think big'; so, opportunities for the youth to think more broadly about their future in a safe environment can help to encourage a desire to set higher goals (Carle & Chassin, 2004).

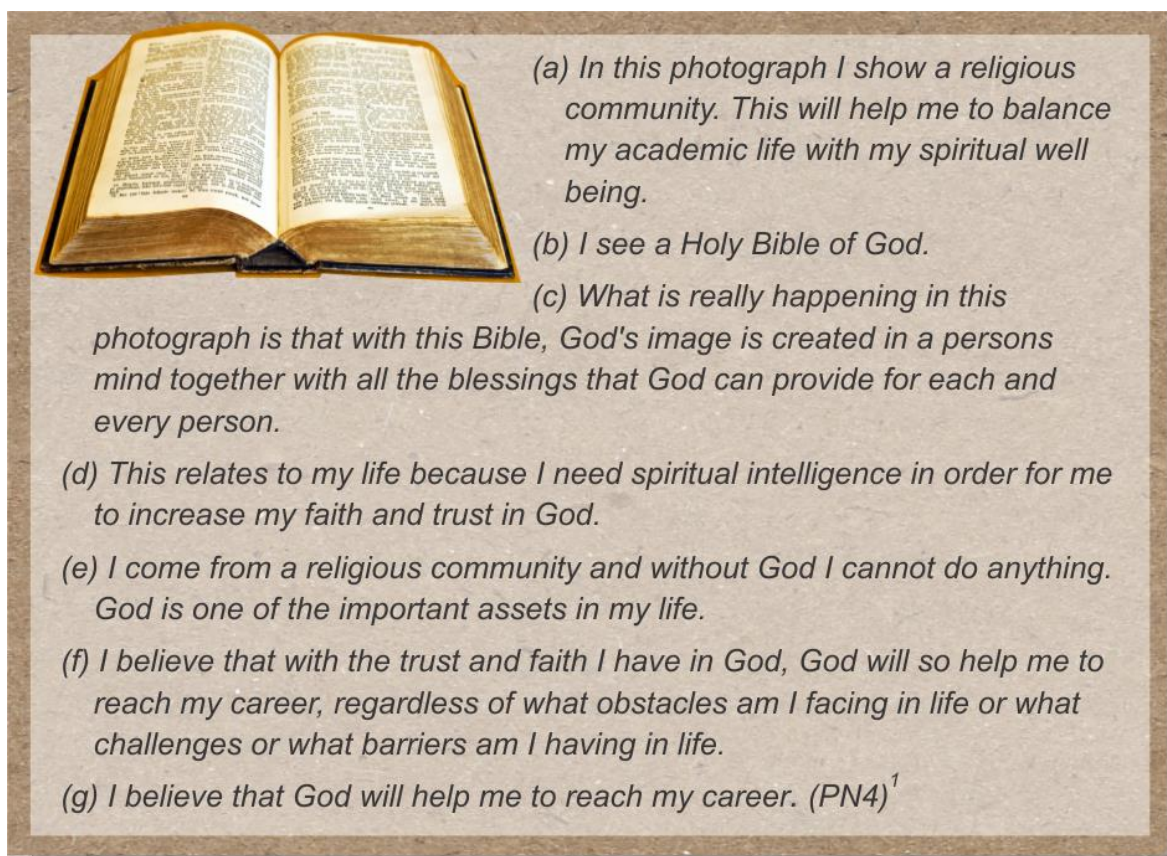
Participants identified the importance of the church and religion as a very strong asset in their lives. Participants mentioned how their faith provided them with the strength, discipline, and courage to have hope for their future. Taking part in religious activities seemed to give them a sense of belonging, and a feeling of safety that there is a higher power that is in control of their lives, and it helped them to resile to their adverse circumstances:

*My church is my biggest and favourite asset. It is through it that I learn that some things do not happen because God is out of plans. I learn to accept conditions in my life, to forgive best I can. (MM6)*

*I believe in God. He helps me achieve in life. I stay grounded and disciplined. I want to become a better Christian and take part in most church activities. (PN7)*

*My church encourages me to do my best and stay away from fraudulent activities. (PN10)*

Participant 4 explained that her belief in God helped her to reach her career goals, and she attributed her faith to the religious foundations that have been laid by the community in which she lives:



**Figure 4.12 The importance of religion**

Yet, although their faith helped the learners to accept adverse circumstances as part of God's plan for their lives, it also helped them to believe that they could attain their goals with God's help:

---

1. (a) A narrative about the photograph. (b) What do you see? (c) What is really happening? (d) How does this relate to our life? (e) Why does this problem/issue or strength exist? (f) How can we be empowered by our understanding? (g) What can we do to address this problem/issue? (Adapted from Wang, 1999)

*Having a, a religious relationship, no matter what [...] what kind of religion you believe in, is particularly a good thing, because whenever you have problems, and bow down to the Lord and pray, in a way [...] even though you see it, and even though you do not realise that this is actually happening [...] li-, ush, like, the Lord answers your prayers, indirectly or directly. So, what you see as bad may actually be good, because of, because of it being a God's will. (FGD1)*

The perception of spiritual relationships as being a strong asset is in line with research findings that stress the importance of cultural traditions, values, and beliefs as protective factors in the development of resilience in the youth in South Africa (Ferrari, 2011; Theron & Theron, 2010).

Strong spiritual relationships positively influence spiritual well-being, which has an empowering effect on development among the youth, and it increases resilience among the youth (Smith, Webber, & DeFrain, 2013). Resilience enables the individual to debate and reflect on their lived experiences (Masten, Monn, & Supkoff, 2011) from a spiritual point of view. Spiritual relationships can positively influence life outcomes (Smith et al., 2013), because the individual is connected, with God, with other individuals, and with the environment, and experiences are interpreted from a spiritual point of view. Spiritual relationships are important sources of support during times when the youth experience barriers that cause negative emotions and stress, which affect their well-being (Smith et al., 2013). This could have the effect that learners will abstain from high-risk behaviours (Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes, Cromer, & Rosenthal, 2005).

Only a few participants mentioned the school and teachers as important assets in their lives:

*Whereas I have another picture of my uniform, my school uniform [...] which represents the asset of my school that motivates me to, to work hard and know that it doesn't matter where you come from, but where you are going, and you work extremely hard to reach that standard of perfection. (FGD1)*



*[...] teacher can always be able to assist me in every complexity I come across, without losing his or her temper frequently. With this I can be motivated every time, and always remembering that all things are possible to happen. (PN4)*

However, teachers and the school environment were also identified as barriers to learners attaining their career goals. During the exercise, I learnt that one teacher had sexually harassed a child. The learner did not mention this to anyone and described her way of dealing with it by pretending that nothing was wrong, but this caused her to stay away from school:

The learner did not mention this to anyone and described her way of dealing with it:

*I had to wear a mask to school, and was constantly absent. (MM1)*

Other learners identified less serious barriers, such as *lack of info* (MM5, MM8, and MM12), *no library* (MM4), and *poor learning environment* (MM8 and MM12).

As many young people lack knowledge to choose realistic career paths (ManpowerGroup, 2011), the teacher can become influential in the development of a learner's skills, interests, emotional involvement, and motivation (Klem & Connell, 2004; Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001) concerning future dreams and hopes. This can create a valuable positive developmental influence on the learner's academic and cognitive development, identity and self-concept (Irvine, 1990; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). The mind-mapping and photovoice exercises can thus be important sources of information to teachers on how their behaviour and input is supporting or hampering learners' achievement.

For the youth to make successful transitions from adolescence to adulthood and careers, they need a network of support and encouragement (The Youth Development Institute, 2002). I therefore needed to stimulate their thinking to find ways to prevent or reduce barriers, so that they could be hopeful about attaining their career goals.

The mind-mapping and photovoice exercises enabled participants to visualise the sources of support in their lived environments, but they also helped them to identify their own role and responsibility in constructively planning their futures.

### **4.2.3 Theme 3: A sense of responsibility and agency to plan one's own future**

The activities helped participants to engage in goal-directed thinking about their career goals, and about potential pathways to reach their aspirations. These characteristics are consistent with the theme of hope identified and discussed in theme 1, since hope is based on agency and pathways thinking (Snyder, 2002). The drawing and photovoice activities allowed participants to visualise their goals and articulate their choice of career. Even though the participants came from disadvantaged contexts, the visual representations and accompanying narratives indicated hopeful and motivated thinking, ambition, aspirations, and intentions to reach their career goals:

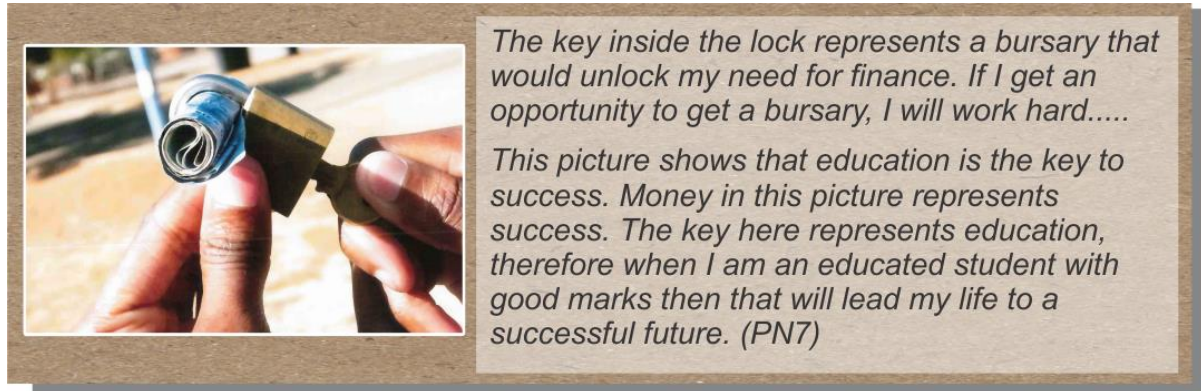
*I see myself already being what I want to become in life. (PN4)*



**Figure 4.13 Visualising the future**

Participant 7 set a goal of being successful and of having money. The money is 'locked' between the shackle and the body of a padlock, which represents the lack of available funds, but the key is inserted in the padlock, which signifies the possibility that the money can be unlocked. The participant provides a solution for the problem through pathway thinking, by indicating that a bursary would help her obtain a good education, leading to a positive outcome and future. Through this, the participant

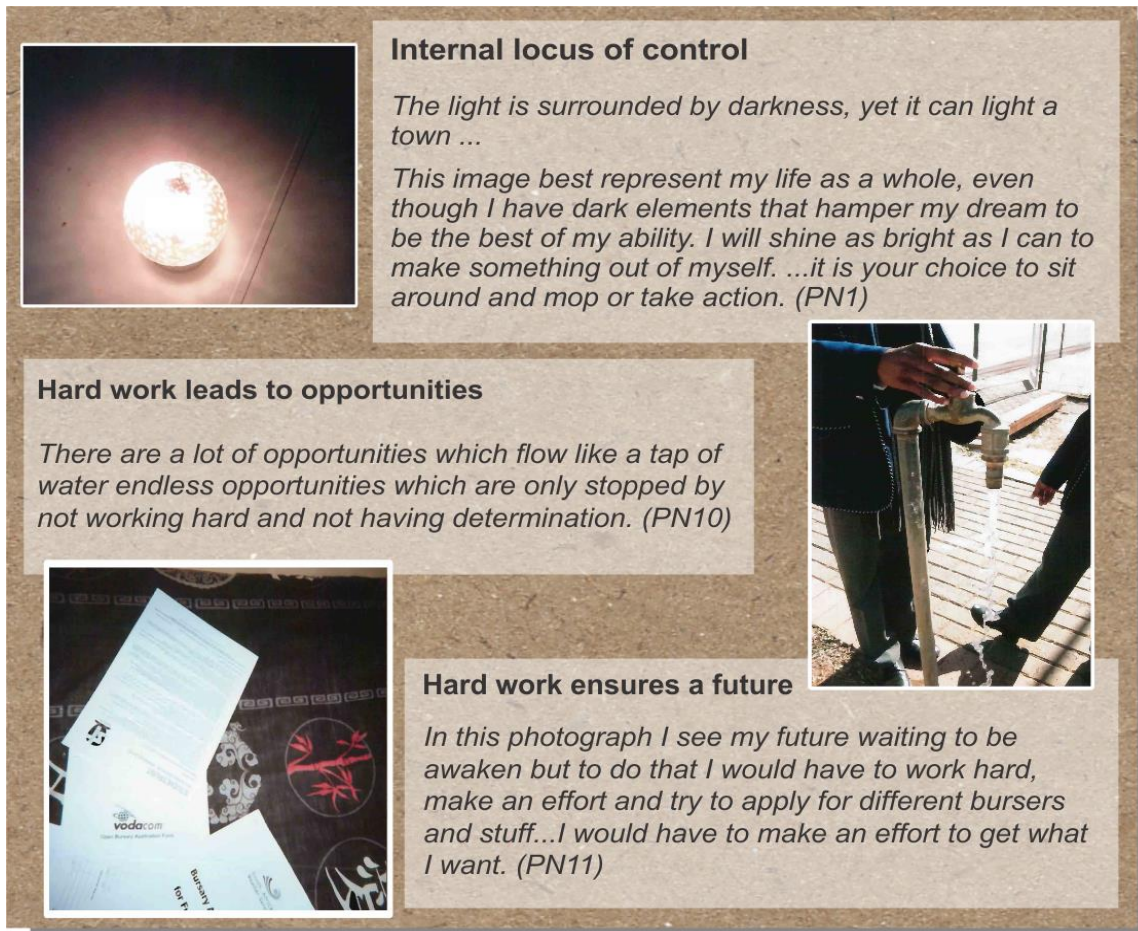
shows the high value that she has attached to obtaining a bursary, so as to reach her goal with regard to her education, and how that would motivate her to work hard:



**Figure 4.14** Pathway thinking

Self-efficacy, as a related construct of hope (Snyder, 2002), was portrayed by the statements of self-belief. Own efforts, persistence, and confidence in learners' own abilities were mentioned. Participants also portrayed a sense of agentic thinking, and an internal locus of control, which are both factors that contribute to resilience (Ungar, 2008).





**Figure 4.15 Own efforts and persistence**

Writing about their visual artefacts allowed participants to articulate the link between hard work and successful goal attainment:

*We can work hard to achieve more and make a lot of money. (PN2)*

*This photo reminds me of how hard I need to work in order to reach this goal. (PN7)*

*As an asset, hard work comes first in achieving my dreams. (PN8)*

*[...] but to do that, I would have to work hard. (PN9)*

Participant 8 took a photograph of a closed gate, to show that he foresees a barrier concerning his career, but he then decides that hard work is the solution to his

barrier. This is a forestalling goal (Snyder, 2002), or one set to avoid a negative outcome of another goal set, by trying to prevent a barrier, or finding a way around the barrier, before it influences the goal.

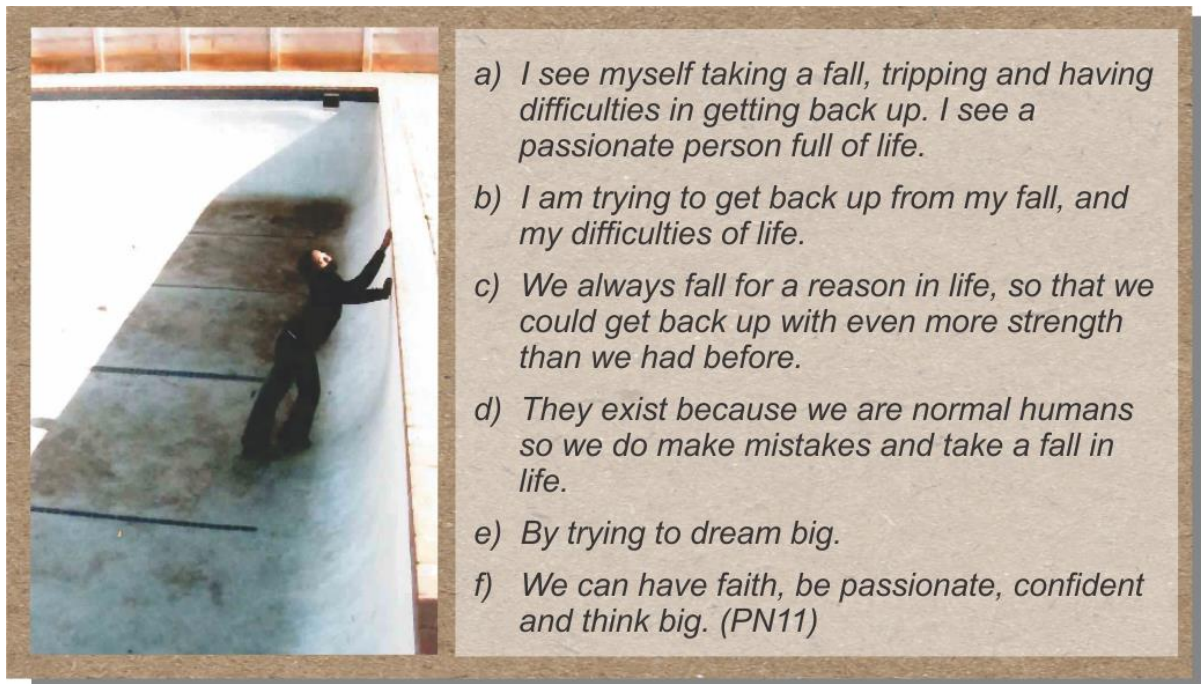
The participant identified the pathway of hard work as a negative goal to prevent the possibility that he might not reach his career goals. Despite the possibility of not being able to attain his career goal in the immediate future, the photovoice exercise helped the participant to shift his focus from the barrier to positive things and assets in his life:



**Figure 4.16 Hard work and determination**

Participant 11 was motivated that, despite difficulties, he can aim to reach his career goals, through being confident and having faith in himself. He took control, a factor of resilience (Ungar, 2008), over his situation, and through positive self-talk motivated himself to pick himself up and persevere:






**Figure 4.17 The power of positive self-talk**

The photovoice exercise allowed participants to identify and articulate barriers to goal attainment, to think about the barriers realistically, and to take action to reduce the impact of the barriers. In figure 4.18 the same participant as in figure 4.17 describes how barriers can become challenges to overcome.

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<sup>1</sup> (a) A narrative about the photograph. (b) What do you **see**? (c) What is really **happening**? (d) How does this relate to **our** life? (e) **Why** does this problem/issue or strength exist? (f) How can we be **empowered** by our understanding? (g) What can we **do** to address this problem/issue? (Adapted from Wang, 1999)

Success takes courage



us, r.p.

a) In this photograph I see my life, I see bad environment surrounding me and trying to discourage me. I see bad influence from my environment. I also see a long way to get to the green full of life future.

b) Everything is happening in this photograph. Obstacles are waiting and willing to challenge me. It shows that the more I walk towards the future the narrower my way gets. And if I don't make it spappy my whole way to success will rust and I would need even more paint to pave it all over again.

c) This shows that our lives are full of discouraging factors, unsmooth ways to walk in and distractions but yet light in front of everyone of us.

d) This issues exists because we as individuals have no true directions, we think life is a playground and yes we are correct, it is a playground but we seem to forget the fact that we have to play by the rules. This issues exists because we always bend the rules and they end up catching up with us.

e) We can simply have vision, ambition, accept reality and be passionate in ~~us~~ whatever we do in this life.

f) We can stop breaking the rules and stop lying to ourselves and try to encourage each other, stop being jealous and ignorant.

PN11

Figure 4.18 Barriers become challenges



The use of participatory visual strategies to assist participants to make constructive choices is illustrated in the narratives of sequential photographs of participant 12 (see figure 4.19). The participant has a clear career goal of becoming a geologist. In the first photograph, he visualised his career goal as stop markings on a road, as if his goal came to an end, and he had no hope. By visualising his goal this way, he acknowledged a barrier.

In the next photograph, which depicts a person rummaging in a rubbish bin, he suggests that if there is something that he wants, he will need to proactively seek it, as clear set goals require action, as well as determination, to initiate pathways towards goal attainment (Curran & Reivich, 2011). This shows that the participant is taking the responsibility of working to realise a successful future for himself.

The participant's third photograph depicts a flight of stairs. This photograph suggests that the participant is able to go forward, and it shows that he believes that he is able to reach his career goal. The last photograph represents the participant's goal of a career in geology, and it shows that he visualises himself reaching the goal.



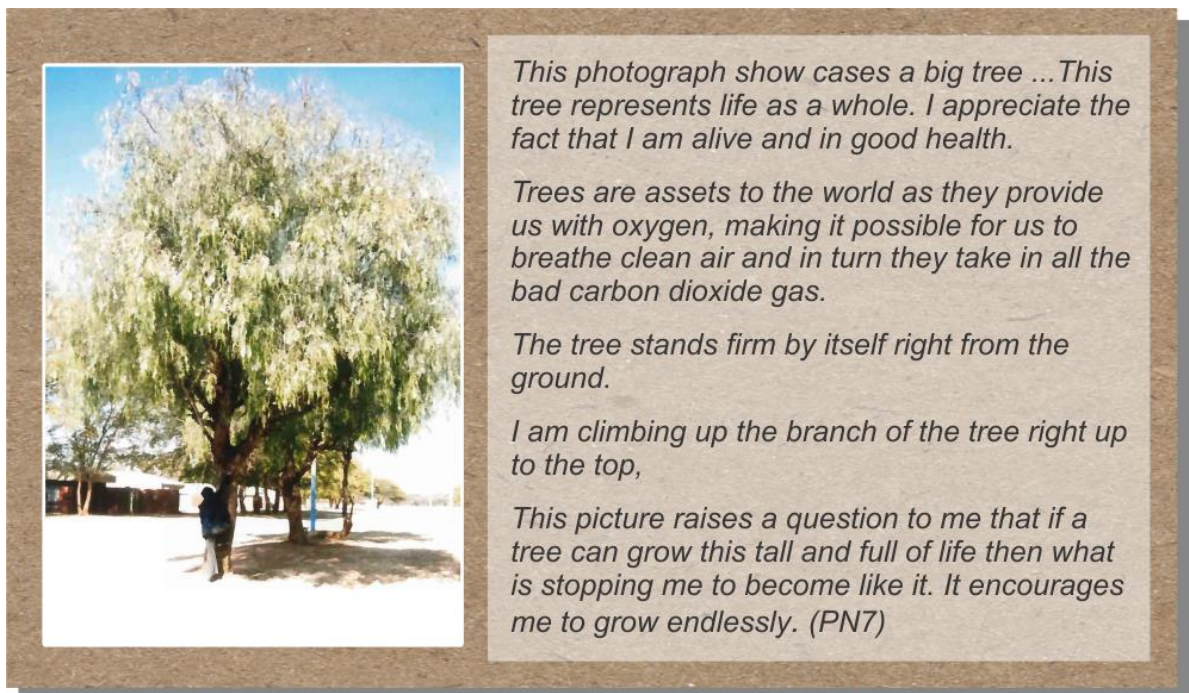
**Figure 4.19 Goal orientation towards a successful future**

The narratives accompanying the photographs and the detailed mind maps suggest that the participants had a strong sense of belief in themselves, their personal strengths, and their purpose in life. Creating the mind maps and photo narratives allowed the participants to think about their own power and control, self-reliance, and the role that they play in shaping their own futures. This contributed to making them aware of their attitudes, and how their own actions and efforts determine their life prospects. They articulated a sense of determination, which was salient in the photo narratives and in the group discussion. This highlights a strong sense of goal attainment and life purpose:

*Our understanding can empower us by showing us the real world, what happens in the real world. Our understanding can empower us by making us face reality and find ways in which we can change them [sic]. (PN11)*

*[...] we all have to play our part. (PN6)*

In the narrative describing the photograph depicted in figure 4.20, participant 7 compares her life to what the tree in the photograph represents: that a tree has a purpose or a function, and that the tree stands firm. This is presumably how the participant would like to be. The tree is symbolic of a pathway for growing, as well as agentic thinking, through the suggestion that the branches can be used to climb one's way to the top. The participant explains that the tree relates to her life, and that she identifies with the tree, as she claims that she has a purpose in her life, which indicates resilience. She is also motivated to progress in life.



**Figure 4.20 Motivation**

Goal setting is the cognitive pillar that provides direction towards goal attainment, through agency and pathways thinking (Snyder, 2002). Goal setting is influenced by outcome expectations for the set goals, goal value, and self-efficacy (Schunk, 2012).

Goal setting is the first step in hopeful thinking (Curran & Reivich, 2011) although a goal does not automatically motivate the individual; a goal must be desired (Schunk, 2012). Individuals with high-hope thinking set clear goals, which serve as motivation for them to persevere to reach their goals (Snyder, 2002). So, participants are making constructive choices to become financially independent, through obtaining good qualifications.

After setting the goal, the individual has personal beliefs or self-efficacy about the foreseen outcomes or expectations of reaching the goal (Schunk, 2012). Goals lead to the action of seeking pathways to reach the goals (Curran & Reivich, 2011; Locke & Latham, 2006), depending on the value, or the importance, that the individual attaches to the goal (Schunk, 2012). The high value that individuals attach to the career goals that they set (Schunk, 2012) will support sustained agency and pathways thinking (Snyder, 2002). The clear goals that the participants set for their future careers contributed to them being inspired and hopeful to reach their career goals. Goal-orientated thinking reflects a sense of personal agency and resilience, which is needed to orient participants' thinking towards goal attainment (Burrow et al., 2010), and to enhance motivation (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2010).

Participants showed considerable optimism. Optimism is a characteristic of a positive state of psychological development (Görgens-Ekermans & Herbert, 2013). It is the degree of positive expectations that an individual has concerning goal outcomes (Baillis & Chipperfield, 2012). The participants' optimism, or positive expectations regarding life, is a positive attribution about being successful (Görgens-Ekermans & Herbert, 2013), which shows that they expect positive goal outcomes, but at the same time they reason that their fate is in their own hands. They realised that they would need to take responsibility for their future, through their own effort and hard work, as a pathway to reaching their goals. This not only stimulates hope for the future, but also fosters resilience, since self-reliance is an indicator of resilience (Ungar, 2008).

Resilience-enhancing factors are interlinked (Duke et al., 2011), and can only really be discussed separately for theoretical purposes, which is what I have done here.

The participants strengthened their belief in their own ability (Schunk, 2012; Tong, Fredrickson, Chang, & Lim, 2010) through agentic thinking, which helped them identify a desire to attain their chosen career goals. This helped them to think about constructive choices and helped learners to be motivated and more hopeful to reach their career goals.

Agentic thinking initiates positive thinking and increases the likelihood that youth will access protective resources (Ungar, 2008). The visual pedagogical exercises stimulated a transformative process, which allowed the participants to realise that the power and control over their lives is in their own hands, that they can take responsibility and pursue goals that will add meaning to their lives (Feldman & Snyder, 2005). The exercises further helped participants to identify and explicitly voice their agency, thus reinforcing an internal locus of control, which is an important factor in the development of resilience (Ungar, 2008).

Self-efficacy is the confidence that the individual places in their own efforts (Snyder, 2002) to attain a goal, but the individual requires determination and energy to make the effort to start the process of movement towards attainment of the goal (Saldana, 2009; Schunk, 2012; Snyder, 2002). Self-efficacy is a protective factor that can support positive goal outcomes (Lane & Chapman, 2011) and life satisfaction or optimism (O'Sullivan, 2012). These two motivational constructs determine the confidence, effort, or persistence with which the individual will reach for a goal (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 2012). This study confirms that participants' self-efficacy and optimism not only motivates them, but their self-determination promotes agency thinking (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sweet, Fortier, Strachan, & Blanchard, 2012), hope, and resilience.

Not only was there a change in learners' thinking about their own abilities, but doing the exercises also helped them to have empathy towards other people that were facing barriers to goal attainment.

#### 4.2.4 Theme 4: An increase in empathic awareness and willingness to help others

The sharing of the visual artefacts and the group discussion enabled some of the participants to gain insight into the lives of others, and develop compassion and warmth towards other participants in the group. Through participants' voicing of their understanding of others with the same problems and situations as themselves, the group discussion fostered and stimulated a feeling of belonging:

*So this is really an emotional session for me, but it is also encouraging. And I think I'll have to find space on my mind map to put that as an asset also. (FGD9)*

One of the participants shared for the first time with the group that she was diabetic. The group responded by expressing empathy and giving advice. The participant's disclosure follows below:

*Um, I am discussing my barrier. I just found out um, three weeks ago, that I'm diabetic. Um, it wasn't that new for me, 'cause I learned that at school. But the fact that, um, now I have it, it's actually disturbing, 'cause it's very difficult for me to accept, especially the fact that I have to change my diet, 'cause all my friends know that [...] aah, (laughs), I'm a, I eat a lot. Now it's quite a problem, because at home, it's a matter of having new grocery, my own specific grocery, which is absolutely not delicious. I have to eat carrots (laughing in background), potatoes, rubbish, then we just call it rubbish (laughs), and, well [...] sometimes I'll just cry, 'cause I don't know why, but again I'll comfort myself by saying everything happens for a reason, and we shouldn't question God's ways. He made me in this way for a purpose, and then I am very glad that I have a supporting friend, Unkaribile. I love her so very much, 'cause she supports me all the way. She tells me everything will be fine, and I believe that, and I'm very glad to have her in my life. Thank you, Unka. (FGD2)*



The group responded as follows:

*Awww!*

*Um, it's really touching, and I just wanted to let her know that it shouldn't stop her from becoming what she is. Being diabetic does not mean you are going to die in the near future, or anything. It just means that you should take care of how you, of your diet and what you eat every day. You should make sure that you always have energy, always drink lots of water, and be able to concentrate in class. Don't let it disturb your concentrating skills, and don't feel lazy all the time when you have to do work and take your sickness as an excuse. Um, I think everybody is here to achieve, and you shouldn't be stopped by such, by such small barriers. (FGD9)*

The following comments indicate how the exercises made participants aware of their desire to help and support:

*So, um, we are here for you, and we are all here to share this with you. (FGD3)*

*This photo made me remember how much I love to help people. This picture means support and care of people that surround me every day of my life. (PN5)*

Participant 9 discussed her concern that lack of finances might prevent her from going to university, but participant 11 showed concern and empathy, by encouraging participant 9 to improve on her performance, and not to lose hope:

*Your matric result are the most important result, so she doesn't have to, you know, to, to feel like discourage, to feel discouraged, and I think she should just study, and apply for the bursaries. Hopefully go to university. (FGD9)*

Empathy is an emotion we express to show understanding of another person's feelings (Hartling, 2010; Leontopoulou, 2010), but it also indicates personal strength, an asset for surviving and thriving in any environment (Anghel, Amas, & Hicks, 2010). Empathy promotes emotional resilience, which strengthens

interconnectedness with others, and supportive relationships and cohesion among individuals, which are both resilience-enhancing factors (Ungar, 2008). Participants showed empathy and a willingness to help, which led to a bond being formed (Hartling, 2010; Leontopoulou, 2010) between the participants, which could help to increase hope and resilience, because empathy promotes motivation (Pavey, Greitemeyer, & Sparks, 2012).

### **4.3 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I reported on the findings of the study, so as to provide an overview of the themes that emerged from the data generated by the two visual methods used and the focus group discussion. This allowed me to address the research question, namely “How can participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?”

The following chapter will present the conclusions drawn from the research, as well as offer recommendations to answer the second research question “What guidelines can be developed for Life Orientation teachers for the use of participatory visual strategies, to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?”.



## CHAPTER 5: **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I provide an overview of the study. I discuss the conclusions that have been drawn from the key findings of the study, and I show how they relate to the research questions. I then present a critical reflection on my own learning, before offering some recommendations for teacher education and further research.

### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS**

#### **CHAPTER 1: Orientation and research rationale**

Chapter 1 opened with an orientation towards and research rationale for this study. Challenging socio-economic circumstances may limit career opportunities for learners, and this may make it difficult for learners to make constructive choices for their future life and career choices, and may cause them to lose hope in their future. I argued that a new approach to exploring career choices could help learners to become more hopeful and resilient when they face adversity that could negatively influence their future careers. I further argued that there is a need for life skills and career guidance teachers to make use of strategies that will provide them with contextually relevant information about learners, so that they can use this knowledge when they plan and teach Life Orientation.

In chapter 1 I also stated the main aims of the study, and the related research questions and elaborated on the theoretical frameworks guiding the study, namely resilience theory and hope theory. I clarified the terminology used in the study, and outlined the methodology employed. I discussed the measures to promote trustworthiness and the ethical considerations. I explained the limitations of the study, as well as the possible contribution of the study to the teaching of Life Orientation. The chapter concluded with an outline of the different chapters.

## **CHAPTER 2: Contextualisation of the study**

Chapter 2 provided a review of the literature on career education and guidance in South Africa in relation to the important role of career education and guidance in preparing Grade 12 learners for life after school. The theoretical underpinnings of a life skills approach were explained, which serve as the basis for my discussion of the need for career education and guidance as part of life skills education. I then reviewed career education and guidance in the South African school curriculum, and focused on “Careers and career choices” as one of the topics in Life Orientation. I further elaborated on the problems and challenges in teaching Life Orientation to prepare learners for life after school. I problematised the current position of career education and guidance, by arguing for the need for alternative pedagogical strategies for teaching and learning in career education and guidance. The chapter concluded with my motivation for using an asset-based approach, underpinned by hope theory and resilience theory, in career education and guidance, as an opportunity to prepare learners for making constructive choices for life after school.

## **CHAPTER 3: Qualitative research design and methodology**

In Chapter 3, I explained the qualitative research design and methodology that was used in this study, drawing on the constructivist theory to guide, explain, and justify the interpretive research paradigm used in the study. I also discussed the trustworthiness of the data generated, and I explained the ethical considerations observed in the study.

## **CHAPTER 4: Discussion of the findings**

Chapter 4 is a report on the findings, as concluded from the data analysis. The four themes that emerged from the data allowed me to explore and describe how participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, can be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices. The themes which emerged from the study were: (i) *Learners can see hope for the future*, (ii) *Learners identify relationships as assets or as barriers to effective life planning*, (iii) *A sense of responsibility and agency to plan one’s own future*, and

(iv) *An increase in empathic awareness and willingness to help others.* I discussed these themes in relation to the relevant literature.

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS EMANATING FROM KEY FINDINGS**

In this section I summarise the conclusions of this qualitative study, based on the key findings of the study, to answer the following research question:

- How can participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?

The secondary question is:

- What guidelines can be developed for Life Orientation teachers for the use of participatory visual strategies, to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?

To address the research question “How can participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?” the use of the asset-based approach in the mind-mapping exercise and photovoice proved to be of value. Although the participants in this study are from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, and some of them might manage to matriculate, there is no certainty that they will be able to pursue their dream careers, due to financial and other constraints. The visual exercises helped the learners to become aware of and identify the risks and the protective factors in their lived environments, which could positively or negatively influence their choices for life after school. By identifying these, and discussing them, the learners were able to visualise alternative pathways to reach their career aspirations, and they were also made more aware of their own agency in attaining their career goals.

### **5.3.1 Visual strategies stimulated hope**

The pedagogical interventions helped to stimulate hope for the future (see section 4.2.1), despite the adversities that participants face. In contrast to the literature, which suggests that disadvantaged youth are not optimistic about their career possibilities, the visual strategies helped the participants to articulate hope and a purpose to life. The mind-mapping and photovoice exercises were valuable in helping participants to shift their thinking away from their barriers, towards identifying personal and community assets and strengths, and towards considering other possibilities to make resilient choices concerning their future careers. The data revealed that they were motivated to seek, and begin to navigate, pathways to reach their goals. They showed creativity through proposing alternative paths towards goal attainment (see section 4.2.2).

Comparing the barriers and the assets regarding their careers in the mind-mapping exercise created more positive emotional states for the learners. They were motivated by their own discovery of a sense of purpose for themselves, which helped them to be hopeful to find alternative ways to reach their career goals (see section 4.2.3). Critical reflection on the visual artefacts helped participants to begin to voice their thoughts and experiences, and begin to generate hopeful thinking. In the photovoice exercise, learners' narratives revealed that they began to rationalise their barriers, and even position them as assets. This strengthened their ability to accept and cope with adversity, and in the process they developed resilient attitudes.

### **5.3.2 Visual strategies helped to unlock latent resilience**

The findings suggest that the visual strategies used unlocked latent resilience (see sections 4.2.1-4.2.4), as the data revealed that the learners had begun to be more hopeful, which is a major contributor to resilience. Visualising their assets helped them to articulate their strengths, and to build a more positive self-concept, and therefore they would be more likely to respond resiliently to life's challenges. When learners changed their focus from seeing their barriers as problems to seeing them

as assets, it cultivated a climate of hope. By raising their levels of hope, it helped learners to rebound and show resilience.

The data indicated that learners were more purpose-driven towards reaching their career goals, and this, in turn, stimulated hopefulness, which was the intended purpose behind the design of these pedagogical interventions. The strategies that the learners proposed to help them attain their goals, such as working hard, clearly show how the use of visual methods helped the learners to engage in pathways thinking, which contributed to awakening latent resilience. The exercises helped learners to discuss the importance of supportive relationships, which is another resilience-enhancing factor. They realised that relationships are important, particularly the relationships with family and religion, and they expressed how these relationships are protective factors that encourage and support them. Furthermore, the exercises helped the learners to identify relationships that were barriers to their future careers, and they were able to visualise strategies as forestalling goals, to prevent or address their barriers.

The visual exercises helped learners to engage in goal-directed behaviour, for example by changing their thinking about poverty as a barrier, to motivating them to work towards reaching their career goals. This shows how the exercises unlocked resilient thinking, as learners showed an increase in their own sense of responsibility to plan for their future careers. The findings suggest evidence of agentic thinking and an internal locus of control, self-efficacy, and hope regarding their own efforts, persistence, and confidence in their own ability to change their fate. All of these are factors that contribute to resilience.

Participating in the visual pedagogical exercises was a transformative process, where the participants reflected personal agency and resilience, which gave them a sense of power and control over their own lives. The visual exercises and the focus group discussion served as a platform where they could voice their personal agency and show resilience by reinforcing internal locus of control. The learners' reliance on their own efforts, such as hard work, to reach their career goals, indicated self-

efficacy, which is a protective factor that reinforced determination and agency thoughts among the learners.

A contributing factor of resilience, namely empathy (see section 4.2.4), was unlocked by implementing the visual strategies. The sharing of the visual artefacts, and involvement in the group discussion, increased learners' empathic awareness and willingness to help others, by showing that they care for and understand the feelings of other learners. This indicated that they have personal strengths which promote emotional resilience as a protective factor to stimulate hope for the future.

### **5.3.3 Personal reflection on using visual strategies**

The experience of being the facilitator of the visual strategy exercises revealed to me the complexities of the lives of the learners that participated in the study, but at the same time it allowed me to observe the hopefulness displayed by the learners concerning their future careers. The excitement that they experienced while participating in the exercises made me realise the value of using visual strategies in the teaching of Life Orientation. Learners described the experience as fun and adventurous, and they expressed how much they enjoyed it. The photovoice exercise was a positive experience for them, and an experience that helped them to find out more about themselves, but it also enabled me to learn more about the learners. Their hopefulness was an inspiration to me, and it evoked in me excitement at the potential of the strategies used. I enjoyed using the visual strategies with the learners, since, as the facilitator, I was part of the interactive process.

Using the visual strategies opens a world of information about learners and their circumstances, and I could use this information to rethink and re-plan the life skills course that I present, to make it more contextually relevant. I found the implementation rather time-consuming, and it could pose a problem for teachers working to a 40-minute period. However, I also realised that learners can take photographs with their cell phones, and bring the photographs to class at the next lesson (which is usually on another day). These can then be downloaded and

projected onto the whiteboard or suitable surface, so that the whole class can take part in the discussion. All the centres where I facilitate have whiteboards and data projectors available.

I adapted my teaching so that it was relevant to the specific needs of the learners concerning career guidance. The information obtained from the mind-mapping and photovoice strategies was a good indication of the problems and needs of the learners concerning career guidance. As a teacher, I observed that the exercises not only created excitement among the learners, and increased their engagement, but also made my teaching more enjoyable, interesting, and rewarding.

#### **5.3.4 Recommendations as guidelines for Life Orientation teachers pertaining to the use of participatory visual strategies**

To address the secondary research question “What guidelines can be developed for Life Orientation teachers for the use of participatory visual strategies, to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices?” I propose the following recommendations as guidelines, based on the findings of this study, as well as my reflection on my experience of teaching Life Orientation:

- Teachers should use participatory visual strategies to obtain contextually relevant information about their learners.

In chapter 2 (2.3), I motivated the importance of more participatory approaches in teaching and learning through experiential learning. In this study I used visual methods for this purpose. The information that teachers can gain from implementing the participatory visual strategies are personal and contextually relevant. This can provide teachers with valuable information about the learners in their classrooms, and the challenges that they may face, as well as the helping resources that they can access. The participatory visual strategies serve as a needs-and-assets assessment, which could help teachers to identify problems that learners encounter, particularly if these strategies are implemented at the beginning of the academic

year. This could help teachers to address the barriers that could potentially limit learners' life prospects and future careers.

- Teachers could plan interventions

Teachers could use the participatory visual strategy exercises as interventions to assess assets and needs of their learners at the beginning of the academic year, and then use that information to plan lessons to equip learners with knowledge and skills, which will then orientate and guide learners to make more constructive choices for their futures. Therefore, the implementation of visual strategies could assist the teacher to fulfil the CAPS outcomes, contribute to learners' holistic well-being, and reduce their vulnerability. As a result, teachers may be enabled to comply with the Life Orientation FET (Grades 10-12) curriculum aims to equip learners with knowledge and skills, so that the acquired knowledge and skills can be applied meaningfully in learners' own lives.

Teachers can use participatory visual strategies in other grades as well.

The strategies can be applied to other topics in Life Orientation as well, not only the topic of "Careers and career choices". The life skills gained through the strategies can be applied to any other problem that the learners encounter in future.

- Building of relationships

Relationships, the learner to self, learners to other learners and learner to teacher, are newly formed or built on. As a result, a feeling of belonging and companionship can be developed between the teacher, student and parents. This cohesion can be strengthened by the excitement of the adventure, uncertainty, success or failure of the outcomes of the participatory methods as the outcomes cannot be predicted.

- Teachers themselves may learn from these experiences

Teachers may be confronted with the unknown. They might have to do some research on participatory methods or explore possibilities of additional training. Teachers could be confronted with their own set boundaries, views, values and



biases. Maybe the challenges that arise from their enquiry might pose new challenges when they need to address the barriers by planning interventions to support the learners. Teachers could be confronted with consequences or mistakes made when using participatory methods.

In addition, I offer the following recommendations for teacher education and for further research:

#### *5.3.4.1 Teacher education*

Teachers should be trained to use interactive pedagogical strategies, such as mind mapping and photovoice. This training can be pre-service training for on-campus students as well as pre-service or in-service training for distance students. The use of interactive whiteboard sessions can be utilised with on-campus students, but especially for distance students. In-service training for further professional development, by means of workshops, short courses, or interactive whiteboard sessions could be considered.

Teachers could also be trained to adapt the pedagogical strategies in less resourced contexts. If photographs cannot be printed or displayed on a white board or suitable surface, learners could make posters or collages by drawing or pasting pictures to represent an abstract or symbolic presentation of their challenges and or assets. Through the group discussion the teacher should obtain the same information about the learners as would have been when using photovoice. Depending on the type of information needed, teachers could have learners present a monologue with the aid of visual presentations or groups of learners can write a play and dramatise it.

Guidelines I suggest to consider in training are:

- Exposure to various participatory methods e.g. mind mapping, photovoice, brainstorming, drama, role-play, songs and jingles. Teachers could be informed how to search for and access additional information on the methods.

- The teacher should be made aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each method so that the most suited method can be chosen to reach teaching and learning goal outcomes.
- These exercises must be well planned and executed with clear teaching and learning goal outcomes.
- The teacher needs to be trained to handle the feedback from learners e.g. what if sensitive information is exposed? What are the procedures to follow? This would imply that the teacher should know their rights and responsibilities concerning the Child Act, Education Department policies and procedures and school policies on e.g. bullying and reference procedures.
- Teachers would need guidance on how they would react and act on situations e.g. when learners do not want to participate, when learners laugh at each other, when learners become emotional or how to sustain a balance between creative freedom of expression and learners disrupting the class.
- How to establish the support of learners and their parents, especially if culturally sensitive or controversial issues are discussed.
- How to equip teachers, in both well-resourced and under resourced environments, with knowledge and skills to implement participatory strategies by making use of what is available e.g.:

<b>Resourced</b>	<b>Under resourced</b>
Use interactive white board and projector Use computer	Use white surface and projector or Use a self-made pin board: - any piece of fabric material; or - paint a piece of (old) hardboard/wood; or - press stick pictures/drawings on suitable surface
Use photographs taken on cellphone and display on whiteboard; or Use artifacts; or Pictures; or Drawings	Use artifacts; or Pictures; or Drawings

Teachers need to acknowledge that learners learn through different ways. The exploration of different participatory methods may increase the quality of education.

#### **5.3.4.2 Further research**

Recommendations for further research in this field include

- Investigating the use of other pedagogical strategies in teaching career guidance;
- Investigating the possibility of adapting the interactive pedagogical strategies used in this study for implementation in teaching the other topics in Life Orientation;
- Investigating the possibility of implementing the interactive pedagogical strategies used in this study in the other grades in Life Skills or Life Orientation;
- Investigating effective ways for training pre-service and in-service teachers with skills to use interactive pedagogical strategies in teaching career guidance; and
- Investigating the use of the interactive whiteboard for training in-service teachers enrolled as distance-education students with skills to use interactive pedagogical strategies in teaching career guidance.

## **5.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

This study showed that the use of participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, can be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices. The participatory visual strategies were not only fun and exciting for the learners, but also helped to stimulate in them hope for the future, and to unlock latent resilience.

The study added to the body of knowledge of how resilience theory and hope theory could be applied to prepare learners for life after school, so that they can make more constructive choices for their future lives and careers.

The study helped me to generate guidelines to help Life Orientation teachers to adapt and improve their teaching methods, by providing information to them on how participatory visual methods can be used as pedagogical tools in teaching and learning. The findings from this research could inform the implementation of new pedagogical strategies for teaching and learning of career guidance in Life Orientation, and for future pre-service and in-service Life Orientation teacher training in adverse environments where learners have limited choices for their future careers.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presents a summary of the research. I discussed the conclusions that have been drawn from the key findings of the study, and I showed how these relate to the research questions for the study. I then presented a critical reflection on my own learning, after which I offered some recommendations for teacher education and for further research.

With this study I attempted to show how participatory visual strategies, in particular mind mapping and photovoice, can be used effectively to orientate and guide learners to make constructive life and career choices. I tried to illustrate that teaching and learning in career guidance could be contextually relevant if teachers make use of participatory visual strategies to provide them with the necessary information about each learner in their classrooms. Learners could be guided and orientated better to make constructive life and career choices. By implementing the asset-based approach, and drawing from hope theory and resilience theory, I was able to conclude that the use of the visual methods awakened latent resilience in the learners, and contributed to hopeful thinking among the learners.

This study is significant, as it can help teachers to apply visual methods in the classroom as part of teaching and learning. Teachers can obtain contextually

relevant information about learners in diverse cultural settings, and they can adapt their teaching and learning accordingly, and so contribute towards improving the life opportunities of learners.

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# ADDENDUM A

## CERTIFICATE OF PROOFREADING

**ANTHONY SPARG**

**Language practitioner**

*MA cum laude in African Languages (isiXhosa), MA cum laude in Linguistics*

*Language editing, isiXhosa-to-English and Afrikaans-to-English translation, and transcription*

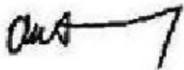
14 Nahoon Valley Place  
Nahoon Valley  
East London, 5241  
South Africa  
Tel: +27 43 735 4397  
Cell: +27 79 106 8179  
Email: [p.a.sparg@telkomsa.net](mailto:p.a.sparg@telkomsa.net)

27 May 2015

To whom it may concern

### LANGUAGE DECLARATION

I, Anthony Sparg, language practitioner, undertook language editing of the MEd thesis titled "The use of participatory visual strategies to assist Grade 12 learners to make constructive choices for life after school" for Suegnet Smit.



.....  
Anthony Sparg



# ADDENDUM B

## CONSENT PROJECT MANAGER



Faculty of Education Sciences  
North-West University  
Potchefstroom 2520  
June 2014

**Mr Darius Mhulatshi**  
Senior Marketing and Project Manager: Ikateleng  
North-West University

### FORMAL PERMISSION REQUEST TO CONDUCT A PEDAGOGICAL ENQUIRY

Dear Mr Mhulatshi,

I am currently one of the lecturers for the *Life Skills Course* presented to Grade 12 learners in the Ikateleng Project. As lecturer I make use of various strategies as part of the lessons presented, including visual strategies and class discussions, in order to empower learners with certain life skills to help them imagine a different, better future. The information we gain from the learners' experiences of these strategies, supply us with valuable information to continuously adapt and improve the *Life Skills Course* in accordance with the specific needs of learners. Furthermore, these insights guide me and co-lecturers to a better understanding of the phenomenon of Life Skills education in a variety of environmental and educational settings. In order to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the course, I need to continuously align the pedagogical strategies with unique life challenges encountered by learners. The CAPS Life Orientation document clearly states that the diverse needs of learners have to be determined in diverse contexts and can therefore not be generalised.

Through this enquiry, I intend to improve and implement strategies used in the *Life Skills Course*, based upon scientific evidence. If required, Ikateleng Management could receive formal feedback with regard to this investigation in the form of a report. Accordingly the findings and conclusions of this pedagogical enquiry could possibly support Ikateleng Management to inspire future sponsorships for the project. General conclusions and recommendations of this exposition could also add value to the quality of teacher professional development.

In conducting this enquiry, I would like to assure you of the following:

- Some of the enquiry strategies and methods already form part of the normal class activities in the existing course design (e.g. mind-maps & group discussions) therefore no additional effort of time will be required from learners in order to participate in this investigation, but I would like to implement more visual strategies (e.g. drawings, asset mapping, photo voice, and/or short questionnaires).
- I will obtain formal ethical clearance from the NWU Ethics Committee before commencement of this enquiry. No risks are envisioned pertaining to the

research design and methods that I intend to use. The learners will be informed that they partake voluntary, they will not be pressurised or feel threatened or intimidated to partake and may choose to share their information or not. They will also be informed of their right to withdraw at any stage or time. Precautionary measures will be taken to ensure that they do not feel upset or uncomfortable and that their rights to privacy or dignity will not be infringed. Both the learners and their parents will be asked for written consent. Learners will remain anonymous in the reporting of findings.

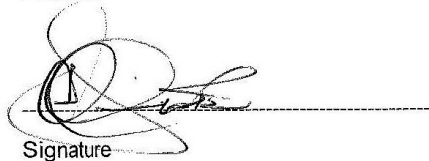
In conclusion, I would like to state that the purpose of this enquiry is by no means to evaluate any learner or the Ikateleng Project. It is a scientific enquiry to gain better insight into learners' unique needs and experiences with regard to the use of visual strategies for the development of Life Skills in order for them to make constructive life choices. I hereby kindly request formal permission from Ikateleng Management to conduct this enquiry. Your support and insight into this project will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Mrs S. Smit  
Suegnet Smit  
Faculty of Education Sciences  
North-West University  
Potchefstroom 2520  
Cell: 082 5532566  
E-mail: suegnet.smit@nwu.ac.za

PERMISSION GRANTED

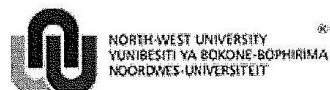
  
Signature

06/06/2014  
Date

Mr Darius Mhulatshi  
Senior Marketing and Project Manager: Ikateleng  
North-West University

# ADDENDUM C

## CONSENT LEARNER



Faculty of Education Sciences  
North-West University  
Potchefstroom 2520  
September 2014

### Grade 12 learner attending Ikateleng Life skills course

Dear participant

### Consent to participate in research

I am studying at North-West University and conducting research to find better ways of helping you to prepare for future life and career choices. As part of my usual life skills class you will be asked:

- To draw a mind map of your assets and barriers concerning their future career;
  - To take photographs of assets and barriers in the mind map;
  - To choose at least five photographs and write a narrative on each; and
  - To participate in a group discussion discussing the photographs and narratives.
- This is no different from a normal class, but I would like permission to use the artefacts you create as research data.

This will not mean any more work for you, but I would like to have your consent that the mind maps and photos can be used as data for my study. I would also like to be able to tape the group discussion.

Your participation is voluntary and anonymous and you may refuse at any time for the data to be used.

You will benefit from the exercises since you will be helped to think more critically and creatively about what choices you could make for employment or study.

The findings of the study may be published in a journal or presented at a conference, but your names will not be mentioned. If you do not want your work to be used in this way, you can indicate this to me and I will not use it.

Should you need more information, please contact my supervisor, Prof Lesley Wood on 018 299 4770 or [lesley.wood@nwu.ac.za](mailto:lesley.wood@nwu.ac.za).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Smit'.

Suegnet Smit  
Faculty of Education Science  
North-West University  
018 299 4595

**Permission for participation in research**

**LETTER OF CONSENT: LEARNERS**

I agree that Suegnet Smit can use all the photos I have taken. She can use it in a way that helps to educate people about this study and its message. For instance, you can put it in a dissertation, book chapter; in a journal, use it at a conference presentation, use it in a photo exhibition to be held with the community, school, church, donors and government.

Tick one:

Please give me credit with my full name at all times

Never give my name when you use this info

Please use my "pen name"

My pen name is:

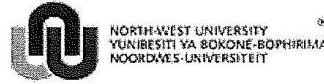
Printed name:

Sign:

Date:

# ADDENDUM D

## CONSENT PARENTS



Faculty of Education Sciences  
North-West University  
Potchefstroom 2520  
September 2014

### Parent / Guardian of learner attending Ikateleng Life skills course

Dear Parent

#### Permission for your child to participate in research

I am a Masters student from the North-West University and am conducting research to find better ways for teachers to help learners to prepare for future life and career choices. Your child will be attending a Life Skills session at Ikateleng in any case, but I would like to ask your permission to use the learning material they create for research purposes.

During my classes, they will be asked:

- To draw a mind map of their assets and barriers concerning their future career;
- To take photographs of assets and barriers in the mind map;
- To choose at least five photographs and write a narrative on each; and
- To participate in a group discussion discussing the photographs and narratives.

This is no different from a normal class, but I would like permission to use the artefacts they create as research data. This will help me to improve my teaching and make recommendations to other teachers to help them to improve theirs.

Learners' names will not be used in any publications and no additional work will be expected, since they participatory visual strategies are part of my normal lesson. Learners will benefit from the exercises since they will be helped to think more critically and creatively about what choices they could make for employment or study.

I hereby request your permission, as parent or legal guardian that I may use the visual artefacts created in my research. At some stage the visual images of the artefacts created may be presented at an academic conference or be published in an academic journal – however no names will be attached to the image.

I pledge to maintain professional and ethical standards during the research and that your child will be informed about the ethics related to taking photographs.

Your child's participation is voluntary and anonymous and s/he may refuse at any time for the data to be used.

Should you need more information, please contact my supervisor, Prof Lesley Wood on 018 299 4770 or [lesley.wood@nwu.ac.za](mailto:lesley.wood@nwu.ac.za).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Smit'.

Suegnet Smit  
Faculty of Education Science  
North-West University  
018 299 4595



**Permission for participation in research**

**LETTER OF CONSENT: PARENTS**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (parent/guardian name and surname)

of \_\_\_\_\_ (learners' name and surname)

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian signature

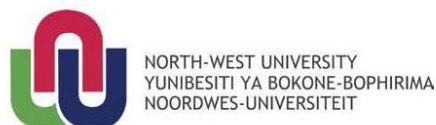
\_\_\_\_\_

Child name and signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

# ADDENDUM E

## ETHICS APPROVAL



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South Africa 2520

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**Ethics Committee**  
Tel +27 18 299 4849  
Email [Ethics@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics@nwu.ac.za)

### ETHICS APPROVAL OF PROJECT

The North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-RERC grants its permission that provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

<b>Project title: ACTION RESEARCH FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BY TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: BEYOND SERVICE LEARNING.</b>																															
<b>Project Leader:</b>	<b>Prof L Wood</b>																														
<b>Student:</b>	<b>S Smit</b>																														
<b>Ethics number:</b>	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="5">Project Number</td><td colspan="2">Year</td><td colspan="5">Status</td></tr></table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	0	2	2	-	1	3	-	A	2	Institution			Project Number					Year		Status				
N	W	U	-	0	0	0	2	2	-	1	3	-	A	2																	
Institution			Project Number					Year		Status																					
<small>Status: S = Submission, R = Re-Submission, P = Provisional Authorisation, A = Authorisation</small>																															
<b>Approval date: 2014-09-18</b>							<b>Expiry date: 2018-11-14</b>																								

Special conditions of the approval (if any):

- All alterations must be made as specified in the minutes 18 September 2014 of the Faculty of Education Sciences Ethics Committee.
- Participants older than 18 years must sign informed consent.

#### General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-RERC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project,
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the NWU-RERC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-RERC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-RERC retains the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-RERC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
    - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
    - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The Ethics Committee would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Committee for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Linda du Plessis

Digitally signed by Linda du Plessis  
DN: cn=Linda du Plessis, o=North-West University, ou=Vice-Rector,  
VTC,  
email=Linda.duPlessis@nwu.ac.za,  
c=ZA  
Date: 2015.06.04 13:32:51 +0200

**Prof Linda du Plessis**

**Chair NWU Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (RERC)**