

**PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT  
THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING  
OF FARM SCHOOLS**

**by**

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# **DECLARATION BY MS CECILIA VAN DER WALT**

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## **VERKLARING NASIEN VAN BRONNELYS**

Hiermee verklaar die ondergetekende dat hy die Bronnelys vir die studie van mnr L.A. Mphahlele tegnies nagesien en versorg het.

Die uwe

**Prof CJH LESSING**

## **SUMMARY**

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Various research reports and articles in the popular press have highlighted the obstacles and negative conditions that learners experience at some farm schools in South Africa. These obstacles and conditions are not conducive to the health and well-being of farm schools and violate farm school learners' rights to receive a high quality of education.

The aim of this research was to establish how parents of farm school learners perceive the health and well-being of farm schools.

A literature study and a qualitative investigation were undertaken to achieve the aim of the research. The literature study focused on the health and well-being of schools with specific reference to farm schools. In the qualitative part of the research, focus group interviews were conducted with 38 parents of learners who attend farm schools in the Mopani District of the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province.

The qualitative data analysis revealed the following findings:

- Parents who participated in the research have negative perceptions of the health and well-being of the farm schools that their children attend.
- Their negative perceptions can be ascribed to various health-related problems/issues that prevail at these schools.

Based on the research findings, various recommendations were made with a view to improve the health and well-being of these farm schools.

Key words: "*health and well-being of farm schools, toxic schools, conditions at farm schools, teachers at farm schools, parental perceptions of farm schools*"

## **OPSOMMING**

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Verskeie navorsingverslae en artikels in die dagbladpers het al melding gemaak van die hindernisse en negatiewe toestande wat leerders in sommige Suid-Afrikaanse plaasskole ondervind. Hierdie toestande en hindernisse is nie bevorderlik vir die gesondheid en welstand van plaasskole nie en skend ook plaasskoolleerders se reg op opvoeding van hoë gehalte.

Die doel van hierdie navorsing was om die persepsies van plaasskoolleerders se ouers ten opsigte van die gesondheid en welstand van plaasskole te bepaal.

‘n Literatuurstudie en ‘n kwalitatiewe ondersoek is onderneem ten einde die navorsingsdoel te bereik. Die literatuurstudie het op die gesondheid en welstand van skole gefokus, met spesifieke verwysing na plaasskole. In die kwalitatiewe gedeelte van die ondersoek is fokusgroep-onderhoude met 38 ouers van leerders wat plaasskole in die Mopani-distrik van die Onderwysdepartement in die Limpopo Provinsie bywoon, gevoer.

Die kwalitatiewe data-analise het die volgende bevindinge opgelewer:

- Owers wat aan die ondersoek deelgeneem het, het negatiewe persepsies ten opsigte van die gesondheid en welstand van die plaasskole waar hulle kinders skoolgaan.
- Hierdie negatiewe persepsies kan toegeskryf word aan verskeie gesondheidverwante probleme/kwessies wat by hierdie skole heers.

Verskeie aanbevelings is aan die hand van die navorsingsbevindinge gedoen met die oog daarop om die gesondheid en welstand van hierdie plaasskole te verbeter.

Sleutelwoorde: “*gesondheid en welstand van plaasskole, toksiese skole, toestande by plaasskole, onderwysers by plaasskole, ouerlike persepsies ten opsigte van plaasskole*”

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# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIMS, METHOD AND PLAN OF RESEARCH**

---

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **“It is a long walk for our children”**

*“Most children attending farm schools walk very long distances to and from these schools. As they walk to schools, they brave elements and criminals. While some merciful motorists sometimes give them lifts this is dangerous because especially girls become victims of rape. These long distances children walk to farm schools coupled with lack of money for transport increase the rate of school dropout at farm schools.” (City Press, 14 May 2005.)*

#### **“Education on South Africa’s farms neglected”**

*“Farm children attend dilapidated schools with inadequate water and electricity supply. Sanitation at these schools is also poor. The children’s access to schools is often deliberately obstructed by farm owners. All these happen to the farm schools because they are forgotten and neglected by the South African Government. The government is failing to negotiate contracts with farm owners. The results are that children’s rights to basic education are impeded, farm workers and their children are left helpless and children are unintended victims.” (Africa News, 12 November 2005.)*

The captions and excerpts above taken from newspaper articles reflect the obstacles and negative conditions learners experience at some farm schools in South Africa. These obstacles and conditions are not conducive to the health and well-being of farm schools and violate these children’s rights to quality education.

The aim of this research was to establish how parents of farm school learners perceive the health and well-being of some farm schools in the Limpopo Province.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In this research the concept *health* is used holistically. The concept *health* extends beyond the mere absence of disease and includes aspects such as societal and environmental health. Naidoo and Wills (2000:6-7) describe societal and environmental dimensions of health as follows:

- The societal dimension refers to the establishment, provision and maintenance of basic social services such as safety and security, housing, health services and quality education.
- The environmental dimension, on the other hand, concerns the physical environment and living conditions such as provision of water and electricity, sanitation and the absence of pollution.

Looking at the South African Farm School situation from a health perspective one can boldly state that conditions at these schools are toxic and not conducive to effective learning and development. According to World Health Organization (WHO) (1998:4), societal health and quality of life is directly linked to the quality of educational provision and to economic productivity. The fact that conditions at farm schools are unhealthy and impact negatively on the quality of education, is corroborated by research findings and newspaper reports in the following paragraphs.

The Human Rights Watch (2004:8-28) summarized the following research findings regarding the health status of farm schools in South Africa: In general, there is inadequate electricity and water supply, poor sanitation, poor infra-structural facilities and a shortage of teaching and learning materials.

According to Roro (2002), the following conditions exist at farm schools: barren floors and a stale and damp atmosphere so that learners are always sneezing and coughing. Samayende (2001) reports on illegal child labour practices on a farm in Mpumalanga. The farm owner told labour inspectors and journalists that his use of child labour actually benefited the children. It teaches them to work hard from a young age.

While one may experience the preceding information as a shocking revelation, it is perhaps not as shocking as the facts contained in a report by the Standing Committee on Education (Muller, 2002). The report tabled in the Eastern Cape Legislature included information about eleven-year old farm girls who were forced to have sex with farmers. It was further reported that some learners at farm schools fainted from hunger as the nutrition scheme was degenerating.

At a farm school near Thabazimbi in the Limpopo Province a farmer, who had recently bought a farm, erected a fence around the farm school to wall off 280 learners. He vandalized the school and burnt down the school house as well as the teachers' and learners' teaching and learning material (Heines, 2005).

Not only are the unhealthy conditions at farm schools impacting on the education of the children, but the living conditions of the farm workers are appalling as well. The households are situated on the farms and are therefore subjected to the same toxic conditions as the farm schools.

Mokwena (2004) described some of the painful experiences of families living on commercial farms. It was during July 2004 with night temperatures dropping below zero degrees Celsius, that a farmer evicted several families from his Khayalami farm. Lack of basic health care facilities on most South African farms is also a source of concern. There are no clinics on most of the farms. Farm workers and their children mostly depend on mobile clinics which visit the farms on certain days of the week. The government policy of providing free medical service to children under the age of six years has good intentions. Nevertheless, in most cases the clinics do not have the required medicines. Parents are complaining that for every illness only painkillers are provided.

Africa News (2005) points out that the South African Government has neglected farm schools. It is neglecting farm children's rights to adequate and quality education. The same remark is echoed in the *Draft Research Report on Farm Schools, Farm life and Social Opportunity in South Africa* which states that the South African Government is failing to ensure children's access to farm schools and to maintain adequate learning conditions at farm schools (Dugard, Mintoor, Ngwenya, Nkosi & Wilson, 2005:10).

It is, however, fair and important to mention here that the government is not folding its arms. Section 14 of the *South African Schools Act of 1996* provides for the signing of an agreement between farm owners and MECs for education in farm schools of the various Provinces (Brunton and Associates, 2003). The purpose of the agreement is to enable the government to take full control of farm schools. Ownership of property will no longer imply control over the manner in which the farm schools are to be run. The school governing bodies will now run the schools. Perhaps of more importance is that the government will now be both entitled and bound to provide the basic infrastructure at farm schools.

The process between farmers and the respective education departments, as mentioned above, is taking place at a very slow pace. Yet, the fact that some farm owners have signed the agreement

shows that there is some light at the end of the tunnel. There are some positive actions taken not only by the government but by some individuals as well who, through their commitment, dedication and perseverance, have made some success out of the poor conditions at farm schools. Komane (1999), in an article titled "*Aha Thuto beats the odds again*", describes a farm school that lives up to its name *Aha Thuto*. The school produced a 100% pass rate in Grade 12 three years in succession. The principal boasts of his credo: "*Every child has the potential to learn in whatever conditions*". One other positive move taken by the Department of Education is the intention to supply bicycles for learners who walk 15 kilometres or more between their homes and the school (Department of Roads & Transport, 2006). It is clear that the government and some individuals are doing their best to improve the conditions at farm schools so that they are conducive to teaching and learning. However, there are still many limitations.

The limitations, on the side of the government, to improve the conditions at farm schools are summarized in the following paragraphs:

- Section 58 of the South African Schools Act 1996 provides for the MEC to expropriate the land on which a farm school exists if the farm owner does not sign the Section 14 agreement. Yet, the Draft Research Report informs that these powers have not been exercised (Dugard et al., 2005:13).
- The resolution taken by some Provincial Education Departments to close farm schools and to take children to schools on land owned by the State (Setena, 2002:2). This is likely to have negative side-effects as children are going to stay in hostels. This will violate their right to attend the nearest school so that they can stay with their parents. It will also put them at risk of becoming disadvantaged in the sense that they will not be able to get assistance from their parents with regard to their school work on a daily basis. Parents will also be less involved in the education of their children.

The latter limitation is very significant. While the foregoing paragraphs described the plight of children at farm schools and their parents on commercial farms, the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children at farm schools is also a serious source of concern. First, there is a link between parental involvement and children's scholastic achievement. Second, parents can be empowered to take community action aimed at improving the conditions in their neighbourhood including the conditions on farm schools. The link between parental involvement and educational achievement as well as the potential capacity of parents to improve conditions in

the life world of their children are well documented in literature. Parents are a resource in improving schools and neighbourhoods and they can contribute significantly in creating a nurturing environment in which children can be educated (Measuring Up Report, 1999:1). Furthermore, the involvement of mothers and fathers in the education of their children has been linked to positive outcomes that include increased achievement test results, a decrease in drop out rate, improved attendance, stronger commitment to school work and improved attitude toward school (Kettler, Valentine, Lukas & Miles, 2000:1). Parents are among the major role players in school health promotion efforts (Department of Health, 1999:4).

Parental perceptions of the health and well-being of farm schools are therefore very relevant and necessary in any effort aimed at developing indicators of the health and well-being status of farm schools.

In the light of the above-mentioned, the central research questions are as follows:

- What do the concepts of health and well-being of schools entail?
- What are the most common types of health-related problems/issues associated with farm schools?
- How do parents perceive the health and well-being of farm schools?
- What recommendations can be made to improve the health and well-being of farm schools?

### **1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

In accordance with the research questions posed above, the aims of the research are to establish:

- What the concepts *health* and *well-being* of schools entail.
- What the most common types of health-related problems/issues associated with farm schools are.
- How parents perceive the health and well-being of farm schools.
- What recommendations can be made to improve the health and well-being of farm schools.

## **1.4 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT**

It is the view of the researcher that parents of children attending farm schools do not perceive these schools as healthy educational environments that are conducive to the education and well-being of their children.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHOD**

A literature study and a qualitative empirical investigation were undertaken in order to find answers to the questions posed above and to achieve the aims of the research.

### **1.5.1 Literature study**

For purposes of the literature study, an EBSCO-host search was conducted to identify relevant and recent literature sources such as books, articles from scientific journals, research reports, conference papers, newspaper article, etc.

The following key words were used to conduct the search:

*"health and well-being of farm schools, toxic schools, conditions at farm schools, teachers at farm schools, parental perceptions of farm schools, parental involvement in farm schools"*

### **1.5.2 Qualitative investigation**

In order to obtain information regarding parents' perceptions of the health and well-being of farm schools, non-structured focus group interviews were conducted with parents of learners in farm schools in the Mopani District of the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province. Parents from four schools participated in the research: three schools in the Tzaneen Circuit and one in the Retavi Circuit.

### **1.5.3 Participants**

Three groups of ten parents each and one group consisting of eight parents participated in the research on a voluntary basis. This means that a total number of 38 parents participated in the focus group interviews.

#### **1.5.4 Ethical considerations**

The following measures were taken to adhere to the ethical aspects of the research:

- Permission was obtained from the following people to conduct the research: farm owners/managers, departmental district and circuit managers, School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and principals of the farm schools.
- Parents were invited to participate in the focus group discussions on a voluntary basis.
- The identity of farm schools and of participants was protected. No names of schools, people or institutions were used during the interviews and the identity of schools and participants will not be revealed when the findings of the research are reported.
- The data emanating from the research was not used to evaluate the farm schools' performance.

#### **1.5.5 Data collection procedure**

The views and opinions of the participants in the various focus group discussions were videotaped. Videotaping has the advantage of freeing the researcher from detailed note-taking which may interfere with active listening and concentration during focus group interviews. Videotaped data can also be reviewed several times in controlled situations for purposes of data analysis and interpretation.

#### **1.5.6 Data analysis**

Raw data emanating from focus group discussions were transcribed to provide a complete record of discussions which facilitated the process of data analysis. The data were analyzed by means of an inductive and descriptive analysis.

### **1.6 CHAPTER LAYOUT**

Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement, aims and method of research.

Chapter 2: The health and well-being of schools with specific reference to farm schools.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology.

Chapter 4: Findings and recommendations.

## **1.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

The study will reveal how parents of farm school learners think and feel about the health and well-being of these schools. These findings will also contribute towards an existing sub-project in the Research Focus Area of the Faculty of Education Sciences, namely “*Developing indicators for health promoting schools*”.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter gave an overview of the background to the study, the research problem and aims as well as the research methodology. In Chapter 2 the health and well-being of farm schools will be discussed theoretically.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF SCHOOLS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO FARM SCHOOLS**

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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Conditions at some farm schools in South Africa are compromising the health and well-being of children, teachers and parents. For example:

- Children attending farm schools are occasionally denied access to school premises (Human Rights Watch, 2004).
- Incidences of child labour, sexual abuse of school children, vandalizing of schools and destruction of teachers' and learners' support materials have been reported at some farm schools (Samayende, 2001; Muller, 2002).
- Parents are often poorly paid as farm workers and, according to London (2006:1), the practice of giving wine to farm workers as a benefit of employment called the "dop" system still persists on many wine farms, despite the fact that it is legally prohibited and has dangerous consequences for the health and well-being of the farm workers.

In this chapter aspects related to the health and well-being of schools, with specific reference to farm schools, will be addressed.

### **2.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

Naidoo and Wills (2000:24) contend that it is important to have a clear understanding of the concept *health*. The reason being that health is often differently defined by different people and various views and beliefs exist concerning health. The same applies to the concepts *well-being* and *health promotion*.

### **2.2.1 Health**

As far back as 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being and not only as the absence of disease (Van Niekerk & Prins, 2001:21).

This definition of the WHO has been criticized on the grounds that it is utopian and can never be achieved (Waltner-Toews, 2001:2). According to Naidoo and Wills (2000:6-7), a definition of health should be holistic and include physical, social, emotional, mental, spiritual, societal and environmental dimensions. The researcher subscribes to this viewpoint. The implication is that health is about a state of balance which should exist between the individual, societal and environmental dimensions and that the conditions in these dimensions will determine the optimal health of individuals and groups. Some of these conditions are internal because they pertain to the individual dimensions of health. Others are external because their roots can be found in the societal and environmental contexts of the individuals. In this regard, Bambra, Fox and Scott-Samuel (2003:7) differentiate between *personal health*, *population health* and *global health*. Personal health refers to the outcomes of interactions between the person and society. Population health results from interactions between individuals, society and their environments, whilst *global health* pertains to the interactions between all the above-mentioned aspects on a global scale

### **2.2.2 Well-being**

Hird (2003:4) states that there are as many definitions of well-being as there are people who study the concept and, in the absence of one accepted definition, attempts at defining well-being seem to have followed the same path as that of defining health.

Initially the focus on well-being was on the individual aspects of health. Later there was a paradigm shift towards societal and environmental dimensions of well-being. The Scottish Executive Publication (2006) lists seven definitions of well-being, all with a common element of subjectivity. Mohan (2004:2) describes subjective well-being as consisting of a frequent positive affect, an infrequent negative affect and a general sense of life satisfaction. While subjective well-being connotes a focus on the individual's subjective life, Hird (2003:6) distinguishes between subjective and objective well-being to accentuate the shift from individual to societal and environmental dimensions of health. Objective well-being refers to measurable individual, societal and environmental factors that determine the health status of individuals, groups and communities.

Well-being also relates to the concept *quality of life*. According to Kirsten (1998:2-3) quality of life is perceived and experienced when people are able to satisfy their desires and needs including the provision of health care facilities and services, participation in cultural activities, living without fear, freedom, mutual respect and quality education.

### **2.2.3 Health promotion**

St. Leger (2001:199) remarks that the concept of health promotion emerged in the 1980s in Europe and North America. Naidoo and Wills (2000:77) illustrate the concept as having evolved from *public health* through *health education* to *health promotion*. Czeresnia (2007:6) describes health promotion as the implementation of strategies to change conditions in people's lives that underlie their health problems. The concept was elucidated at the first *Global Conference on Health Promotion* in Ottawa in 1986 (WHO, 2007) where health promotion was described as a process whereby people as individuals, groups and/or communities are enabled through their skills and capabilities to gain control over the determinants of their health and to improve the determinants of health. The Public Health Agency of Canada (2004:2-12) lists the following determinants of health that correlate positively with health and well-being: Income and social status; social support networks; education and literacy; employment and working conditions; social environments; physical environments; personal health practices and coping skills; healthy child development; biology and genetic endowment; health services and culture. These determinants of health are described as follows:

#### **1. Income and social status**

An increase in income and social status is associated with improved health status. People gain control over their living conditions such as housing and ability to buy healthy food. Low income families are associated with material deprivation and impoverished environments that impact negatively on the educational development of their children. Furthermore, large differences in income distribution lead to increased social problems and poor health in the community at large.

#### **2. Social support network**

The support people receive from their families, friends and significant others help them to solve problems and maintain a sense of control through the care and respect in social relationships. A sense of satisfaction that results from care and emotional support children receive from their families act as a buffer against health problems.

### **3. Education and literacy**

Education equips people with knowledge and problem-solving skills. Knowledge and skills give people a sense of control over their life conditions. Education enables people to access health knowledge and develop health literacy. People with high levels of education are better able to prepare their children for school. These people also tend to have access to healthy foods and know the difference between “filling” and nutritious food.

### **4. Employment and working conditions**

Unemployment, unsafe working conditions and lack of control over work circumstances associate with significant mental health problems. These mental health problems have negative effects on family members of the workers and the community at large. For example, unemployed parents might not be in the position to afford school fees and school uniforms for their children.

### **5. Social environments**

Poor social networks, unacceptable lifestyles and poor values and norms in a community are potential risks to health and well-being. Family violence is associated with physical and psychological problems while group membership and trust correlate strongly with reduced mortality.

### **6. Physical environments**

Air pollution, water pollution and poor housing and transport system can influence physical and psychological health and well-being.

Children living in damp and cold houses are more likely to develop respiratory ailments such as asthma (Naidoo & Wills, 2000:34). Contaminated water often leads to ailments such as cholera. Second-hand tobacco smoke increases the risk of lung cancer. The message on cigarette packets makes people aware that, every time they smoke, those around them smoke too, which increases their risk of heart disease.

### **7. Healthy child development**

Experiences people have from conception through early childhood determine their health into adulthood.

Malnutrition, smoking and drugs during pregnancy are associated with low birth weights, foetal alcohol syndrome, stillbirths, mental retardation, learning disabilities and impaired

intellectual and emotional development (Mwamwenda, 1995:31-34). Loving and secure attachment in infancy links with trust, self-esteem, emotional control and positive relationships in later life.

### **2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Views and beliefs regarding health are generally described in terms of positive and negative meanings of health, lay concepts of health, professional concepts of health and cultural views of health with differences of interpretations of health and disease across age, sex, social class and nationality (Naidoo & Wills, 2000:6, 17, 18, 19-20; Doyal & Doyal, 1984:2-3).

Beck, Clark and Griffin (2003:1) insist that there are basically two theories concerning health, namely the natural health theory and the medical health theory and they further argue that contrary to popular belief, the natural perspective on health is older than the medical perspective. Because the medical perspective on health became dominant during the 1900s the natural perspective lost its prominence.

Salutogenesis is a view of health that represents a shift away from the medical perspective on health and it emphasizes the need to consider personal resources such as cognitive ability and external resources, for instance having good social support, as important determinants of good health (Rowley, 2005:1).

Shepherd (2004:1-2) and Van Niekerk and Prins (2001:22-31) postulate that the views and beliefs regarding health have evolved in reaction to the limitations of the medical perspective to culminate in a bio-psychosocial-spiritual view of health and well-being.

Kirsten and Viljoen (2003:5-6) propagate a more comprehensive and holistic view of health called the meta-approach to health that extends the bio-psychosocial-spiritual view to include the ecological and metaphysical contexts of health as well as its determinants. For the purposes of this research, the researcher supports this viewpoint.

The metaphysical approach to health and well-being represents the contemporary state of affairs pertaining to believing, thinking and acting in respect of health, well-being and health promotion in various settings.

## **2.4 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN SCHOOLS**

Health, well-being and education are concepts that are intertwined (Naidoo & Wills, 2000:282-283). Although schools are primarily concerned with achieving academic goals for learners (St Leger, 2001:198), strong links are noticed between health and education (Nutbeam & Kickbush, 2000:183-184). The Department of Education in Tasmania (2006) supports the health and well-being of government schools because learners thrive when they feel happy and safe in a healthy school environment. When health and well-being are defined holistically, one becomes aware of the magnitude of health-related factors (positive and negative) to which children are exposed both inside and outside the school environments. Negative health-related factors become barriers to learning and development and impede the realization of learners' potential (Landsberg, Kruger & Norman, 2005:27).

These barriers to learning and development usually manifest in scholastic failure, absenteeism, unacceptable school drop-out rates and the exclusion of learners with special needs (Department of Education, 1997:12).

## **2.5 HEALTH-PROMOTING SCHOOLS**

Miller (2003:6-7) indicates that health-promoting interventions in schools started in North America in the 1970s when learners were provided with information on health risk behaviours and programmes to develop their social skills and attitudes in order to make healthy lifestyle decisions. However, research indicated that the provision of information and development of attitudes and skills did not have the desired long-term impact among learners (Miller, 2003:6)). Therefore the need for a new approach to school health promotion became apparent.

The development of a comprehensive approach to health promotion in schools was set in motion by the first *Global Conference on Health Promotion* in Ottawa in 1986 and the fourth *Global Conference on Health Promotion* in Jakarta in 1997 (WHO, 2007). The *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* defined the conditions and resources that must be available for health, described the general actions to be taken in order to make the conditions favourable for health and laid down the principles that provided the necessary focus for health-promoting interventions. The above-mentioned conditions that should be available for health included peace, shelter, education, food, income, social justice, equity and a stable ecosystem. Actions to promote health included advocacy, enablement and mediation. Focus areas identified for health promotion were policies, environments, community action, personal skills and health services. However, the *Jakarta Statement* from the fourth conference gave the strongest impetus for the

development of comprehensive approaches to health promotion in schools. The essence of the *Jakarta Statement* was that all children should have the right and be given the opportunity to receive education in health-promoting schools. These health-promoting schools should be developed and maintained by Governments, NGOs, the private sector and communities. Furthermore, it was stated that schools should integrate health-related issues with comprehensive health-promoting programmes to promote the health and well-being of learners, staff, parents and families and other stakeholders.

Since the Ottawa and Jakarta statements, there has been a proliferation of various terms to describe school health promotion as well as different implementation approaches applied in various countries (McCall and Andrew, 2006:1-3). Some of the terms used in different countries to refer to health promotion approaches are: *Comprehensive School Health* (Canada), *Health-Promoting School* (Europe), *Coordinated School Health* (United States of America) and *Healthy Schools or Good Schools* (England) (St. Leger, 2001:198, 199).

The various health promotion approaches differ according to their areas of focus such as risk-taking behaviours, life skills, learning and educational objectives and key environments (Elder, Ayala & Harris, 2005). The Kentucky Department of Education (2007) has integrated eight components to develop a comprehensive approach to health promotion in schools. These components are *Counselling, Psychological and Social Services; Family and Community Involvement; Health Education; Health and Safety Policies and Environment; Health Promotion for Staff; Health Services; and Physical Education*. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health added one component, namely *Family and Consumer Science Education* to come up with nine components in its comprehensive approach to healthy schools (Massachusetts Department of Health, 2000).

The World Health Organization in Partnership for Child Development with the United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and World Bank (United Nations Children's Fund, 2003:1) launched the FRESH start approach at the 2000 *World Education Forum* in Senegal for the development of healthy, child-friendly schools. The core components of the FRESH start model are: health-related school policies; provision of safe water and sanitation; skills-based health education; school-based health and nutrition services; and supporting activities which provide the context for school health-promoting interventions. The health-promoting activities include learner awareness and participation and partnerships between teachers, health workers and relevant stakeholders in the community.

The Department of Health (1999:4-8) advocates an approach to health promotion in schools that is based on the Ottawa Charter. Six key components of health-promoting schools have been identified by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Departments of Education and Welfare (Department of Health, 2000:21-25). These components are: building education and school policies which support well-being; creating supportive teaching and learning environments; strengthening community action and participation; developing personal skills; providing access to and re-orientating education support services; and developing health-promoting schools within an integrated whole-school development approach. These key components are addressed by specific programmes such as life skills and HIV/AIDS Education (Department of Health, 1999), Inclusive Education (Department of Education, 2001) and the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (COLTS) which later became the Tirisan Programme. The afore-mentioned programmes were subsumed in the Implementation Plan for Tirisan (Department of Education, 2000).

While comprehensive school health approaches have led to the development of school health promotion programmes with well-established goals and benefits (McCall & Andrew, 2006:3), Konu and Rimpela (2002:80-85) argue that these approaches are riddled with limitations restricting the effectiveness of the interventions aiming at the improvement of personal health. These limitations include: concentrating more on the factors of school effectiveness without giving practical consideration to the health and well-being in schools; mentioning aspects related to health and well-being of schools but failing to operationalize these aspects as indicators of quality; and defining health as social and psychological well-being and hence getting stuck with traditional health interventions that focus on health behaviour, feelings, values, attitudes and competencies of learners and educators.

Swart, Craig, Muller, Kriek, Lotz, Gillmer and Pote (2000:3-237) present a Life Orientation Programme which recognizes the impact of contextual factors but it concentrates only on personal health by developing learners' coping skills. No attempt is made to promote population and societal health, except by merely acknowledging the existence of societal and environmental factors of health. The result of this type of programme is that the learner is often seen as the victim of external circumstances. Meeks and Heit (1999:1-9) display the same limitations in a programme envisaged to be comprehensive by providing learners with knowledge on mental and emotional health; family and social health; growth and development; nutrition; personal health and physical activity; substance abuse; communicable and chronic diseases; consumer and community health; environmental health; and injury prevention and safety. Again, no attempt is

made by the programme to improve conditions in the learners' living environments. So, learners know a lot about health-related topics and issues, but nothing is done to promote and improve the health conditions in their immediate living environments.

Miller (2003:13-14) advocates a *Settings Approach* which is essentially an ecological approach to school health promotion. The ecological approach recognizes schools together with learners and educators as existing and interacting within complex subsystems which include families, peer groups, organizations, communities, cultural and physical, social, political and economic environments. Du Plessis (2005:11-12) too employs the bio-ecological perspective which is based on the ecological approach for understanding barriers to learning and development. It is important to mention that barriers to learning and development are actually the factors/determinants of health in schools because they frustrate learners and educators in realizing their potential in terms of desires, needs goals and talents. They are barriers to learning from the Inclusive Education Perspective but factors or determinants of health from the Health Promotion Perspective.

### **2.5.1 Factors related to school health**

Health promotion in schools is about empowering learners, educators, parents and other stakeholders to have control over the factors that directly or indirectly stand in their way toward the realization of their potential.

McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter and McWhirter (1998:20, 60, 78) categorize factors that impact on the health and well-being of school-going children as environmental/societal, school and individual factors. These factors are related to school health by virtue of putting children at risk of developing health problems. According to Lazarus and Davidoff (2002:4), factors related to school health and well-being pertain to the elements of the school as an organisation in context, namely: leadership, management and government; identity; human resources; strategy; culture; structures and procedures and technical support; as well as micro, macro and global contextual factors. Departing from an eco-systemic approach, the relevance of contextual factors is based on the school as an open subsystem within a larger ecological system.

According to Fowler (2006:18-25), the Nova Scotia Government identified six health-compromising factors which do not only exist in schools but work-places and communities as well. These factors are poor nutrition, unprotected and unsafe sexual intercourse, physical inactivity and lack of sporting and recreational facilities, tobacco use, injuries and alcohol and substance abuse.

Furlong, Page and Osher (2003:447-448) identify violence, alcohol and substance abuse in their research report as factors that harm the health and well-being of children at school and keep teachers away from the actual teaching-learning process.

Di, McIvor, Chifunyise and McCartney (2000:14-17) succinctly describe factors which impede the health and well-being of children at farm schools in Zimbabwe. These factors are interrelated and include teenage pregnancies, poverty, HIV-orphans looking after siblings, early marriage, divorce and remarriage, extended families, polygamy and step-children, child labour, corporal punishment and long distances to farm schools. Bezuidenhout (2004:31, 117, 151, 179) identify similar factors as social issues necessitating guidance and counselling as they impact negatively on the psychological well-being and academic performance of learners.

From an African perspective, factors impeding school health are often described as barriers to learning and development (Department of Education, 1997:12-19). The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) documents list the following factors as barriers to learning and development: lack of access to basic services, poverty and unemployment, negative attitudes, inflexible curriculum, teaching and learning through the medium of a foreign language with poor communication skills, inaccessible and unsafe school environments, inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services, lack of enabling and protective legislation and policy, lack of parental involvement, disability and a lack of human resources development. These health-impeding factors are often prevalent in farm schools in South Africa.

## **2.6 THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF FARM SCHOOLS AND FARM-WORKING COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Research on farm schools in South Africa revealed disturbing findings related to the health and well-being of farm schools and the farming communities in which they are situated.

The Human Rights Watch (2004:7-24) conducted research on conditions at various farm schools across the country. The research reported the following conditions that run counter to the health and well-being of the schools, learners, teachers and parents as well as other stakeholders:

- *Access to schools:* Learners are occasionally denied access to farm schools through a myriad of dubious tactics. Fencing off the schools, building of walls, threats regarding closure and evictions, cutting water and electricity supplies and locking of gates are the common tactics used by some farmers.

- *Distances to schools:* Most farm schools are remotely located with vast distances between homes and the schools. Lack of transport means that teachers and learners walk long distances to reach the schools.
- *Electricity:* Most farm schools are without power supply, sometimes due to the tactics of denial used by the farmers. Where power supply is available it is mainly for lighting. Heating for major activities like cooking for the primary school nutrition programme is done by firewood.
- *Sanitation:* Hygienic sanitation facilities are scarce. Pit latrines are a common phenomenon. Most of these latrines are unhygienic and in dire need of repair and renovation.
- *School buildings:* Small and dilapidated school buildings are the order on commercial farm schools in South Africa. Most of them are unsuitable for education purposes. Store-rooms and security are seriously lacking in most of these schools

Farm workers seem to be those hit hardest by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. According to the Medical News (2007:1), between 30% and 45% of farm workers in South Africa are HIV positive. This finding was based on data that was collected by Agri AIDS which is an HIV/AIDS Pilot Programme targeting farm workers.

Husy and Samson (2001:9-17) highlight disturbing research findings regarding the plight of workers on South African commercial farms in respect of income, conditions of work, training of farm workers, child labour, housing, water and electricity supply, communication, education and child care and recreation. According to these research findings, the highest paid male farm workers received just below R500 per month while the highest paid women earned monthly wages of ± R300. On the other hand, the lowest paid male workers received below R400 per month while the lowest paid women received monthly wages of just above R100. Conditions of work were found to be unacceptable and 75% of farm workers in the KwaZulu-Natal Province worked more than 48 hours per week and 90% worked more than 10 hours per day. Contracts of employment were almost non-existent and in general, farm workers had no written contracts of employment. Where contracts existed, workers did not have copies of these contracts in their possession. Poor housing conditions were also reported. Farm workers stayed in overcrowded mud houses, shacks, compounds or hostels. Water was not easily accessible and communal taps were an average distance of 1 km from the dwellings of the farm workers. Where electricity was

available in schools and houses, it was for lighting purposes only. Heating for major activities like preparing food for primary school nutrition programmes relied on firewood. With regard to the medical health status of farm workers and their children, a high prevalence of infant mortality, low birth weight, tuberculosis and alcohol consumption, even by pregnant women, were found. The average level of education for most adult farm workers was below Grade 7, with a large incidence of adult illiteracy. Secondary schools in the vicinity of farm schools were scarce, scattered and located far away so that children from primary schools had to walk vast distances or make use of motor travel to reach them. Recreation, banking, shopping and health care facilities were either non-existent or limited in the various provinces. Farm workers and their families usually walked long distances to nearby towns to access these facilities.

According to Mmbengwa (2005:30-35), farm workers perform various tasks and jobs for the farm owners without opportunities for further training and development. The lack of training results in low productivity which in turn leads to low salary packages for the farm workers..

A longitudinal study in KwaZulu-Natal revealed that most farm children whose mothers had died were educationally disadvantaged. They were less likely to enrol in a school. Those who enrolled performed poorly at school and most of them were early school drop-outs (Anne, 2006).

Jinabhai, Taylor, Coutsoudis, Coovadia, Tomkins and Sullivan (2001:50-52) conducted a nutrition study on a sample of 579 South African rural primary school children and reported micronutrient deficiencies, especially a vitamin A deficiency; parasitic infections; obesity and stunting as significant health impeding factors.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (2007:7-43) conducted research and held public hearings with farm workers in all the provinces in South Africa. The subsequent research report indicated that the lives of people living and working on commercial farms in South Africa are riddled with conditions that threaten their health and well-being in respect of violations of human rights with regard to land tenure, education, social services, health care, safety and security and social security grants.

## **2.7 GOVERNMENT ACTION AND LEGISLATION AIMING AT IMPROVING THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF FARM WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The South African Government is aware of the plight of farm workers and put in place mechanisms in terms of structures, policies and legislation to address the challenges related to the health and well-being of farm workers and their families. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act No 75 of 1997 was promulgated to protect the rights of farm workers in respect of their employment which included minimum wages, hours of work, leave entitlements, prohibition of child labour, termination of employment and notice of termination and accommodation. For example, it is a violation of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (75/1997) to pay farm workers less than R994,00 per month. Yet, many farm owners act against the farm workers as if such protective measures were non-existent.

Examples of these transgressions are abundant. The following research findings are reported by the SAHRC (2007): Fifty-four percent of farm workers are not only working longer hours than the legal limit, but are not remunerated for overtime work either. Twenty seven percent do not get annual leave and 92% of those who are given annual leave do not receive leave pay. Maternity benefits are often not paid to pregnant women.

Chapters 3 and 4 of the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (62/1997) prohibit eviction of farm workers by farm owners without an eviction order. Farm owners, however, evict farm workers at random.

Section 14 of the South African Schools Act of 1996 provides for the signing of an agreement between the farm owner and the MECs for Education in the provinces (Brunton and Associates, 2003). The purpose of this agreement is to enable government to take full control of farm schools to be run by School Governing Bodies. While the Department of Education, Transvaal Agricultural Union and Agri-SA have declared a commitment to Section 14 (News 24.Com, 2001), the South African Human Rights Commission (2007) has found that the process of signing is painfully slow with many farm owners simply refusing to sign the agreement.

The Department of Roads and Transport (2006) issued a circular requesting the various districts of the provincial education departments to identify learners in rural and farming communities who walk more than three kilometres to school so that they could be provided with bicycles. The provision of bicycles has, however, been changed to provision of transport by buses. Some

children are benefiting from these measures although in some cases the transport has been found to be irregular.

From the above, it is evident that government and other stakeholders have started to take some action in providing services to alleviate the plight of farm workers and their families and to improving their health and well-being. Unfortunately there seems to be a lack of capacity to drive and maintain these health-promoting actions, so that here are still many conditions in farm-working communities and farm schools that can be described as toxic.

## **2.8 CONSEQUENCES OF TOXIC CONDITIONS AT FARM SCHOOLS**

While the consequences of toxic conditions at farm schools are different for learners, teachers, parents and the community at large, they are interrelated.

### **2.8.1 Consequences for learners**

The prevailing denial of access to the premises of farm schools as seen in the closure of gates and building of walls results in learners entering the school premises in illegal ways like making holes in the fences. Vast distances between homes and farm schools coupled with the lack of transport or irregular transport where it is provided, leads to truancy, non-attendance and an increased drop-out rate. Hitchhiking by learners due to transport problems puts the children at risk of abuse by people who give them lifts to and from school. Children arrive home late and tired from school and consequently fail to do their homework.

Lack of water, or insufficient water supply where it is provided, result in learners fetching and drinking dirty water from dams. This exposes them to infectious diseases such as cholera. The Government's HIV/AIDS policy demands that each school should make running water available so that if children are injured and bleeding during playtime they should be able to wash their hands with running water to avoid HIV infection (Department of Health, 1999:118). Lack of running water supplies therefore puts farm school children at risk of contracting the deadly virus.

Most farm schools are without electricity supply and this promotes the provision of a poorer quality of education, since teachers and learners cannot use electronic teaching and learning aids. Due to the lack of electricity and electrical lighting in most of the farm schools, visibility in the classrooms is affected, especially during cloudy or rainy days. Where electricity is available, it is restricted to lighting. Food for the Primary School Nutrition Programme is cooked on wood fires which, according to Naeher, Brauer, Lipsett, Zelikoff, Dimpson, Koenig and Smith (2007), emit wood smoke that contains health damaging gaseous pollutants. The wood smoke therefore puts

children at danger of developing potential lung diseases. According to London (2003:60), child labour practices on some farms also expose learners to work-related injuries, pesticides and organic dust.

The absence or lack of toilets at farm schools leads to children relieving themselves in the nearby bushes. Gleick (2002:1) points out that lack of safe drinking water coupled with poor sanitation and inadequate disposal of excreta leads to contamination of water sources which in turn is associated with water-related diseases in children such as cholera, typhoid, hookworm, schistosomiasis and filariasis. These infections are potentially more dangerous for farm children because their immune systems are often impaired by mal- and/or under-nutrition. Children's visits to the bushes also expose them to the risk of snake bites and possible rape. Girls in particular are more likely to be raped by boys and other farm workers. The consequences of rape for the children include physical injury, nightmares, eating disorders, sexually transmitted diseases, problems with sexual relationships and shame, guilt and anger and suicidal thinking (Bezuidenhout, 2004:161).

The toxic conditions in farm schools are barriers to the academic development of farm school children. On the one hand, most parents of farm school children are themselves either illiterate or semi-literate and poor because of low salaries. On the other hand, conditions in the farm schools affect the children's scholastic performance negatively due to poor attendance and poor quality teaching which results from multigrade teaching and lack of resources. Most children become disinterested and de-motivated with a negative attitude towards school and education. The result is increased drop-out rates in both primary and secondary farm schools. The children who drop out lack the knowledge and skills needed for employment in most sectors of employment. The only sector of employment for these children becomes the agricultural sector where cheap labour is preferred. This means that the children too are employed on the farms where they are subjected to the same toxic conditions which include poor salaries, amongst others. Then the cycle of illiteracy, semi-literacy and poverty is perpetuated in the farm-working communities.

### **2.8.2 Consequences for parents**

Eviction of parents from the farms often results in the termination of the education of their children. Where evicted, parents often decide to leave their children in the care of those who have not been evicted, with the result that these children become more disadvantaged, since they will remain on the farm without close parental supervision and support. Evictions deprive parents of their involvement in the education of their children. According to Majestry and

Grobler (2007:5), parental involvement is associated with successful school improvement interventions and increased learner effort, concentration, attention and interest in learning as well as high perceived competence.

Denial of access to farm schools makes it difficult for parents to attend parent and SGB meetings. Officials from the Department of Education and other agencies are often unable to visit farm school educators and parents to enlighten them in respect of their rights as farm workers. High levels of illiteracy among farm workers contribute to their ignorance of their rights as provided by legislation such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No.75 of 1997 and the Extension of Security and Tenure Act No. 62 of 1997. Most of the actions taken by farm owners against farm workers are simply violations of the rights of farm workers (HRW, 2004; SAHRC, 2006).

Low wages paid to farm workers implies poverty and their resulting inability to pay school fees, to buy school uniforms and to build better houses. According to Medical News Today (2004), the poor quality of houses built by parents on farms put children at risk of developing asthma and other respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis and bronchitis. Other health conditions which can be attributed to the poor wages that farm workers receive are under- and malnutrition. The implication is that farm-working households are poor and likely to be associated with conditions which, according to the Department of Education (1997), are socio-economic barriers that lead to learning breakdown. These socio-economic conditions include lack of access to basic facilities and poverty-related conditions such as domestic violence, malnutrition, inconsistent parenting and lack of support for and involvement in school-related activities, confirming the strong links that exist between poverty and low academic achievement.

Donohoe (2004:1-3) identifies specific health-related problems that affect male and female workers on commercial farms. Poor nutrition coupled with over-exertion, strenuous tasks and pesticide exposures lead to musculoskeletal injuries, breast and reproductive organ malignancies, spontaneous abortions, premature births and foetal abnormalities, morbidity, mortality and dermatitis. Overcrowding and poor ventilation in damp mud-houses without toilet facilities are the precursors of urinary infections, asthma and tuberculosis.

The lack of recreational facilities on farms leads to increased alcohol consumption (Husy & Samson, 2001:17). The Hesperian Foundation (1997) and Courtejoie and Pirre (1983:6-10) highlight the damaging effects of alcohol on users. The effects include poor nutrition, brain damage or fits, memory loss and mental health problems of the schizophrenic type where the person becomes suspicious of others and starts seeing things or hearing non-existent voices and

songs. Pregnant women who use alcohol and other drugs are more likely to give birth to children with birth defects and mental disabilities. The incidence of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAT) among children of farm-working mothers who work on wine farms in the Western Cape is among the highest in the world (McKinstry, 2005:1-3).

### **2.8.3 Consequences for teachers**

Toxic conditions in farm schools de-motivate teachers, since it impacts negatively on their teaching morale resulting in a negative attitude towards teaching in farm schools.

Lack of transport to the farm schools makes teachers arrive late for lessons. In some cases teachers fail to report for work because they could not obtain transport to come to work. Many farm schools are so small that only one or two teachers teach there. This denies them the opportunity to seek common transport like minibuses as is done by teachers in most rural community schools. Teachers cannot take needy learners for remedial classes because it might be dangerous for these learners to walk home alone when most of the learners have already left the school.

Lack of clean water puts teachers at risk of infections from drinking contaminated water. Bringing along water from home to school every day can be cumbersome, especially because of lack of transport to the farm schools. Science equipment is often delivered to schools but teachers cannot plan learning activities which need use of the science equipment because of lack of water.

Lack of toilets at most farm schools exposes learners to the same risky conditions as it does learners. These teachers are forced to use the bush to relieve themselves and in so doing they are exposed to similar dangers. Lack of toilets or unhygienic toilets means that teachers have to travel distances in order to access toilets, usually at a shop on the farm, and this encourages poor teacher attendance as most of these teachers never come to the school until the next day.

Lack of transport coupled with poverty in farm schools make it difficult for teachers in farm schools to attend in-service training courses organized by curriculum advisors. This is because the teachers claim travel allowance from the school fund which is always not enough as parents cannot afford the school fee. Furthermore, although the Department of Education has declared all farm schools no-fee schools, allocations are made according to enrolment. This means that allocations for most farm schools will be insufficient because of the small number of learners at these schools.

#### **2.8.4 Consequences for the farm-working community**

Deaths due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the farming communities should create a social problem by leaving many children orphaned.

The Department of Social Welfare has to take care of the orphans by providing them with food parcels. However, the denial of access to the farming communities by some farmers makes it difficult for deliveries to reach the farming communities. Other complicating factors are that some farm workers are not aware of the kinds of service provided by the Government. Some orphans are foreigners and therefore do not have the South African Identity Document that would qualify them for the service.

Members of the farming communities might be painfully aware of unhealthy conditions in their communities but they do not talk about it in order to take community action for fear of eviction. Social workers and other public health workers find it difficult to reach farm workers in order to empower them through knowledge and skills development. These public health workers must first secure permission to meet the farm workers, and farm owners often do not give the permission. A complicating factor is that most farm workers are either illiterate or semi-literate and as such incapable of self-empowerment.

Problems in farming communities are likely to persist in a somewhat vicious cycle. First, many farm workers are illiterate and unaware of their rights as workers. Second, while their children go to school and a handful of them obtain grade 12, these children do not want to live and work in the farming communities. On the one hand, they are pushed by the toxic conditions on the farms. On the other hand, they are attracted by the bright lights of the cities and the better services there. The result is that illiteracy and its consequences are sustained in the farming communities because only drop-outs add to the number of farm workers. These drop-outs will have their own children who will receive the same poor quality education in the farm schools; thus the vicious cycle is perpetuated.

## **2.9 SUMMARY**

This Chapter discussed the health and well-being of schools with specific reference to farm schools. Toxic conditions at farm schools and their impact on learners, teachers and farm-working communities were addressed.

Chapter 3 addresses the research design and methodology that was used to answer the research question and achieve the aim of the research.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

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#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 2 aspects related to the health and well-being of schools, with specific reference to farm schools, were discussed. The consequences of toxic conditions at farm schools for learners, teachers, parents and farm-working communities were also addressed.

In this chapter the research design and methodology implemented by the researcher to answer the research question and to achieve the aim of the research will be discussed.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIM**

As stated in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Chapter 1, the researcher wished to establish empirically how parents of farm school learners perceive the health and well-being of farm schools.

#### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A survey of literature reveals two basic approaches to research, namely quantitative and qualitative approaches:

Qualitative research is phenomenological by nature and employs a naturalistic approach for understanding phenomena in their natural settings while quantitative research departs from a positivistic approach that uses experimental methods to test hypotheses in experimental settings in order to establish causal relationships between variables and make generalizations (Hoepfl, 1997:47).

According to Marshall (1996:522) the choice between qualitative and quantitative methods in a research project is informed by the research question and not the preference of the researcher. The researcher is of opinion that qualitative research methods are the most appropriate for purposes of this study. The researcher's opinion is based on the following aspects:

- First, the purpose of the research entails obtaining parents' perceptions and lived experiences of farm schools and farming communities as their everyday realities. According to Bennett, Bradley, Martin and Sutcliffe (2004:9-10), qualitative research is

most appropriate where the purpose of the research is to gain a thorough understanding of people's lived experiences and their subjective understanding as well as shared meanings of phenomena in their social worlds.

- Second, Hoepfl (1997:49) and Marshall (1996:524) fully describe features of qualitative research which match the nature of this research project. The following table concisely illustrates the match between the nature of this research and features of qualitative research:

**TABLE 3.1: THE MATCH BETWEEN FEATURES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND THE NATURE OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT**

Features of qualitative research	Nature of the research project
Holism and inductive analysis of data	Health and well-being are holistic concepts and the data was analysed inductively
Exploration and interpretation of complex human issues	Parents' perceptions of the conditions at farm schools are complex issues
Participation of the researcher as human instrument in collecting non-numerical data	Researcher participated in focus groups as an observer who probed the feelings and opinions of the participants
Use of criteria of trustworthiness rather than validity and reliability as measures of quality assurance	Observation, focus groups discussions and video-recordings were used to ensure trustworthiness which, according to Kok (2007:6), is described by credibility, transferability and dependability.
Reliance on emergent research designs.	A flexible, naturalistic, descriptive exploratory, inductive and interpretive research design was followed instead of an artificial design (experimental and control group design).

This research followed a phenomenological approach, because verbal data was gathered by means of focus group discussions for purposes of gaining a deep and comprehensive understanding of parents' perceptions of the health and well-being of farm schools.

## **3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.4.1 Participant selection**

McMillan (2007:1-2) clearly distinguishes between population, target population, subjects, participants and sample.

The concept *population* refers to a large group of people to whom the research results can be generalized. A *target population* is a concept that refers to the group of people to whom the research results are intended to be generalized. Quantitative researchers use the term *subjects* while qualitative researchers use the term *participants* to refer to a group of individuals from whom research data is collected. A *sample* is a collective group of participants from whom data is collected in a research process.

Monteith (2007:1) explains the differences between a target population, an accessible population and a sample in research. A *target population* refers to all the potential number of people from whom data can be obtained in respect of the research topic. An *accessible population* is a section of the target population to whom the research results are intended to be generalizable or transferable in quantitative and qualitative terms respectively. A *sample* is a representative group of people derived from the accessible population in order to obtain data on the research topic.

In this research project, the various concepts are understood as follows:

1. *Population* refers to the parents whose children attend farm schools in South Africa.
2. *Target population* is that group of parents whose children attend farm schools in the Limpopo Province.
3. *Accessible population* consists of parents of children who attend schools in the Mopani District of the Limpopo province.
4. *Participants* are individual samples of parents whose children attend three farm schools in the Tzaneen Circuit and one farm school in the Ritavi Circuit of the Mopani District of the Limpopo Department of Education.

According to Monteith (2007:1-2), selecting the participants is the most important step in a research process where a choice can be made between probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The use of probability or non-probability techniques depends on the type of research

and the purpose for which the participants are selected in a research project (McMillan, 2007:1). Probability sampling techniques are used in statistically driven research (quantitative research) to select subjects who are representative of an accessible population. Non-probability sampling techniques are used in pragmatically-based research (qualitative research) to select participants from the accessible population who are informative with regard to the research topic.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select participants in this research project for the following reasons:

1. Purposive sampling is informed by the purpose of the study (Bonilla, 2007:3) which in this project is to obtain information from participants concerning farm schools.
2. Purposive sampling is the most dominant strategy in qualitative research (Hoepfl, 1997:51).
3. Purposive or judgment sampling is commonly used in qualitative studies because it selects the most productive participants who can provide more insight and understanding than those selected randomly (Marshall, 1996:523).
4. According to Patton (in Hoepfl, 1997:51-52), purposive sampling is flexible due to the various forms it can take in order to reduce sampling errors and turn weaknesses into strengths. These various forms include maximum variation sampling, snowball sampling, convenience sampling, confirming or disconfirming sampling and others.
5. Convenience sampling in particular has been the dominant form of purposive sampling in this project because perceptions of the health and well-being of farm schools can be best provided by parents who are available at farm schools in the commercial farming communities.

According to Longan (2006), a research report must include demographic details of the study population and study area. Description of a research sample makes it clear what population is represented and how it affects conclusions that are drawn concerning the report (Rudner & Schafer, 1999:3).

Participants in this project consisted of fathers and mothers of children who attend farm schools. Most of the parents work in the fields either planting vegetables or minding fruit plants, mainly banana, mango, avocado, litchi and citrus plants. A few of the parents, especially mothers, are domestic workers in the houses of the farm owners. Two parents are principals at the farm

schools where the research was conducted and their children also attend the farm schools. Most of the parents are between 18 and 35 years old. Very few of them are older than 57 years of age. The older parents lack primary school education, as indicated by their inability to read and write. The majority of the younger parents have primary school education and a small number of them have partially completed secondary school education. The two school principals completed their secondary school education and are in possession of teaching qualifications (diplomas). Biographical information regarding the participants is reflected in Table 3.2 below:

**TABLE 3.2: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE PARTICIPANTS**

Variable		Number
<b>Gender</b>	Male	8
	Female	40
<b>Age</b>	18 – 35 yrs	45
	50 + yrs	3
<b>Occupation</b>	Farm workers	46
	Farm school principals	2
<b>Educational level</b>	Illiterate	3
	Primary school	40
	Partially completed	3
	Secondary school	
	Teaching diploma	2

### 3.4.2 Site selection and description

Data for the research project was obtained from parents of children attending three farm schools in the Tzaneen circuit and one farm school in the Ritavi circuit. These two circuits are in the Mopani District of the Department of Education, Limpopo Province. The farm schools in Tzaneen circuit are situated on farms which specialize in the production of mangoes, bananas, litchis, avocados and pawpaws. The farm school in Ritavi circuit is located on a farm that mainly produces citrus fruits, namely oranges, grapefruits, lemons and naartjies. The nearest town to all

the schools and their farming communities is Tzaneen which is about 157 kilometres north of Polokwane which is the capital city of the Limpopo Province. The different sites are described in the following paragraphs:

- **School A:**

This is a combined school, situated approximately one kilometre from the main road leading from Tzaneen to Polokwane via Makgoba's Kloof.

The school premises are unfenced and enclosed by a dense forest of blue-gum and avocado trees. The school is a brick building and there are three blocks of classrooms. Each block has two offices which are used as staff rooms. All the blocks have corrugated iron roofs. The buildings are generally in a good condition although leaking water taps and pipes have damaged the walls. The absence of stoeps and verandas caused rain water to erode the bottoms of the walls and grasses and spirogyra are growing into the bottom sections of the walls. There are, however, beautiful flowers around the school premises and a freshly prepared garden at the back of the building.

Refuse is dumped at the back of one of the blocks and this spoils the otherwise beautiful scenery provided by the flowers. There are flushing toilets that cannot be used because there is lack of water. Two pit toilets are used by the staff. The school has a sports ground where learners play soccer and netball.

- **School B:**

This school is situated in the Retavi circuit about 500 meters from the main tarred road leading to Tzaneen.

The school consists of one block of four classrooms with many broken window panes. There is no fencing around the school. A dusty road from the main tar road passes just in front of the classrooms and goes around to the residential houses at the back of the school building. The school building is constructed out of plastered bricks, but it is in dire need of re-plastering. Roofing consists of corrugated iron which is so rusted that it is likely to leak any moment. There are steel doors and windows. Only one of the doors was locked. This is apparently because it is the door of a classroom that currently not only serves as a classroom, but also as an office and a store-room.

There are pit toilets at the school. The leaking water tap in front of the school poses a health risk to the learners and the staff because of the malaria-carrying mosquitoes of the

Lowveld Region of South Africa. There is an open hole at the back of the school that is used as a dumping area. The dump was, however, so full of paper and other rubbish that one doubts whether it is regularly emptied. The school is electrified, but the electricity is used mainly for lighting purposes. The presence of a hot-plate in one of the classrooms indicates that teachers might use electricity for cooking purposes as well.

- **School C:**

This primary school is situated south-east of Tzaneen, about 2.5 kilometres from the main road leading to Lydenburg,

The farm on which the school is built specializes in the production of mangoes. The school itself is situated in a forest of mango trees. It is built of bricks and consists of one classroom. The bottom sections of the walls are badly eroded and there is a green belt of vegetation, possibly spirogyra, growing into the walls. The school premises are not fenced and are overgrown with tall grasses. Roofing consists of corrugated iron and the window panes are not broken. There is no visible playground where children can play soccer, netball or any other outdoor sports or games.

- **School D:**

This school is situated alongside the main road from Tzaneen town to Polokwane via Makgoba's kloof. The school premises are unfenced and surrounded by bluegum and pine trees with some avocado trees.

The building is built of bricks and consists of a block of three classrooms and a building that was previously used as a home. The front of the school building displays beautiful art in the form of children's drawings and this artistic decoration which gives the building the appearance of a school which would otherwise have been lacking. The stoep in front of the block of three classrooms is too high for the learners and could be potentially dangerous to the learners as they like to play on it during playtime. Electricity is available but only used for lighting purposes

Generally the school is kept clean. There are no pieces of paper or any form of littering around the school grounds. The tidiness of the premises and the empty dustbins indicate that refuse is regularly collected from the school grounds.

There is a large sports ground which is meant for soccer and netball. The sports ground is, however, overgrown with weeds which is an indication that it is rarely used.

### **3.4.3 Data collection**

A focus group is an organized group in which discussions are used to obtain group members' views and experiences about a topic that is the subject of research (Gibbs, 1997:1-2). Morgan (1997:1) explains that a focus group or a focus group interview is a qualitative research tool in which a selected group of people hold discussions to address a specific topic.

For purposes of this research project, parents whose children attend farm schools were organized into focus groups. The researcher conducted focus group interviews to obtain the parents' views and experiences with regard to the health and well-being of the farm schools.

The researcher conducted focus group interviews for the following reasons (Morgan, 1997:1; Evmorfopoulou, 2000:2):

- (1) It takes place in a setting which provides rich data due to the direct interaction between researcher and participants.
- (2) It provides an opportunity for group members to build on one another's responses and to confirm individual contributions.
- (3) More important, focus group interviews are suitable for people with lower literacy levels.

The purpose of focus group interviews is to elicit participants' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way that it is not feasible with other methods because attitudes, beliefs, feelings and reactions are best revealed in the social gatherings and interactions which are provided for by focus group interviews (Gibbs, 1997:2).

Four focus group interviews were conducted with the participants on different days at schools A, B, C and D. At all the schools, the focus group interviews were held inside classrooms. With the permission of the participants, the researcher made video-recordings of the focus group interviews to collect detailed data that consist of not only verbal expressions of parents' perceptions but also visual displays of the physical settings and non-verbal behaviour patterns of the participants (see Appendix A for a copy of the video recordings).

The researcher started the focus group interviews by greeting the participants in Sepedi and shared the following introductory information with them:

- The researcher's name and credentials.

- The purpose of the research and of the focus group interview.
- The voluntary and confidential nature of their participation.

The introduction above was followed by a more detailed explanation of the research topic and the important role the participants would play in sharing their perceptions of the health and well-being of farm schools. The researcher explained the concepts *health*, *well-being* and *perceptions* to the participants in the following terms:

- Health is about physical, emotional, social and spiritual conditions of the children and the conditions in the school and its surroundings. Examples the researcher used to explain it further were the various diseases that children often suffer from, the way they relate to one another, to their teachers and to their parents, the type of education they receive at the school, the available resources and facilities at the school and the general living conditions and services in the farming community.
- Well-being refers to the learners' and parents' state of satisfaction and happiness about conditions at the farm schools and their immediate surroundings.
- Perceptions refer to parents' beliefs, views, feelings and opinions with respect to the health and well-being of learners, the farm schools and the farming communities.

After the introductory comments and the subsequent clarification of concepts the researcher initiated the focus group interviews by posing the following question:

*"What are your beliefs, views, feelings and/or opinions about the health and well-being of the farm school, including the children who attend this school?"*

Probing questions were asked during the focus group interviews to sustain the focus group discussions and to collect as much information as possible.

#### **3.4.4 Data analysis**

The video recordings of the focus group interviews were viewed, transcribed and translated into English by the researcher (see Appendix B for transcriptions). The researcher carefully read through the transcribed data, divided the information into meaningful segments and assigned codes (descriptive words) to the particular segments. The coding process enabled the researcher

to retrieve and collect all the data so that the sorted bits could be examined together. This process is also known as open coding because instead of using preset categories, the researcher read through the text and identified themes that recurred in the data (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003:3). The researcher continued with this process until all the data emanating from the four focus group interviews were segmented in this manner. The researcher kept a list of all the codes that were generated in this way and the same codes were assigned to similar segments of data.

After the coding process, the researcher grouped related codes into categories and each category was given a descriptive label. The researcher continued to categorize until all the coded data were grouped under relevant categories.

In order to assess the trustworthiness of the data analysis, an independent coder (an academic with experience of qualitative data analysis) was requested to code the raw data and to develop categories from the codes. During a consensus meeting, the inter-coder reliability of the two analyses was determined by comparing the independent coder's codes and categories with that of the researcher. An acceptable degree of inter-coder reliability was indicated by the comparison, and in order to enhance inter-coder reliability, a few codes and categories were adjusted to the satisfaction of the independent coder and the researcher.

#### **3.4.5 Ethical considerations**

According to the American Anthropological Association (2006:1-2), the ethical code in research refers to moral rules and obligations to ensure that researchers generate and utilize knowledge in an ethical manner for moral and practical reasons. The code of ethics in research applies to three main areas (American Association of Physical Anthropologists, 2003:1-6). These three main areas are:

1. Responsibility towards the people with whom the researcher works. For example, the parents whose children attend the farm schools and other stakeholders like members of the school governing bodies, school management teams, educators, farm owners and supervisors and officials of the Department of Education.
2. Responsibility to scholarship and science. For example, identifying and reporting on problems encountered in the research process.
3. Responsibility towards the public. For example, making the results of the research available to the stakeholders and ensuring that the results are factual and properly contextualized.

In this research the following measures were taken to consider the ethical aspects of the research:

1. Farm owners/managers, District Senior Managers, Circuit Managers, principals of the farm schools and parents whose children attend these schools were consulted. Consultation was done not only to secure permission to visit the schools but also to establish a working relationship that would benefit all parties involved. A supporting letter from researcher's supervisor was attached to the letters sent to the above-mentioned stakeholders and permission was granted to visit the schools in order to conduct focus group interviews (see Appendix C for copies of the letters).
2. Voluntary participation was ensured by indicating in the invitational letters to parents that they were under no obligation to participate in the focus group interviews. Letters sent to parents provided for the parents to append their signatures as an indication of their consent to participate in focus group discussions. Non-compulsory participation was further stressed at the beginning of the focus group interviews at the various schools.
3. Names of the schools concerned and the participating parents were not used. This was done to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.
4. Participating parents were informed at the beginning of the focus group interviews that the information they provide would not be used to compare and evaluate schools. Parents were further informed that the information provided would benefit both the researcher and the parents in that the researcher would be able to complete the research project while the parents would be able to air their views and opinions to the Department of Education (Limpopo Province) through the emergent research report. The researcher emphasized the fact that neither the researcher nor the North-West University could directly effect positive changes in the farm schools but only make recommendations for change to the Department of Education.

### **3.5 SUMMARY**

In this chapter the research design and methodology were discussed.

In Chapter 4 the research findings will be presented and discussed and, based on that, recommendations will be made.

# **CHAPTER 4**

## **RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 3 the research design and methodology which were used in this research were discussed.

In this chapter, the results emanating from the research will be presented and discussed. Based on this, conclusions will be drawn and recommendations made.

### **4.2 RESULTS**

The analysis of data has produced fifteen categories with corresponding sub-categories. These categories and sub-categories are presented in Table 4.1 below.

**TABLE 4.1: RESULTS EMANATING FROM THE DATA ANALYSIS**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
Inadequate teacher provision	Shortage of teachers No remedial teachers No sports coaching
Lack of transport	Long distances to schools No regular transport Absenteeism due to lack of transport Learners involved in accidents when hiking to schools
Inadequate HIV/AIDS training	Teachers are not adequately trained to teach about HIV/AIDS Learners are not adequately informed about HIV/AIDS

Multigrade classrooms	More than one grade per classroom Younger and older learners are taught together No secondary school facilities
Teenage pregnancies	Children give birth to children Teenage mothers' schooling is disrupted
Inadequate teaching and assessment	Books are not marked by teachers Teachers do not teach in accordance with the prescribed teaching hours No home work is given to learners Teachers do not always teach when they are at school, e.g. they listen to the radio
Feeding scheme	Learners prepare meals during school hours Parents are not involved in food preparation
Absence of extracurricular activities	No sporting activities are offered
Poor scholastic achievement	Poor academic results Reading problems Inadequate facilities for home studies Dysfunctional and non-supportive families
Lack of parental involvement	Inadequate parental control and discipline Parental illiteracy
Communication problems	Inadequate communication between school and parents
School fees	Parents cannot afford to pay school fees Schools must rely on donations

Inadequate school premises and facilities	Premises are dilapidated and neglected Shortage of classrooms No security Inadequate water supply Inadequate toilet facilities and sanitation Shortage of school furniture
Lack of community facilities	No church near school or farming communities No recreational facilities Inadequate provision of health services

### 4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings emanating from the focus group interviews will be discussed in terms of the verbatim comments of the participants and relevant literature sources.

#### 4.3.1 Inadequate teacher provision

In general the participants commented on the inadequate teacher provision at farm schools and that it results in inadequate teaching and underachievement of the learners. The following verbatim comments of the participants illustrate this finding:

- Shortage of teachers

*"There are no teachers. We want enough teachers so that our children can go to school near".*

- No remedial teachers.

*"We have no remedial educators. There is a programme. This woman goes around in the compound teaching two to seven-year old children to read. This is the extra time she does."*

- No sports coaching.

*"Teachers spend more time teaching. They do not have enough time for extramural activities."*

The Ministry of Education (2000:7) identified the lack of qualified teachers and very high teacher/pupil ratios as some of the serious challenges facing rural and farm schools. There is, however, a unique situation at farm schools that seems to elude the Ministry of Education but is well described by Segale (2005:12). Enrolment at most farm schools is so low that single teachers become principal-teachers in multigrade classrooms. Parents of learners attending these farm schools construe the situation as indicative of a shortage of teachers. These parents' understanding is founded on the fact that when the principal-teacher is attending departmental meetings, learners are left unattended.

Single principal-teaching coupled with the absence of early childhood development programmes at farm schools contribute to a situation where farm school learners with developmental lags remain unidentified well into the General Education and Training Phase. These learners are described as learners with special needs and according to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997:71), their developmental backlogs and learning barriers can be ascribed to contextual disadvantages.

The fact that most teachers at farm schools are not trained to offer remedial support to learners who experience barriers to learning further illustrates the point that quality education is often seriously compromised at farm schools.

#### **4.3.2 Lack of transport**

Participants commented on the lack of transport that leads to increased learner absenteeism. Learners walk long distances to schools and are occasionally involved in road accidents which in turn negatively affect learners' academic performance and progress.

The following verbatim comments illustrate this finding:

- Long distances to school.

*"Some children travel about twenty-two kilometres to come to school here."*

*"They walk long distance and it is going to be hot now. For small children to walk for more than twenty-two kilometres is a problem. We are worried by lack of transport here."*

- No regular transport.

*"You find they (children) stand here three days and at other times the whole week not going to school. The farmers here do not agree to give our children transport. These*

*farmers when they want to give children transport to go to school they make keys available at about half past nine and it is too late in the day."*

- Absenteeism due to lack of transport.

*"Going back to the issue of transport, our children do not go to school regularly"*

*"My child finished here and went to Secondary (Deeside). At other times he cannot go to school for three days as there is no transport"*

- Learners involved in accidents when hiking to schools.

*"Children are hit by cars here as they go to school. Yes, because there is no transport for them. Last year a child was hit by a car that side. She was coming from school. As I am speaking now a woman has just been hit by a car at one of our neighbouring farms"*

According to Casey (2007:13), most of the farm school learners in South Africa travel long distances to farm schools. These children are tired when they arrive at school and they cannot learn optimally' because they cannot concentrate due to fatigue. Exhaustion caused by walking long distances negatively affects these learners' ability to actively take part in classroom teaching and learning activities (Human Rights Watch, 2004:3). According to Africa News (2005:2), the exhaustion experienced by young children walking long distances to attend farm schools in Limpopo Province results in poor performance, absenteeism or irregular school attendance. In particular, girls are at risk of sexual assault when they walk these long distances to farm schools. According to Molema (2005:2-3), other negative experiences of learners who walk to farm schools that are situated far away from their homes include walking long distances to school on empty stomachs, no money for transport leading to hitch-hiking that exposes children to accidents and puts girls at risk of being raped.

#### **4.3.3 Inadequate HIV/AIDS training**

Another concern raised by the participants was about the risks of contracting HIV infection and AIDS which would compromise learners' health and well-being, their school attendance and academic achievement, not to mention the tragic loss of young lives and valuable human potential.

The following verbatim comments illustrate this finding:

- Teachers are not adequately trained to teach about HIV/AIDS.

*"As for HIV/AIDS, we will be happy if our teachers can attend conferences where they are taught about HIV/AIDS. They will then come and teach our children and ourselves about HIV/AIDS and how we can protect ourselves."*

- Learners are not adequately informed about HIV/AIDS.

*"These children attend school at Legoleng. The problem is that they start to support themselves. That is where the HIV/AIDS comes in."*

*"Nurses no longer come to the school"*

*"Nurses do not come to the school. Only the inspector comes here."*

Knowledge of HIV, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and the use of preventative measures such as the use of condoms is inadequate among the children of farm workers (Alene, Wheeler & Grosskurth, 2004:57).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2007:1) has found low levels of knowledge of HIV/AIDS and the use of condoms among farm workers in the Limpopo Province and a very high occurrence of casual and unprotected sex among them.

The inadequate knowledge of HIV and related issues persists among farm school children and farm workers, regardless of the Life-Skills and HIV/AIDS Programme initiated by the Department of Health in 1999 and the training that teachers received in this regard.

Mbananga (2004:156-157) identified some of the factors that contribute to the lack of knowledge that learners have of HIV and related issues: teachers do not talk to children about the transmission of HIV through sexual intercourse because they feel uncomfortable about the topic, parents would not approve of it if teachers addressed these topics at school and, in general, teachers lack knowledge of the national HIV/AIDS policy and the Abortion Act.

Farm workers' lack of knowledge of HIV/AIDS and related issues can often be associated with misconceptions and these misconceptions often lead to the spread of the pandemic resulting in many orphans and child-headed families. For example, according to Kruger-2 Canyons.Com (2006:3), the belief that AIDS is a curable disease was common among farm workers in the Hoedspruit area of the Limpopo Province.

#### **4.3.4 Multigrade classrooms**

Participants commented on teachers having to teach more than one grade in one classroom. This situation affects effective teaching and learning and makes it difficult for the teacher to teach grade-specific content to learners.

This finding is supported by the following verbatim comments:

- More than one grade per classroom.

*"They use one classroom. I do not think they will be able to learn if they are taught together"*

*"These children need to be taught in different classrooms according to their grades"*

*"We request that they build a school for us so that children of different grades are not sharing classrooms. Children of grade one must not mix with others of different grades"*

*"What I see is that there must be a separate foundation school and a school for children in higher grades"*

*"Grade R children attend lessons in one classroom with children in grades one, two and three"*

*"Children in grades one, two and three are in one classroom. Those in grades three and four are in one classroom"*

- Younger and older learners are taught together.

*"They must take bigger children from here and give us the smaller ones"*

*"Our school goes from grades one to 12"*

- No-secondary school facilities.

*"We do not have a secondary school here. We try to talk to the employer (farmer) so that we can have a secondary school. There is no secondary school here and in the end our children when our children finish school here they start to work on the farms. They have nowhere to go. That is the main problem"*

*"Children must pass and get secondary education here"*

*"As for many things, you see there must be a high school here. Right here"*

*"There must be a secondary school here"*

Segale (2005:35-37, 56-59) mentioned factors associated with multigrade classes that inhibit the provision of quality education in farm schools: lack of concentration among younger children because their concentration span is shorter and they are play oriented, difficulties in providing school readiness and remediation programmes in the Foundation Phase as most learners at farm schools do not attend pre-schools, limited learner involvement in classroom activities because classroom conditions suit direct instruction with limited chances for individual teaching and unreliable assessments because learners in lower grades often share learning programmes with learners in higher grades.

Most farm schools provide only primary school education up to Grade seven with no secondary school education opportunities (Kruger, Lemke, Phometsi, Van't Riet, Pienaar & Kotze, 2006). Because of the inaccessible secondary school education facilities, a substantial number of farm school learners who manage to pass Grade seven drop out of school.

#### **4.3.5 Teenage pregnancies**

Participants commented on teenage pregnancies which hamper their children's school careers.

The verbatim comments to illustrate this finding are:

- Children give birth to children.

*"There are pregnant children here at school. Some give birth during school holidays. When they come back and you ask them they say that they have baby boys"*

- Teenage mothers' schooling is disrupted.

*"Other parents phone the school to say we are telling you that our child has a baby and will come to school when schools reopen"*

According to the SAHRC (2007:196), pregnant farm school learners drop out of school because of their inability to cope with teenage parenting. Group discussions with farm school learners revealed that teenage pregnancy is an obstacle to schooling and that a significant percentage of farm school children who fall pregnant eventually drop out of school (Di et al., 2000:14, 26).

#### **4.3.6 Inadequate teaching and assessment**

Participants were concerned that their children were inadequately taught and assessed at farm schools and they doubted whether their children have really made the grade when they are promoted to a next grade at the end of the year. Inadequate teaching and assessment are seeds of poor quality of education. This can often be observed among farm school leavers who cannot make a meaningful contribution to their farm-working communities and this contradicts the generic and critical outcomes of our outcome-based education system.

Verbatim comments that illustrate this finding are as follows:

- Books are not marked by teachers.

*"My problem is that children come to school but their books are not marked. The whole year books are not marked. How do they pass because their books are not marked? She shows me the books but they are not marked. She does corrections but these are not marked"*

- Teachers do not teach the prescribed teaching hours.

*"Our children go for break at 10h00. They eat and they do not go back to class. At 12h00 they go home. When are they taught? This means that they are only taught from 08h00, 09h00 and 10h00. In fact it is only 08h00 and 09h00 and they school is out"*

*"Sometimes when the inspector comes, he finds only children and teachers had left already"*

- No home work is given to learners

*"A child must bring books home. He/she must ask parents where she/he has problems. Then the parent must be able to assist the child"*

*"The mother here makes us remember something. It means children are not given home work"*

- Teachers do not always teach when they are at school, but do other things, e.g. listen to the radio.

*"These children are not taught"*

*"These teachers play radio and talk for a very long time not teaching our children. Children must be in class for them to teach"*

*"At other times children come to school and play around"*

*"But, the problem here is the radio. Teachers play radio for a very long time here."*

*"How can the children learn? Radio is a problem here"*

According to the SAHRC (2006:26) farm school teachers do not spend the prescribed time at work for a number of reasons. These reasons include simply not going to classrooms, arriving late, leaving early, attending union meetings and departmental workshops and consulting medical doctors. Due to teacher absenteeism and goofing, learners are taught and assessed inadequately – either not enough written work is given to the learners or learners' books are not marked properly. Ultimately, a poor quality of education is given to the learners at farm schools.

#### **4.3.7 Feeding scheme**

Participants commented on the negative side-effects of the Primary School Nutrition Programme on both learners and parents due to improper management of the programme. These side-effects negatively impact on the education of learners.

This finding is deduced from the following verbatim comments:

- Learners prepare meals during school hours.

*"Our children should not be made to cook for others in the Nutrition Scheme. If they cook they will not have time to learn. They cook by rotation but still they miss other lessons"*

- Parents are not involved in food preparation.

*"We know that parents should cook but we are always at work. We may not have time to come here and cook"*

*"I know they once made a call in a meeting for unemployed parents to come and cook for the children. No parent responded"*

The HRW (2004:23-24) reported on the poorly managed feeding schemes at most farm schools in the country with instances of older learners and educators taking turns in preparing meals because cooks were not paid and therefore stopped cooking.

Educators and older children at farm schools in the Limpopo Province will no longer prepare meals at their schools. The Provincial Department of Education has employed food-handlers at all schools including farm schools. These food-handlers are remunerated to prepare meals for the children at schools.

#### **4.3.8 Absence of extracurricular activities**

Participants commented on the lack of sporting facilities at most of the farm schools and the fact that learners do not participate in extracurricular activities. Participation in extracurricular activities contributes to the provision of quality education and sporting activities contribute to the physical health and well-being of learners.

The following verbatim comments support this finding:

- No sporting facilities.

*"There are no sporting facilities. What you see as a sport ground out there is just there but is rarely used"*

*"Sporting facilities must be there. Children want to play but there are no sporting facilities here at the school"*

*"Last year children used to play some games like soccer and netball. But, as for this year there is no place where children can play. There is nothing"*

*"Teachers spend more time teaching. They often do not have enough time for extramural activities"*

*"There was a teacher who used to engage children in various sporting activities. She is no longer here so the children are no longer kept busy with sporting activities"*

According to the HRW (2004:23) few farm schools have sports grounds and if they do offer some sports programme it is mostly for boys who participate in soccer. Normally no sporting opportunities are offered for girls.

#### **4.3.9 Poor scholastic achievement**

Participants voiced their concerns about the unsatisfactory academic performance of their children. Unsatisfactory scholastic performance often leads to disinterest in school work, retards learners' career development opportunities and ultimately results in high school drop-out rates.

- Poor academic results.

*"All our matric learners failed preparatory examination this year"*

- Inadequate facilities for home studies.

*"The houses here have two rooms. There are pots in one room. They sleep in the other room. If there was enough space one could put a small chalkboard for the child to use. But, there is just no space"*

*"Another problem is that our children do not have places to study at home. The only room is used for preparing meals and for sleeping. At night when the child wants to study she/he is told to switch off the lights so they could sleep"*

*"At home we try to help the children but it is difficult as there is no place where we can sit and assist them. If we can have houses we will be able to sit down with them and help them"*

*"A child must have a separate room where he/she can be alone to do her/his school work"*

- Dysfunctional families.

*"Children misbehave because of what they see their parents do. A married woman makes a child with a man married to another woman here on the farm. When they both go to see their spouses, children born on the farm remain without parents"*

Poor academic performance of farm school learners can be ascribed to a number of factors. According to Casey (2007:15), research established that amongst other things, poor physical infrastructure (poorly designed and dilapidated farm school buildings) contribute to poor learner performance and that it impacts negatively on teacher effectiveness.

The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (2005:6-13) has identified aspects of school facilities that can be associated with poor academic results. These aspects

include old, dilapidated and not well-maintained buildings, lack of instructional facilities such as laboratories, libraries, computers and a lack of safety and security measures.

Poor housing conditions in farming communities (SAHRC, 2007:195) impact negatively on farm school learners' academic achievements as they do not have enough private space and a home environment conducive to home studies.

Some families in farming communities are dysfunctional due to alcohol abuse and child neglect by parents (Husy & Samson, 2001:17). According to McWhirter et al (1998:48), dysfunctional families put children at risk of alcohol abuse, school absenteeism, undesirable relationships with alcoholics and teenage pregnancies.

#### **4.3.10 Lack of parental involvement**

Yet another comment made by the participants pertained to parents not taking part in the education of their children. This frustrates teachers in their endeavour to tap on the support of parents in providing quality education at farm schools. This finding is supported by the following verbatim comments:

- Inadequate parental control and discipline.

*"We have parents who do not help their children. We have parents who say there is the child, may be you can control him or her"*

- Parental illiteracy.

*"Some adults cannot even sign their names"*

*"But, in a meeting that we are going to have we will say it out that adults too should be able to sign their names"*

*"People registered to attend the lessons but they just stopped attending"*

Heacox (1991:3) points out that parents should establish a positive tripartite alliance with teachers and learners in order to promote academic success and break down the failure cycles at schools.

Parents of farm school learners often find it difficult to assist teachers with the education of their children for a number of reasons (Human Rights Watch, 2004:26-27). These reasons include long hours of work (between nine and thirteen hours per day, seven days a week), evictions from

farms, the seasonal nature of farm work and educators living far away from the farming communities.

According to Di, McIvor, Chifunyise and McCartney (2000:4-45) parental meetings at most farm schools are ill-timed and parents are normally invited to schools when there are major events during which departmental officials give long and boring speeches.

#### **4.3.11 Communication problems**

Participants were concerned about the inadequate communication between themselves and farm schools. These communication problems hamper school governance and management in the pursuit of quality educational provision at farm schools.

The following verbatim comments illustrate this finding:

- Inadequate communication between school and parents.

*"What happens in the school is known by the SGB members. What can we say? We do not know what happens"*

*"You see teachers do not give themselves time for parent. I am even surprised that we are meeting here today. It never happens"*

*"Our school committees are these mothers and they tend not to take things seriously. If there is something they do not call us together"*

*"There were elections but since the elections they never met as members of the school committee"*

SGBs at most farm schools are either absent or dysfunctional and most of them exist mainly to provide cheap manual labour such as tending school vegetable gardens. Very seldom do members of SGBs participate and contribute in a meaningful way when school policies are formulated (HRW, 2004:22).

According to the SAHRC (2006:29-30), interviews with farm workers not only revealed dysfunctional SGBs but also highlighted the lack of communication between the SGBs and schools and between the SGBs and the parents. Principals often intimidate and control parents because they are illiterate, SGBs are uninformed about their rights and responsibilities and

parents in general are not informed about school matters and are not afforded the opportunity to make decisions about the education of their children.

Inadequate communication between school and parents deprive learners of the positive impact of parental involvement in the education of their children. According to the South-West Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) (2000:2), studies have established a strong positive link between parental involvement in the education of their children and scholastic performance, increased attendance rates and reduced school drop-out rates.

#### **4.3.12 School fees**

Participants commented on parents' inability to pay school fees and that, in order to survive, farm schools must mostly rely on outside donations. The lack of funds impacts on the smooth running of farm schools and it negatively affects effective teaching and learning at these schools.

This finding is supported by the following verbatim comments:

- Parents cannot afford to pay school fees.

*"Not every one of us is working. We all pay R90,00. The children have never gone on a trip. There is no money"*

*"The problem is that we do not earn enough"*

*"As for the school fees some children do not pay because we as parents do not have money"*

*"The first thing is that here at the farms we are paid nothing (paid so little)"*

Lack of funds was identified as one of the major issues challenging the accessibility and quality of education at farm schools in South Africa because most parents of farm school learners are unable to pay school fees (SAHRC, 2006:19-20).

It is important to indicate that since the beginning of 2007, school fees should no longer be mentioned as an obstacle that could prohibit access to education at farm schools in the Limpopo Province. The Limpopo Department of Education has placed all farm schools on the quintile one poverty level. In effect this means that farm schools are now seen as "no-fee schools" and parents of learners attending these schools will no longer be required to pay school fees.

#### **4.3.13 Inadequate premises and facilities**

Participants were concerned about the inadequate provision of classrooms, water supply, toilet facilities and sanitation as well as the lack of security and school furniture at farm schools. These infra-structural defects and deficits impede the physical health and well-being of farm schools.

This finding is supported by the following verbatim comments:

- Premises are dilapidated and neglected.

*"Boys and girls go out of the classrooms to play in the bushes and trees"*

*"You do not know who broke the windows"*

*"Brooms here at school. When they have to sweep their classrooms they go to the bushes to fetch leaves to sweep with"*

- Shortage of classrooms.

*"Our children do not have classrooms"*

*"There are no classrooms"*

*"That is why we ask for classrooms"*

*"The last important thing is the shortage of classrooms"*

- No security.

*"The fact is that they must first fence the school so that there is security"*

*"There must be a security guard"*

*"To add, there must be a fence and...here at the school"*

*"I see security and safety as very much poor. There must be fence around the school with a gate to use so that children are protected"*

*"You see this school cannot be clean because there is no fence." "I request that the school be fenced so that our children are safe and can be controlled"*

- Inadequate water supply.

*"Children often come to the house where I work asking for water"*

*"The problem here is water"*

- Inadequate toilet facilities and sanitation.

*"When I look around I see papers and dirt all over. Our children do not have a place where they drop the papers they have collected. They do not have toilets"*

*"We need toilets too. There are eight pit toilets in the school"*

- Shortage of school furniture.

*"There is no school furniture"*

The premises and facilities at most farm schools are barriers to learner's rights to receive quality of education (HRW, 2004:18-24). These obstacles include denial of physical access to the school premises, dilapidated school buildings, lack of security/unfenced school grounds, insufficient water supply and unhygienic sanitation.

According to the Education Rights Project (ERP) (2000:1), the unacceptable conditions at farm schools can be attributed to government's failure to provide farm schools with security of land tenure by making farm owners sign the Section 14 agreement.

The above-mentioned conditions compromise the quality of teaching and learning at farm schools. Teachers and learners have to walk long distances in order to get access to basic facilities like water and toilets. This disrupts teaching and learning. Farm schools are often victims of burglaries and robberies during school holidays because these schools have no safety measures like fences, night-watches and strong-rooms. Farm owners occasionally lock children out of school premises and evict their parents because these parents have no security of land tenure.

#### **4.3.14 Lack of community facilities**

Participants talked about lack of health care facilities and the inadequate health care services in farming communities which are detrimental to the health and well-being of parents and children. They also commented on the lack of cultural, spiritual and recreational facilities in farm-working communities which often contribute to substance abuse and other social misdemeanours

The following verbatim comments prove this finding:

- No churches near school or farming communities.

*"The problem here is that there is no church nearby"*

*"Our children do not go church"*

- No entertainment facilities.

*"Like there are no sporting facilities for children, there are no facilities for parents in this community. The only entertainment is one and that is drinking"*

- Inadequate provision of health services.

*"Nurses do not come to the school"*

*"Nurses no longer come to the school. They used to come here. Now they no longer come"*

Prince (2004:7) mentions that farm workers and their children often have no or very limited access to health-promoting facilities: There are no libraries for their intellectual development, they have no sporting facilities to enhance their physical health and their spiritual health is at risk because churches are situated far away from their communities.

Day clinics and hospitals are situated far away from farming communities in South Africa with reported cases of monthly visits to some farming communities by government health care providers (Rust, 2000:2).

In certain cases farm owners deny health care providers to gain access to their farms and do not allow their farm workers time off to visit health care centres (in the absence of reliable transport services) that are situated far away from the farms (SAHRC, 2006:196).

According to the Health Systems Trust (1998), the provision of mobile school health services to rural and farm schools in the Haenertzburg/Tzaneen/Letsitele/Gravelotte (Halegratz) district is often difficult due to transport problems and shortage of health staff.

Limited recreational facilities in farming communities cause farm workers to either travel to nearby towns to seek recreation or to resort to substance abuse as an alternative form of recreation (Husy & Samson, 2001:17).

Blair (2006:1) points out that alcohol abuse by farm workers in the Western Cape Province has been associated with the high incidence of foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) among farm school learners. FAS often manifests in hyperactivity and other learning problems and very often FAS learners drop out of school and become low-skilled, illiterate farm workers themselves (McKinstry, 2005:2).

## **4.4 CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings emanating from the research, the following conclusions are drawn:

Parents of farm school learners have negative perceptions of the health and well-being of farm schools in the Mopani District of the Limpopo Province. Their negative perceptions can be ascribed to the following health-related problems/issues that prevail at these schools:

- Inadequate teacher provision
- Lack of transport facilities to and from the schools
- Inadequate HIV/AIDS training at the schools
- Multigrade classrooms at the schools
- A high incidence of teenage pregnancies at the schools
- Inadequate teaching and assessment practices at the schools
- The school feeding scheme
- The absence of extracurricular activities at the schools
- The poor scholastic achievement of learners at the schools
- Lack of parental involvement
- Communication problems between parents and the schools
- School fees
- Inadequate school premises and facilities
- Lack of community facilities

## **4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the conclusions above, the following recommendations are made with a view to improve the health and well-being of farm schools in the Mopani District of the Limpopo Province:

### **4.5.1 Recommendations to the Department of Education and other state departments**

#### **4.5.1.1 Adequate teacher provision**

The Department of Education, hereafter referred to as the Department, should make sure that remedial teaching becomes part of pre- and in-service teacher training programmes. This will enable teachers to cater for the needs of learners with special needs in regular classrooms – something they are unable to do at the moment.

The Department should review the policy of teacher provisioning based on learner enrolment in farm schools because of the unique situation in these schools. Small farm schools with single teacher-principals put learners at risk of being without a teacher when the only teacher is away attending a workshop or on sick leave.

The Department should appoint sport coaches to farm schools and see to it that not only soccer and netball are coached, but that also other types of sporting activities are provided for the farm school learners.

#### **4.5.1.2 Provide regular subsidized transport**

The Department should review the logistics in respect of the inadequately subsidized transport of farm school learners who walk long distances to farm schools.

The government transport for farm school learners should be carefully and thoroughly budgeted for in order to ensure that regular transport is available and learners attend regularly without having to risk the dangers of hitch-hiking to school.

#### **4.5.1.3 Adequate training to handle HIV/AIDS must be provided for teachers, parents and learners**

The Department should train farm school teachers and parents of farm school learners together, so that cultural issues and misconceptions regarding HIV and AIDS can be addressed in the presence of both parents and teachers. This will put teachers at ease when teaching learners

about HIV and AIDS at school without fear of interfering with parental attitudes and cultural values.

The training of teachers and parents should emphasize knowledge and understanding of the national HIV/AIDS policy and the Abortion Act without paying attention only to life skills per se.

NGOs and other Departments such as Health and Welfare should not only focus on urban and community schools, but target both farm workers and farm school learners with their HIV/AIDS Advocacies, Awareness Campaigns and Life Skills programmes.

#### **4.5.1.4 Empower teachers to manage multigrade classes**

The Department should ensure that farm school teachers are trained to teach multigrade classes. Alternatively, farm schools should be merged to increase enrolment in order for the schools to qualify for more teachers. The farm schools that become available from merging should be turned into centralized secondary schools. Merging of the farm schools and availability of secondary schools will reduce mixed age and multigrade classes in farm schools.

The Department in partnership with the Department of Transport should then ensure that regular and reliable transport is available for learners to reach their schools on time.

#### **4.5.1.5 Control teenage pregnancies**

The Department of Health should make nurses available at farm schools to provide family planning guidance in support of the Department's Life-Skills programme and Peer Education Movement.

The government must stop giving child grants to children of school-going age, because it encourages teenage pregnancies among school-going children.

The Department should make it a policy that school-going children who become pregnant must receive adult basic education and training in order to complete their primary and high school education.

#### **4.5.1.6 Teachers must be trained to teach and assess adequately**

The Department must ensure that teachers strictly adhere to departmental policies, the National Curriculum Statements and other departmental guidelines. There must be continuous school support, monitoring and control by Circuit and District officials to ensure that teachers comply.

Departmental officials must be thoroughly trained in respect of initiating and managing cases of misconduct to reduce situations in which cases of misconduct are unsuccessful because departmental officials did not follow the correct procedure. Unsuccessful charges against offenders cause teachers to violate departmental directives because they know very well that nothing will happen to them.

#### **4.5.1.7 Adequate management of the Public School Nutrition Programme (PSNP)**

No learner should be made responsible for preparing food while other learners are attending lessons in classrooms. The SGBs at farm schools should employ food-handlers who are remunerated by the school for preparing food for the learners. The schools must then claim the amount paid to food-handlers from the Department. This is in accordance with Departmental policy.

#### **4.5.1.8 Provide sporting facilities**

The Department must engage the Department of Public Works in providing sporting facilities on farm school premises.

Government employed sports coaches at farm schools must then engage farm school children in various sporting activities. Farm school teachers and learners must be clearly informed that the concept *sporting activities* goes beyond soccer and netball to include even indoor sporting activities.

Education support staff must make Life-Orientation teachers realize that sporting activities are not necessarily extracurricular, because they form an integral part of the content of the Life Orientation curriculum and should be provided as such to farm school learners.

#### **4.5.1.9 Improve scholastic achievement**

The Department should provide both physical and human resources to farm schools because they are linked to improved scholastic performance.

School Management Teams (SMTs) and SGBs at farm schools must adhere to the priorities identified by the MEC for Education in the Limpopo Province with respect to spending allocated funds for proper fencing of school premises, providing water, building toilets and repairing broken window panes.

The Department of Housing (DoH) should extend the provision of subsidized houses to farming communities to alleviate the shortage of housing. This will improve housing facilities in the farming communities so that farm school children have enough space for home study.

The Department of Health should visit farm schools regularly to conduct visual and auditory screening tests of farm school children. Visual and hearing diseases in learners tend to go unnoticed until they become serious learning barriers.

#### **4.5.1.10 Involve parents in the education of their children**

The Department's District Education Support Service should plan and implement Parent Education Programmes for the parents of farm school learners. These programmes should focus on effective parenting styles, developing parents' awareness of the value of parental involvement in the education of their children and how they can assist their children at home.

The Department should register every farm school as an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Centre. Education and training provided at ABET centres in farming communities should reduce parental illiteracy among parents of farm school learners and empower these parents with the skills they need in order to perform their various farm-working tasks and thereby promote their chances of earning better wages as educated and trained farm workers.

#### **4.5.1.11 Improve school-parent communication**

The Department should prioritize school support visits to farm schools in order to monitor and ensure that farm schools regularly report on the learner's school work to the parents as per departmental policy.

#### **4.5.1.12 No-fee schools**

The Department has placed all farm schools at a quintile 1 level of poverty and declared them "no-fee schools". This means that school fees will no longer be an obstacle to education at farm schools in the country.

Since norms and standard funds are allocated to schools in accordance with enrolment figures, it is possible that the departmental funds may still not be enough for the farm schools as they have low enrolments. The implication is that the Department should subsidize farm schools at a higher rate than other public schools. This will reduce the poverty experienced by farm schools.

#### **4.5.1.13 Provide adequate premises and facilities**

The Department should legally compel farm owners who have farm schools on their land to sign the Section 14 agreement immediately. Provincial MECs for Education should, in accordance with Section 58 of the South African Schools Act, expropriate the piece of land on which a farm school is erected if the farm owner is reluctant to sign the Section 14 agreement. Signing of the Section 14 agreement or expropriation of land will enable the Department to take control over the farm schools' premises and to provide an adequate infrastructure by renovating farm school buildings, building classrooms, toilets, laboratories, libraries and administration offices, providing school furniture, fencing the schools, employing security officers, and supplying water, electricity, computers and other teaching and learning materials.

### **4.5.2 Recommendations to Agricultural Unions and farm owners**

#### **4.5.2.1 Security of land tenure**

Agricultural Unions should workshop farm owners on the importance of signing Section 14 agreements that will give the Department and farm workers security of land tenure. This will enable the Department to invest in farm schools while farm workers will also be free to improve their living conditions on the farms.

#### **4.5.2.2 Make health services accessible**

Farm owners should allow and encourage health workers to visit farm workers in order to provide health services, because healthy workers are productive workers. They should accept that farm workers have the democratic right to become union members in the same way they have the right to become members of agricultural unions.

#### **4.5.2.3 Reduce parent illiteracy**

Farm owners should allow time off for farm workers to attend ABET classes because it will improve the farm workers' functional literacy to perform farming tasks more effectively and efficiently.

#### **4.5.2.4 Create peace in the farming communities**

Farm owners should stop evicting farm workers and their children from the farms seeing that they are creating their own enemies who will in turn undertake farm attacks in which innocent

people are killed. Labour union representatives should be allowed to workshop farm workers for the sake of peace in the farming industry.

#### **4.5.3 Recommendations to the school governing bodies and parents**

##### **4.5.3.1 Improve communication**

School governing bodies at farm schools should hold regular meetings with parents of farm school learners to inform them about the conditions and state of affairs in the farm schools.

##### **4.5.3.2 Contribute towards improved school conditions**

Since the money allocated to farm schools as quintile 1 schools is likely to be inadequate because of the low learner enrolment figures at farm schools, school governing bodies should seek donations from institutions in order to improve conditions at the farm schools.

##### **4.5.3.3 Ensure adherence to policy**

Members of the school governing bodies should attend workshops on school finance management so that they can know and be able to govern school finances and take corrective action when they realize that expenditure is not in accordance with departmental financial policies.

##### **4.5.3.4 Participate in the education of children**

Parents should check their children's school books on a daily basis to assist them with home work and to monitor their school attendance. They should attend parents' meetings convened by School Management Teams (SMTs) and SGBs.

##### **4.5.3.5 Maintain children's discipline**

Parents should discuss their children's general conduct with the teachers in order to identify disciplinary problems and to take corrective action.

##### **4.5.3.6 Personal development**

Parents should attend ABET classes in order to become literate or more literate, which in the end will enable them to assist their children better with school work.

#### **4.5.4 Recommendations to teachers**

##### **4.5.4.1 Teach and assess as per policy**

Teachers should stay at school and teach for not less than seven hours per day in accordance with departmental policy. They should not give learners less than the minimum amount of assessment tasks prescribed by the respective learning area policy guidelines.

##### **4.5.4.2 Inform learners about HIV/AIDS and substance abuse**

Primary farm school teachers should implement the Life-skills and HIV/AIDS Education Programmes for which most of them have already received training by the Department. Teachers who have not been trained yet, should consult various sources on HIV/AIDS and infuse appropriate information when teaching Life Orientation lessons to learners.

Farm school teachers should prioritize teenage pregnancy and family planning as topics for discussion during Girl Education Movement workshops. Teachers must ensure that learners are well informed about the National HIV/AIDS Policy and Abortion Act.

##### **4.5.4.3 Promote school-parent communication**

Farm school teachers should develop the habit of regularly reporting learners' progress to parents. They should invite parents to prize-giving functions and interview parents whose children are under achieving.

##### **4.5.4.4 Create opportunities for sporting activities**

Farm school teachers should infuse sporting/movement activities when implementing the Life-Orientation curriculum. They should organize Sports Days at farm schools where farm school learners either compete against each other or against learners from other schools.

##### **4.5.4.5 Discourage substance use and abuse**

Farm school teachers should invite parents, nurses, social workers and members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) to come to the school and conduct open discussions with farm school learners regarding the dangers of substance abuse.

#### **4.6 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The findings of this research reflect parents' perceptions of the health and well-being of farm schools situated in the Mopani District of the Limpopo Province. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to represent the perceptions of the entire population of parents whose children attend farm schools in South Africa.

Therefore it is recommended that a study involving a representative national sample of parents of farm school learners be undertaken in order to establish how they perceive the health and well-being of farm schools in South Africa.

#### **4.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The aim of this research was to establish how parents of farm school learners perceive the health and well-being of farm schools situated in the Mopani District of the Limpopo Province.

The research revealed that the parents have negative perceptions of the health and well-being of these farm schools and that their negative perceptions can be ascribed to various health-related problems/issues that prevail at these schools.

In order to improve the health and well-being of these farm schools, recommendations were made to the various stake holders.

If these recommendations are not implemented in the near future, the health and well-being of these farm schools will deteriorate further, and this will have serious negative implications for the education and development of the learners who attend these schools.

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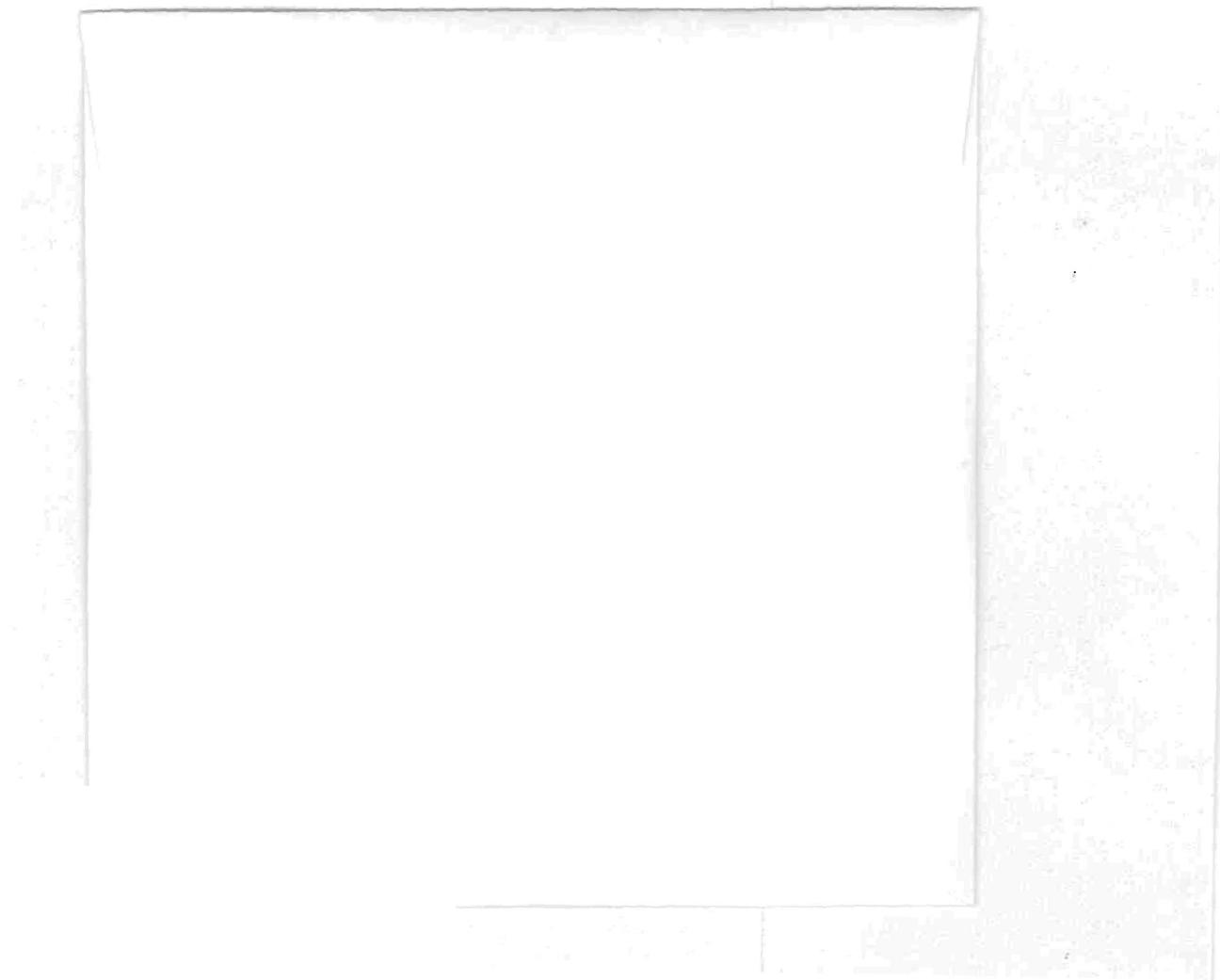
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## **APPENDIXES**

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### **APPENDIX A: COPIES OF VIDEO RECORDINGS**



## **APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTS OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

### **SCHOOL A:**

#### **LOCATION: TZANEEN CIRCUIT**

##### **INTRODUCTION BY RESEARCHER:**

*"I will start by greeting you all. My name is Mphahlele from Ga-Mphahlele. I work at Lulekani in Phalaborwa. I am a part-time student at Potchefstroom University. Now I am at a stage where I must conduct a research. The topic of my research is : Parents' opinions, views and feelings about the health and well-being of farm schools like this school. Your opinions, views and feeling are not only restricted to the health and well-being of the school itself but the children attending the school as well. Health does not only mean the absence of disease. There are several aspects of children's health and well-being. There are:*

- *Mental conditions*
- *Physical conditions*
- *Emotional conditions*
- *Social conditions like behaviour and discipline and*
- *Diseases they often experience. For example, there is HIV/AIDS and drug-resistant TB.*

*There are the general conditions of the school:*

- *Safety and security. For instance, you hear about children who fight and injure or kill one another at some schools.*
- *Services they receive from the Municipality, Department of Education and other Departments.*
- *Type of education children get at the school in terms of quality and the learning areas/subjects.*

*There are issues to consider as principles in this research. We do not use peoples' names. The information will benefit you as parents and me as student. Children too will benefit. I will use the*

*information to compile a report with recommendations for the purposes of completing my studies. The University also make recommendations and publish the report. This report will not be send to the Newspapers. It will be sent to the libraries for children and other people to read. It will also be sent to the Department of Education to inform the Department that Mphahlele conducted research at farm schools in Mopani and this is the situation and the recommendations are these. Recommendations mean that when situations are like these, we recommend that these should be done. I will bring a copy of the same report to the school for you to see your contributions. It is not possible to call the parents of children at this school. You, the 10 parents are a sample. You are not forced to participate in the discussions. Be free. We are not going to say so and so said this. We are going to say these are the views of parents whose children attend the farm school. You are free to use any language: Sepedi, Xitsonga, Venda, English or Afrikaans".*

#### **QUESTION POSED BY RESEARCHER:**

*"My question is: What are your views, opinions and feelings about the health and well-being of the school, including the children as individuals at this school?"*

#### **CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY PARTICIPANTS**

01. *"There are no teachers. We want enough teachers so our children can go to school near. Our children travel long distances to attend school. There is a bus but it does not come regularly so our small children travel +-20 km to attend school in Haenetsburg. We want Government to build enough classrooms and give us enough teachers. As for HIV/AIDS, we will be happy if our teachers can attend conferences where they taught about HIV/AIDS. They will then come and teach our children and our selves about HIV/AIDS and how we can protect our selves".*
02. *"We do not have human resources. Our school goes from grades 1-12. The school is not recognized for upgrading because the enrolment is low. The present enrolment is 156. The biggest class is a combined class having 11+ 8 in a classroom when a classroom must have 35-50 learners for a teacher. So, the Department says there are enough teachers at the school. Another factor that kills us is that some parents work here but they leave their children at Legoleng (back home) to take care of the house or the family. These children attend school at Legoleng. The problem is that they start to support themselves. That is*

*where the HIV/AIDS comes in. It also encourages teenage pregnancy. There are pregnant children here at school. We see them but we cannot send them home as that would be violation of Policy. Some give birth during school holidays. When they come back and ask them they say: "Yes, I have a baby boy". We call nurses to guide the children that becoming pregnant is not a race to be won. When we tell the parents they say they have failed to control their children. Other parents phone the school to say we are telling that our child has a baby and will come to school when the schools reopen. We have parents who do not help their children. We have parents who say: "There is the child, may be you can control him or her". Children misbehave because of what they see their parents do. A married woman makes a child with a man married to another woman here on the farm. When they both go to see their spouses, children made on the farm remain without parents. That is the difficulty we have".*

03. *"We have no remedial teachers. There is a programme. This woman goes around in the compound teaching 2-7 years old children to read. This is the extra time she does"*
04. *"What happens in the school is known by the SGBs. They are the ones who know. What can we say? We do not know what happens"*.
05. *"My work is to help 2-7 years old children who do not attend school because their parents do not have money to pay school fees. I give them books and teach them to read so that when they come to school they already know. I do it after school. The programme is called Run Home to Read".*
06. *"As for me, my child at home is good. I have not received a report that my child at school is bad. What I see is that our Government has banned corporal punishment. When teachers tell children to clean classrooms as punishment, they refuse. What will the teachers do? The cause of children to be out of control is the Government. So, this is the problem I see. Another thing is that our school is hidden in the trees. Boys and girls go out of the classrooms to play in the bushes and trees. Teachers do not see them".*
07. *"My problem is that children come to school but their books are not marked. The whole year books are not marked. How do they pass because their books are not marked? When she comes home I ask her what she did at school. She shows me books but they are not marked. She does corrections but these are not marked. She will end up doing wrong corrections"*

08. "Going back to the issue of transport, our children do not go to school regularly. How will they pass? For three days our children did not go because there was no transport"
  09. "This year, if they say our children have passed, it will be lie. How will they pass because they took a long time not going to school because of lack of transport?"
  10. "What I see is that there must be a separate foundation school and a school for children in higher grades. Government says small children must not be mixed with bigger children".
  11. "They must take bigger children from here and give us smaller ones"
  12. "Our children were using toilets made of planks but now beautiful flushing toilets have been built for them. This is good. What we are now requesting is that our school should be fenced. There must be a security guard. Children leave the school premises to play outside. When you ask them if it is break they say yes meanwhile you know it is not break. I request that the school be fenced so that our children are safe and they can be controlled"
  13. "To add, there must be fence and a garden boy here at the school. Our children must not be made to cook for other in the Nutrition Scheme. If they cook they will not have time to learn. They cook by rotation but still they miss other lessons"
  14. "We know that parents should cook but we are always at work. We may not have time to come here to cook".
  15. "I know they once made a call in a meeting for unemployed parents to come and cook for the children. No parent responded".
  16. "Unemployed parents need to be paid for doing the cooking. If they are promised to be paid they will come and cook".
  17. "Policemen come to our school. They guide our children about the danger of using drugs. They tell them that they must not steal and must not use drugs".
  18. "Our children use drugs. When we speak to them they do not understand. Children's performance drops because they have started to use drugs especially matekwane".
  19. "Drug use is high amongst our children. The way our children use drugs we are even afraid to greet them when we meet them on the way. If you greet the child he says: "Hear what this ou lady is saying?"
  20. "We have spoken to the local shopkeeper not to sell cigarettes and beers to the children. He usually comes to the school to address the children that they must not use drugs like
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*nicotine and alcohol. We see him refusing to sell them cigarettes. We just do not know if he refuses to sell them cigarettes because he sees us. What we, however, know is that children send adults to buy the cigarettes from the shop. Again there are people who pass along. They too send children to the shop to buy cigarettes and beers”.*

21. *“To stop use of drugs and alcohol policemen should come into the school without children knowing to search them. Those who are found with drugs must then be taken for reprimand and guidance”.*
22. *“We can no longer keep money at home. The children take it to buy drugs”.*
23. *“When policemen come to school they must search for possession of dangerous weapons as well. Some children carry dangerous weapons to school”.*
24. *“The issue of water is known by Ma-Mokone. They must keep water tap at the playground. Children often come to the house where I work asking for water”.*
25. *“There was a teacher who used to engage children in various sporting activities. She is no longer here so the children are no longer kept busy with sporting activities”.*
26. *“Teachers spend more time teaching. They often do not have enough time for extramural activities. However, we recently played netball against one school and we won. When we know we are having a match game we practise the whole week to make sure that we win. You see there are so many workshops that teachers are more often out for workshops”.*
27. *“They are, however, trying. For instance, we have introduced cricket through the assistance of our neighbouring school called Duiwelskloof Primary School. Mr. Letswalo helping the children to play cricket. He has, however, now transferred to Stanford College. He comes here to help our children with cricket on a part-time basis. Parents should understand the situation of our school. We have more workload. We are understaffed. Our teachers work hard. The MEC once came to our school give scientific calculators to our metric learners. He told them that he heard they found mathematics difficult. During June holidays I took our grade 12 learners to the neighbouring high school (Ben Vorster). They gave them tasks in all the subjects to complete and submit for marking. Up to now none of the learners has submitted those tasks. In short I can say you can take a horse to the river but you cannot make it drink water. Our children do not work hard. All our metric learners failed preparatory examination this year. It is our first matric this year 2006. Another problem is that our children do not have places to study at home. The only room is used for preparing meals and for sleeping. At night when the child wants to study he/she is told to*

*switch off so they could sleep. Parents are tired from the day's work. Siblings too want to sleep. These are other problems parents are having".*

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS MADE BY RESEARCHER

*"We have come to the end of our interview. What I have I will be able to write a report. The report will come to the school for you to read. Just know that the information is not going to the newspapers.*

*I want to thank you very much for your participation and contributions".*

## SCHOOL B:

### LOCATION: RITAVI CIRCUIT

#### INTRODUCTION BY RESEARCHER

*"I start by greeting you all. Like you heard from the letters you received, I am Mphahlele. I stay in Phalaborwa but my home of origin is Ga-Mphahlele. I am a part-time student at Potchefstroom University and here to talk with you about the opinions, ideas, feelings and beliefs of parents whose children attend the farm school. What we are going to talk about here does not go to the Newspapers. No, it is for study purposes will be taken to the University to tell them that with my chosen topic this is what I found about the farm schools. The University will send a report to the Department of Education to say the state of farm schools in Limpopo is like this. The fact is that when we talk about happens we will in the end be able to come up with suggested solutions.*

- What you should know is that we are not going to use peoples' names here. I am not going to write your names anywhere to say the so and so said this and did not say that. We speak as parents of the children at this school.*
- Another thing is that you are not forced to participate in the discussions. That is why I told the principal that you are requested to take part as parents.*

*The topic is about the health and well-being of farm schools including the children. Let us understand that when we talk about health we do not think of diseases only. Yes, we think of diseases but also the conditions at the school. Remember that even diseases come from dirty and unclean surroundings. If our surrounding is not clean we will fall sick. We are looking at the children and their lives as well. Does the education they get here make them the kind of children we want them to be? Does it develop them into the kinds of adults we expect? Are they taught about life in general? Does it take care of their mental development? You are requested to give not only the negatives. Give the positive things you see and get as well. This will allow us to have a balanced report in the end.*

*"Sorry, Ntate (the father). Here we speak different languages. I would like to interpret what you are saying for all here to understand."*

*I thank Ntate here in assisting by interpreting what I have been saying. It is true that not all of us understand Sepedi or Xitsonga equally. He will continue to interpret where necessary".*

#### QUESTION POSED BY RESEARCHER:

*"The question is: what are your ideas, opinions, views, feelings and beliefs about the health and well-being at this school?"*

#### CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY PARTICIPANTS

01. *"I can start. Our feeling is that at this school we have a problem when our children finish school. When they finish school they start to suffer. We do not have a secondary school here. We try to talk to the employer (farmer) so that we can have a secondary school. It is, however, difficult. There is a place which is about 15 km from here. The place is called Deeside. Our children go to school there. Even there the children are very many. They come from all the surrounding farms namely, Ga-Mapiet, Landman, Constantia, Lacotte and Moerland. There is no secondary here and in the end when our children finish school they start to work on the farms. They have nowhere to go. That is the main problem. As for other health problems like water and others we try. We give them water. In our homes and around, we do clean. Our children go to school. The only problem is when they finish school here".*
02. *"I also suffer. I just work here. I do not have a husband and nothing. My child finished here and went to secondary (Deeside). At other times he cannot go to school for three days as there is no transport. He could only go on with his studies up to standard 10 because I cannot buy uniform. As for those still at this school, money is deducted from our salaries in order to pay school fees. They want uniform there and I do not have money. I stop here".*
03. *"As for exemption from school fees, we do not know. We were not told that a parent may not pay school fees depending upon her/his income. We do not know".*
04. *"Let me talk about school fees. As from this year parents will not pay school fees. We were called to Tivumbeni College to be told that children at all farm schools are not going to pay school fees. It is just that we have not yet met parents to tell them. We are still busy planning transportation of children from as far as Ga-Mapiet to Deeside. Another thing*

*that I will try to say is that we a problem of transport. Some children travel about 22km to come to school here. As I am speaking now a woman has just been hit by a car at one of our neighbouring farms. That side of the farm. For the small children is a problem. They walk long distance and it is going to be hot now. For small children to walk more than 20km is a problem. We are worried by lack of transport here. I have spoken to the parents of children who walk long distance to come to school. They say they can pay up to R30.00 per year. People who can provide say they want from R33,00 up to R50,00 per year per child. Now if a parent has five children, how is she/he going to afford? How much does the parent get from the farm? The people from Government (Department of Education) asked for the number of kilometres children travel to go to school. We gave them but they have not come back to us. It is the problem we have here at the school".*

05. *"Yes, nurses do come to school to teach children about health matters".*
06. *"Another problem was the issue of toilets as you see them here. They told us that money was coming for fencing so that the school can be safe. They also said every classroom must have two toilets. As the toilets are here, we will proceed. As for many things, you see there must be a high school here. Right here. For children to go from here to Deeside , it is too far. The farmers around her do not give them lift everyday. Even when a parent is seriously ill, these farmers do not provide transport for the parent to reach clinic. They just leave things as they are. Our children do not go to school regularly. They will end up stealing, becoming thieves as they do not learn. There must be a secondary here".*
07. *"Children are hit by cars here as they go to school. Yes, because there is no transport for them. Last year a child was hit by a car that side. She was coming from school".*
08. *"I do not know about others but with me when children come back from school I check their books and I find that their education is right. The way I look at it".*
09. *"Alright. This parent meetings. Like me, I am the chairperson here. We elected this year. Right, we were supposed to meet with the other parents on Wednesday but I was not here as I was going far. But as a rule we have made, we decided that in a month we should meet as parents to show one another".*
10. *"We are two and when there are meetings I go with them or he goes with them. If we are all not there to go with them they come and give us report".*
11. *"For health matters there are nurses taking care of the children. They come here to give medicine to the children. Yes, they come. Even the nutrition is there. The children eat"*

12. "As far as sanitation is concerned we are just trying. Children sometimes take the rubbish together and burn it".
13. "You see, this school cannot be clean because there is no fence. Now you can see children are peeping in through the door there. And, people just bring paper to dump here. We wanted to make it a rule that if that if a child breaks a windowpane, the parent must pay. But we cannot do it because there is no fence. You cannot know who broke the windowpanes".
14. "Yes, according to me there is no furniture. You see this classroom is congested because of the things that are in here. Even the way children sit is not the way they should sit in a classroom. It is not the right way. According to me even these classrooms are too small. There must be a lookable building before we can get furniture".
15. "Children must pass and get secondary education here. Now they go too far. You find they stand here three days and at other times the whole week not going to school. The farmers here do not agree to give our children transport. Some parents decide to send their children to school far in the villages. These farmers when they want to give children transport to go to school they make the keys available at about half past nine and it is too late in the day. How can the children pass? That is the problem".
16. "Children cannot just get lift from the other cars. There are people killing children these days".
17. "If it was possible for the Government to listen to us they should provide transport for the children who pass here to attend at Deeside. White children have transport to take them to school as far as Letsitele. But, with us Blacks our children arrive at school tired and they are unable to listen to the teacher as she/he teaches".
18. "If we can get a high school. A child can say he/she is going to school only to find that she/he did not go to school. That they spent the day eating oranges on the farms".
19. "Yes, that is a big issue. Some parents cannot even sign their names. We have not yet started with education for adults. But, as elected by the parents, I have already talked with the principal about it. It is just that people work different hours. Some will tell you that they work stock and knock-off early. Others knock-off as late as 15h00. but, in a meeting that we are going to have we will say it out that adults too should be able to write their names".

20. "There was a person here helping with the teaching of adults. People registered to attend the lessons but they just stopped attending".

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS MADE BY RESEARCHER

"We have come to the end of our discussions. Just as I said, what you said here is going to be written into a report with recommendations. I thank you very much. The letters you received are yours to keep. I thank you all".

## SCHOOL C:

### LOCATION: TZANEEN CIRCUIT.

#### INTRODUCTION BY RESEARCHER

*"Yes, I will start by greeting you all. I understand we speak various languages. I speak Sepedi. Some of you speak Xitsonga. Ntate here speaks Venda. Speak the language you are comfortable with. You can speak Afrikaans or English. It does not matter. I am going to translate the information that I will get here into English. I am Mphahlele from Phalaborwa. My home is, however, Ga-Mphahlele. I am a student at Potchefstroom University in North-West. One of the requirements for my studies is to conduct research. Research means what I am doing now. That is, to get information from you about a given topic. The topic that I chose is: the opinions, views, ideas and feelings about the health and well-being of farm schools and the children. I am going to write a report with recommendations and send to the Department of Education. recommendations mean I have conducted research at farm schools in Tzaneen. The situation is like this and this is what I suggest that it be done to improve the situation. This is how development takes place. It starts with research and responsible people are told this is what can be done.*

*There are requirements for conducting research which you must know:*

- *We do not use peoples' names. We are not going to say Mr or Mrs X said this. We are going to say the parents of children at farm schools in Tzaneen say this.*
- *We are not going to evaluate schools by saying school A is better than school B.*
- *I did not just come to see you. I requested permission from the Department of Education, your Circuit, the principal and farm manager.*
- *You are not forced to participate in the discussions. You are free to participate with the aim to inform people who are responsible to develop your school.*
- *What we are going to discuss here does not go to the Newspapers. It is going to be written into a report. The report will be send to the libraries for people to read. It will also be brought here for you to read about what you did.*

*There is only one question but we will keep on seeking explanations and clarifications in the process. Before I give you the question, let us look at the concepts of health and well-being. When we speak of health and well-being people think of the absence of disease. Yes, it is true but health and well-being also include:*

- *Conditions in which we live in terms of the services we get like water and sanitation, safety and security at home and at our schools, other services you get from other Departments. For example, nurses from clinics often visit schools to tell children about the dangers of using drugs.*
- *Conditions of your surroundings. Is it clean or not? Do you live in place where there is always pollution in terms of dust or smoke? Diseases come from our surroundings.*
- *The education that children get from the school. Does it help children in terms of their mental, behavioural, emotional, physical and spiritual conditions. This also forms part of health and well-being.*
- *The place where you stay. Do children have a place to do school work at home? They are given home-works to do and sometimes they are told to switch off as it is time to sleep. A child must have a corner where he/she knows she/he can study from time to time.*

*When you speak do not give the negatives only. Give both the negatives and positives”.*

#### **QUESTION POSED BY RESEARCHER**

*“My first question is: what are your opinions, ideas, views and feelings about this school, looking at the surroundings, children and where you stay?”*

#### **CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY PARTICIPANTS**

01. *“When I look around I see that things are not going on well. When I look around I see papers and dirt all over. Our children do not have a place where they can drop the papers they have collected. They do not have toilets. I do not know where they go. Those toilets you see there are not theirs but for the people who stay that side. Our children do not have classrooms. They use one classroom. I do not think they will be able to learn if they are taught together. I do not think Mam will be able to teach them. If there could be at least*

*three classrooms divided so that they can learn differently”.*

02. “*School fees. Children in different grades, A, B, 1, 2, 3 and 4 all must pay R100.00. Is that possible? Should not there be a difference? Not each one of us is working. We all pay R90.00. The children have never gone on a trip. There is no money”.*
03. “*Brooms here at school. Our children come to school clean. When they have to sweep their classrooms they go to the bushes to fetch leaves to sweep with. It is possible that they are bitten by snakes there”.*
04. “*I see safety and security as very much poor. Children just leave the school to walk and play around. Some go this way. Others go that way. Cars are very busy here. The children can be hit by these cars. There must be fence around the school with a gate to use so that children are protected”.*
05. “*The school belongs to the Government because things that happen here come from the Circuit. If there is something going to happen here like today’s meeting, they usually come and tell us”.*
06. “*Our children get enough food. As for food, they get enough”.*
07. “*Yes, but are they getting good or bad food? They may get enough but bad food”.*
08. “*No, our children get good, enough food. The food is right”.*
09. “*The money for cooking is too little. We cook and take some of this food home. That is not right. They must give us. We love to cook for these children. They give us R110.00 at month-end but this is not enough because we also have to clean everything. At month-end they must give 25kg of Mukayo (special Maize Meal), a packet of sugar and a packet of beans to take home. The R110.00 will buy other things”.*
10. “*Our children go for break at 10h00. They eat and they do not go back to class. At 12h00 they go home. When are they taught? Which means that they are taught only from 08h00, 09h00 and 10h00. In fact it is only 08h00 and 09h00 and the school is out”.*
11. “*At other times children come to school and play around. Their clothes get dirty and we have to clean them. And, the teachers complain when the children come to school in dirty clothes”.*
12. “*These teachers play radio and talk for a very long time not teaching our children. Children must be in class for them to teach”.*

13. "As far as I am concerned children here learn and do better than those in the villages. When I compare their books I find that they do better than the children in the villages".
14. "How do we see the books of our children? They do not bring books home. Parents are shown books only when schools close and at the end of the year. We must see the books all the time".
15. "These children are also problematic. When they got the wrong answers they tear off the pages. How will you know?"
16. "Child must bring books home. She/he must ask parents where he/she has problems. Then the parent must be able to assist the child".
17. "The mother here makes us remember something. It means children are not given home-works. You see teachers here do not give themselves time for the parents. I am even surprised that we are meeting here today. This is a miracle. It never happens. Now we just hear that children are eating here at school. We just hear there is feeding scheme. Food come and we do not see it. We do not know whether or not the food is good for their bodies or whether they eat enough. We must have regular meetings where they tell us if the education of our children is high or low. We will also discuss what to do in order to make sure the education of our children goes higher. It is true that parents are not many here but the three parents who will be there can do something. In these meetings they will be able to tell us if our children are doing well or not. We will then be able to assist in controlling the children at home so they can do better at school. We need to see their home-work so that we can help but we do not see their books. We only see them at the end of the year".
18. "I see that our children are not taught good manners. When we speak to them at home they do not listen. They respond aggressively, throwing up their arms and saying we must leave them alone".
19. "I see this brings us back to the issue of classrooms. These children need to be taught in different classrooms according to their grades. That way they will understand. If it is like this I do not think our school will shine".
20. "These children are not taught. The mistress leaves them here with a woman who is not a teacher. There are two teachers and 14 learners".
21. "Nurses do not come to the school. Only the inspector comes here. Sometimes when the

*inspector comes he find only children and teachers had left already. I think we as parents need to come together and see what we can do”.*

22. *“When it comes to water we do not have a problem. Water is available here and children get enough water”.*
23. *“Children at this school are never taken out to work on the farm. We have never heard about working children here”.*
24. *“The good things at this school are that they give children food. But, the problem here is the radio. Teachers play radio for a very long time here. How can the children learn? Radio is a problem here”.*
25. *“As for children not learning I do not agree with what these other parents are saying. Even if we can call a learner here he/she will be able to tell all the things there on the chalkboard to show that they are learning”.*
26. *“Grade R children attend lessons in one classroom with children in grades 1, 2 and 3. The grade R child only sleeps when others are learning and the parent pays school fees”.*
27. *“One other thing that can make us happy as parents is that our children should have school uniform. They must be seen to be school children. One will also be able to see a child who has dodged from the school. The school can buy the uniform and the parents with the little money they get as salary can pay for the school uniform. If a school does not have a school uniform it is not nice and the children are not beautiful”.*
28. *“Our school committees are these mothers and they tend not to take things seriously. If there is something they do not call us together”.*
29. *“There were elections but since the elections they never met as members of the school committee”.*
30. *“When I look there is no place for children to study. The houses here have two rooms. There is a parent and children. There are pots in one room. They sleep in the other room. After school children just play with the soil. If there was enough space one could even put a small chalkboard for the child to use. But, there is just no space”.*
31. *“Last year children used to play games like soccer and netball. But, as for this year there is no place where children can play. There is nothing”.*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS MADE BY RESEARCHER

*"I thank you for participating in these discussions. The information will be compiled into a report. The school will receive a copy of the report for you to see your contributions. I thank you all*

## SCHOOL D:

### LOCATION: TZANEEN CIRCUIT

#### INTRODUCTION BY RESEARCHER

*"Yes, I start by greeting you all. I am Mphahlele from Ga-Mphahlele and working at Lulekani in Phalaborwa. I am a teacher as he has already told you. What I requested to see you about is that I am a student at Potchefstroom University in North-West. One of the requirements for studies is holding talks with parents whose children attend farm schools. Now, to start with, I want to tell you that:*

- *You are not forced but requested to participate in these discussions. You are taking part voluntarily.*
- *What we are going to say here does not go to the Newspapers. I am going to use the information to write a report with recommendations and submit to the University. The report will say, for instance, Mphahlele found this kind of a situation at farm schools and he recommends these. Recommendations means that if things are like this, I suggest that 1, 2 and 3 could be done. And who does these. It is not the University of Potchefstroom but the Government because education is the responsibility of the Government. The University just helps to investigate and finds out how the situation at farm schools can be improved. To improve is like what you say you are going to do which is to make a year-end party to motivate learners because they attended school the whole year and you want them to do so the next year.*
- *You hear there are people who go around our schools collecting information. In the end they say school A is better than school B or school C is better than school D. no, we are not going to evaluate schools here. We are going to say schools in Mopani in Tzaneen and Ritavi circuits are like this. This is what you should know.*
- *In here we are not going to say so and so said this. We took you as a sample. Sample means we cannot talk to all the parents. We take a few to represent all the parents. Yes, you can say a sample is an example. What you say here will be taken to have been said by the parents of learners at farm schools in Tzaneen.*

*I request you to be free about what I am going to ask you. But, before I ask you I want to give you the topic which is: "Parents' perceptions about the health and well-being of farm schools". Parents mean the fathers and mothers of the children. Perception means the ideas, beliefs, opinions, feelings and views about what you have and want to have at this school. That is, how you see it, what can be done to improve it, what disturbs you, what you think about it and what you need. We usually use the word health when a person does not have diseases. No flu and no cold, for instance. Health as used here means the same thing but also includes the state and balance of things or conditions at the school and about the children both at the school and at home. You have to know that if a child comes from a home where conditions are not motivating him/her to come to school this child will not perform as expected here at school. You have to consider the things children do at school and outside, how they play, and the things they need at school, at home and in the community.*

*I am giving you an example. I do not mean that things are like that. It is just an example. This is true but worrying. You find that at home there are two rooms with four children. Mom and Dad are there living with the children. The one room is used for cooking. The other is used for sleeping. Where is the child going to do his/her home-work in the evening and at night? These are the things you have to consider and talk about here. When we make a report we will be able to say things are like this and we think if this is done things will improve. Another thing is income. How much does a parent get where she/he is working? It does not mean we are going to say they are not paying us and start toyi-toying".*

#### **QUESTION POSED BY RESEARCHER**

*Now I am going to ask you the question. I will not take time as the principal has already indicated that he has to attend a meeting elsewhere. The question is: "what are your ideas, opinions, feelings and beliefs about the health and well-being of the school and the children?" As far as the children are concerned, looking at their mental health, social health (how they live), physical health (diseases from which they often suffer) and spiritual health (the services they get from the church). Please be free and speak out".*

## CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY PARTICIPANTS

01. *"The first thing is that here at the farms we are paid nothing (paid so little). And, the houses wherein we live are mud houses we built on our own. We are requesting RDP houses. Our children can not read (they have nowhere to study). Our school teachers are trying. At home we try to help the children but it is difficult as there is no place where we can sit and assist them. If we can have houses we will be able to sit down with them and help them. And, our school. We ask that a school be built for us. Children in grades 1, 2 and 3 are in one classroom. Those in grades 3 and 4 are in one classroom. This way is a complete school. Our children are prepared for schooling. Another thing is that as parents we are paid so little. When children are sick we cannot take them anywhere because the clinics are very far. Even if there are no clinics can come here at least weekly".*
02. *"Nurses no longer come to the school. They used to come here. We were bringing our children here to get medicines. Now they no longer come".*
03. *"I do not know about the mixing of children of different grades in classrooms. I just do not know how many children are there now".*
04. *"It is because of the school. It is all just as it is. There are no classrooms. We request that they built a school for us so that children of different grades are no sharing classrooms. Children of grade 1 must not mix with others of different grades".*
05. *"As far as transport is concerned there is a bus now. It brings children to school and takes them back home again".*
06. *"Another thing is that we try to buy uniform for our children. The problem is that we do not earn enough. You find that a child cannot concentrate in class because of difficulties at home".*
07. *"As for the school fees some children do not pay because we as parents do not have money".*
08. *"While at the school fees, it looks like the Government has some plan. As from next year there is a possibility that children are no longer going to pay school fees. This school, like other farm schools, is a quintile one school where children are not going to pay school fees".*
09. *"There are no sporting facilities. What you see as a sport ground out there is just there but rarely used. We just forced it to be there".*

10. "Sporting facilities must be there. Children want to play but there are no sporting facilities here at the school".
11. "While at sporting facilities, there is bus by which children use to travel. Those who remain here after school to play often have a problem of transport because the bus comes and goes at its own specified time. We try to make arrangement but we think of children who come from afar. They still have to walk some distance and through the bushes from the bus stop in order to reach home".
12. "I can give example of my children. He came here from the village knowing nothing. He could not read a e i o u. Now he can do so while learning in multigrade classrooms. Since he came here at this school he can even read English. That is why we ask classrooms".
13. "Another thing I see as important is that there are computers. In the past only White children had computers in their schools. With us, we started learning about computers after finishing school".
14. "I think that health education here at school helps our children not to contract diseases".
15. "The problem here is water. We think that they should take care of the water. It comes from that dam and we think it is not very clean".
16. "The fact is that they must fence the school so that there is security. Any person can come into the school from any point. A person can come in with a dangerous weapon and hide it somewhere in the school".
17. "The refuse here at school is collected by the children. They drop it in the bushes".
18. "The last important thing is the shortage of classrooms. We need toilets too. Children try to clean them but there are no cleaning materials like soaps and freshners. There are eight pit toilets in the school".
19. "Some of us parents do not know much. We have not been to school that much. We do not have space where we can sit with our children to help them with their work. When you try there other children around making noise".
20. "A child must have a separate room where he/she can be alone to do her/his school work".
21. "And, these children are motivated. It is just that they do not have opportunities".
22. "The problem is that we are not always at home. We do not have time to be with our Appendixes

- children at day. We are always out in the fields to work and we knock off late".*
23. *"Like there are no sporting facilities for children, there are no facilities for parents in this community. The only entertainment is one and that is drinking. You cannot blame them".*
24. *"The problem here is that there is no church nearby. The only church is in Haernetsburg and it is too far. Our children do not go to church".*

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS MADE BY RESEARCHER

*"The information is going to be written into a report. The report will be taken to the Department. Implementation of the recommendations is the responsibility of the Department. Such implementation will benefit the school and you as parents. If the school benefits it means both you and children also benefit. That is how researches work in other areas as well. It is not the University but the Government that implements the recommendations. I want to take this time to thank you all for your participation. I will still come back later to bring you the report on your contributions".*

## **APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF PERMISSION**

**Letter from the university:**

**Yunibesitiya Bokone-Bophirima North-West University Noordwes-Universiteit**

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
Private bag X6001 Potchefstroom 2520  
**Prof LW Meyer**

Tel (018) 299 1902 Fax (018) 299 1888  
e-mail: nsolwm@puknet.puk.ac.za

07 August 2006

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: RESEARCH PROJECT; MR A L MPHABHLELE; STUDENT NUMBER: 12050253**

Mr Mphahlele is a registered MEd- student in the Faculty of Education Sciences at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. The title of his dissertation is: *Parents' perceptions about the health and well-being of farm schools.*

In order to obtain information regarding parents' perceptions about the health and well-being of farm schools, Mr Mphahlele wants to conduct focus group interviews with parents of learners who attend farm schools in the Mopani District of the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province.

Parents will participate on a voluntary basis in the focus group interviews and the identity of participants and schools will be protected. The information collected will not be used to evaluate the farm schools in terms of their performance in comparison with others.

I humbly request that you grant Mr Mphahlele the necessary permission to conduct the above-mentioned research.

Should you need more information, you are welcome to contact me

Yours sincerely

**Prof LW MEYER: Supervisor**



PRIVATE BAG X6001, POTCHEFSTROOM. 2520,  
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS



**LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

Corner 113 Biccard & Excelsior

PIETERSBURG 0700

**PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**

**Enquiries: Mokoka, MB Telephone: 015 290 7918**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Sir/Madam

The bearer, Mphahlele LA, has been given permission by Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) to conduct research at schools in Thabina and Ritavi Circuits in Mopani District. The title of the research is "Parents' perceptions about the health and well-being of farm schools." The research will be conducted during the first three quarters of the calendar year.

The Department requests departmental officials, learners, managers and educators to cooperate with the researcher when research activities are conducted.

It is envisaged that the research report will assist LDoE in many ways.

Thank you

DATE: 11/10/2006



A HEAD OF DEPARTMENT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**LETTER TO PARENTS OF CHILDREN ATTENDING FARM SCHOOLS**

REF: PO BOX 8599

ENQ: MPHACHELE L.A. NAMAKGALE

TEL: 015 783 0400 (W) 1391 015769 2911 (H) 073 465 6994 ( CELL)

09 SEPTEMBER 2006

FAX: 015 783 0411 (W) 015769 2911 (H) E-MAIL: LMK(o),telkomsa.net

TO: PARENTS OF LEARNERS AT.....

You are humbly requested to come to the school on ..... at .....

The purpose of coming to school is to meet an MEd Degree Student from the University of North-West Potchefstroom Campus.

The student is conducting a research on the opinions, views and feelings of parents about the health and well-being of the farm schools where their children attend.

The school, learners, parents and the researcher all stand to benefit from this research because the findings will be published with recommendations to the Department of Education.

Parent's name.....

Signature.....

Date .....

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Yours truly

.....

MPHAHLELE, LA

## **LETTER TO PRINCIPAL AND FARM MANAGER**

REF:

ENQ: MPHACHELE, LA TEL: 015 783 0400 073 465 6994 FAX: 0157830411 0157692911

E-MAIL: LMK(o).telkomsa.net

THE PRINCIPAL AND FARM MANAGER .....

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW PARENTS OF LEARNERS AT THE SCHOOL.**

1. I am an MEd Degree student at North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus). The letter from the University and the Department of education are attached.
2. The topic for my dissertation is "Parents perceptions about the health and well-being of farm schools".
3. I therefore request permission to conduct focus group interviews with a total number of 10 parents at each of the following farm schools:
  - 3.1 .....
  - 3.2 .....
  - 3.3 .....
  - 3.4 .....
  - 3.5 .....
4. The following table indicates the dates, times, venues and target group

Date	Time	Venue	Target group
16.09.2006	09h00-12h00		10 parents of learners at the school
17.09.2006	09h00-12h00		10 parents of learners at the school
07.10.2006	09h00-12h00		10 parents of learners at the school
08.10.2006	09h00-12h00		10 parents of learners at the school
14.10.2006	09h00-12h00		10 parents of learners at the school

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated

Yours truly,

.....

MPHACHELE, LA