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**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF SOME TEACHERS IN  
TEACHING ABOUT, AND IN THE CONTEXT OF, HIV/AIDS**

A minor dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the

Degree of

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

by

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**OCTOBER 2005**

**Supervisor: Ms Jean Baxen**

**October 2005**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the whole of this thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work and that it has not been submitted for any degree in any other university.

Signature: Signature removed

Date: 2005-10-14

University of Cape Town

## **ABSTRACT**

Amidst growing concerns about the impact of HIV/AIDS on the political, social and economic spheres of our country, comes the responsibility of government to address this pertinent issue, especially through HIV/AIDS education, in schools.

Pertinent to HIV/AIDS education is the school and teacher. Therefore this study investigates the influence of school culture on teachers' understanding and teaching of HIV/AIDS, particularly, how a school's culture may restrain and/or allow HIV/AIDS teaching. Whilst school culture is the main focus, attention is paid to teachers since they are the mediators of knowledge. The study seeks to investigate what values/perceptions of teachers, influence HIV/AIDS lessons.

The study is located in the qualitative paradigm because it seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how school culture is constituted and consequently affects teachers' teaching of HIV/AIDS. Methods of data collection include observations, interviews and documentary analysis. Data was collected in three primary schools in the Western Cape. These schools were selected to embrace the diversity prevalent in South African society, especially in relation to socio-economic status, religion, culture, race and gender. Intermediate and senior phase life-skills teachers were selected for participation. Principals, deputy principals, school administration clerks as well as governing body chairpersons were interviewed to establish how the school culture defines their position and role at the school, and conversely, how they contribute in shaping the school's culture.

The results of the study reveal that school culture is a complex and nuanced phenomenon and, indeed, influences teachers teaching and understanding of HIV/AIDS. It was also found that where the values, practices and beliefs of teachers were similar to those of the school, teachers were able to practise their beliefs freely. However, where the teachers' beliefs and values were different to those held by the school, the teacher seemed to be restrained.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX**

**Interview schedules**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>WCED:</b>     | <b>Western Cape Education Department</b>                                    |
| <b>WHO:</b>      | <b>World Health Organisation</b>  |
| <b>UNAIDS:</b>   | <b>United Nations Aids</b>  |
| <b>SRC:</b>      | <b>Student Representative Council</b>                                       |
| <b>HIV/AIDS:</b> | <b>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune<br/>Deficiency Syndrome</b> |
| <b>L:</b>        | <b>Learner</b>  |
| <b>T:</b>        | <b>Teacher</b>  |

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction and background to the study

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is one of the most devastating diseases in modern history. It has wreaked mayhem on our social and economic networks by wiping out breadwinners and creating orphans (Steinberg, 2002). Otaala (2004, p.1) says that “HIV/AIDS is without doubt one of the most tragic and challenging health problems of our days”. While many countries around the world have experienced the consequences of the pandemic, Africa, as Otaala (2004) suggests, is the hardest hit with nine out of ten HIV reported cases originating from this continent. Within the African continent, the devastating impact of the pandemic has been experienced most acutely within the Sub-Saharan region where it is estimated that 28 million people are currently living with HIV/AIDS (Otaala, 2004), representing two-thirds of reported HIV/AIDS cases globally.

Within the Southern Africa Development Corporation (SADC) region South Africa has one of the highest and fastest growing incidences of HIV-prevalence. Studies conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations AIDS (UNAIDS) in July and December 2002 predicted that by 2005, South Africa would have lost ten percent of its workforce to HIV/AIDS. It is estimated, too, that by 2010, this country will have lost 1.7 million and by 2015, 1.8 million of those between the ages of 15-30. Further estimates suggest that by 2020, the country would have lost about twenty-six percent of its workforce (WHO and UN HIV/AIDS Statistics for Southern Africa, 2002).

## 1.2 Context of the study

In dealing with the pandemic, government departments have had to consider their responses at various levels, namely politically, medically, socially and educationally.

Politically, the stance of the ANC-led government has been problematic. In its decisions about how to treat and manage the disease, the government has served to perpetuate confusion and controversy. Conflicting and contradictory messages from high ranking officials in government, have entrenched misunderstandings about the identification, the causes and ways of treating HIV/AIDS. Fuelling this uncertainty have been the public questions raised by our president, Thabo Mbeki, as to whether HIV causes AIDS. Critics have argued that this questioning by the president encourages the spread of the disease because it sows confusion as to the causes and consequent contraction of HIV/AIDS (McCafferty, 2002). More positively, medically, the response has been the development of an integrated health care programme that includes treatment, research and care (HIV/AIDS in South Africa, 2005). The response from the social welfare department has included the establishment of social welfare grants for those infected and affected by the pandemic. Educationally, the government has devised various strategies as discussed below.

Education has been identified by government as one of the key strategies to combat the disease. In this regard, government has embarked on an educational drive through its life-skills and HIV/AIDS education programmes which include a curriculum development process, and a mass media drive<sup>1</sup> that endeavours to promote public awareness and healthy sexual behaviour (HIV/AIDS in South Africa, 2005). Within such programmes has been the encouragement of collaboration between schools and their respective communities. As such, the government has encouraged schools to engage with parents, care-givers, community and faith-based organizations in the implementation of the HIV/AIDS programmes. The education department for example, has also established a web-site providing information for educators, learners and parents (WCED: HIV/AIDS LIFESKILLS PROGRAMME , 2002).

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include Love-life, Yizo Yizo, supplements in newspapers, advertisements on radio and television.

According to Schenker (2002) and Gallant and Maticka-Tyndale (2003), schools may be the key contributors in the fight to halt the spread of HIV infection. These authors explain why schools are essential institutions through which HIV/AIDS messages can be spread. Schenker states that schools accommodate children between the ages of approximately five and eighteen and “have excellent resources for delivering effective education: skilled teachers, a long-term interactive educational process, various learning opportunities and the potential of good parent involvement” (2001, p. 416). Gallant and Maticka-Tyndale (2003) concur, explaining that more than 70% of children are found in primary school and, that of these, 67% within the Sub-Saharan region complete Grade 5 (UNICEF, 2001 in Gallant and Maticka-Tyndale, 2003). Secondly, the primary school is regarded as the largest single site where youth can be reached (Gallant and Maticka-Tyndale, 2003). As Gallant and Maticka-Tyndale suggest, “their location is known, they are sustained within the community, their hours and mode of operation are known, they have established mechanisms for the introduction of new programmes and accessing students, and the size of the target population is known” (2003, p.3).

A provincial education policy for HIV/AIDS, based on the national policy, was provided to all schools so that each school could devise its own policy. In the Western Cape, where this study was conducted, the Western Cape Education Department’s (WCED) responses to combating the disease was multi-faceted and have included policies for curriculum development, the development of support material and other resources and training for life-skills teachers.

Schools were encouraged to engage with the broader community by participating in School Aids Week during the first week in September every year (WCED: HIV/AIDS LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME, 2002). Another strategy sought to raise awareness about the rights of the infected by ensuring that they were not discriminated against. WCED also required that the teaching of HIV/AIDS and sexuality life-skills education take place for half an hour a week and that this be time-tabled and mainstreamed (WCED: HIV/AIDS LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME, 2002). In addition, curriculum support material was developed for Grades one to seven. This support material was supplied to schools free of charge (WCED: HIV/AIDS LIFE

SKILLS PROGRAMME, 2002). Teachers have been trained by WCED in the use of the resource material.<sup>2</sup>

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The strategy of WCED is commendable and seems workable. However, what it omits to address is a problematisation of the school as a site of delivery of HIV/AIDS messages and how the transmission of HIV/AIDS knowledge occurs. The school is regarded a neutral site, when, in fact, there is a great deal of literature to show that the school is a deeply ideological place. In this respect, the strategy of WCED does not address how practices in schools operate to reproduce dominant discourses in relation to HIV/AIDS knowledge. The omission on understanding the influence of school practices seems to be a global tendency. This is an especially important point to understand given the central role that schools play in modern society. The context of schooling in South Africa is also important to understand in the sense that the school represents a great deal of what modernity stands for, often in opposition to the traditional values that continue to have relevance in many South African families.

The study will focus on three schools in the Western Cape where an examination into how the culture of schools influences what and how teachers mediate knowledge about HIV/AIDS will be conducted. While school culture is the main focus of the study, some attention, of necessity, is paid to the role of the teacher as she/he is the major mediator of the knowledge in the classroom.

### **1.4 Aims of the study**

This study aims to:

- Examine the influence of school culture on teaching about HIV/AIDS.

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<sup>2</sup> WCED has thus far trained eighty –five percent of schools and approximately 10 000 educators (WCED HIV/AIDS Life Skills Programme, 2003).

- Understand how traditional and modern values find expression in the culture of schools.
- Investigate the community and school practices that shape teachers' understanding and teaching of HIV/AIDS.
- Understand the relationship between schools and the surrounding communities in the construction and expression of HIV/AIDS messages.

### **1.5 Research question**

My main research question:

How does school culture influence teachers' understanding and teaching of HIV/AIDS in some schools in the Western Cape?

My sub-question:

What values/perceptions of teachers influenced the lessons?

Supporting questions:

- What societal and cultural practices within particular communities influence school culture?
- How does school culture influence teachers' perceptions and their teaching of HIV/AIDS?
- How do teachers go about teaching HIV/AIDS?
- How does school culture influence teachers decisions about what and how to impart knowledge about HIV/AIDS?

### **1.6 Significance of the research**

Current educational research debates on education and HIV/AIDS have focused mostly on: the impact of the pandemic on the education sector systemically (Coombe

& Kelly, 2001), on pedagogical practices (Mirembe, 2002; Mpemba, 1997) and on the success rates of HIV/AIDS education intervention programmes amongst the youth (Agrawal, Roa, Chandrashekar, & Coulter, 1999). Few, if any, focus on the context of schooling as a site for the transmission and reproduction of HIV/AIDS knowledge, and how, within these institutions, this knowledge is mediated, reproduced and interpreted. The focus of this study was to investigate the ways in which the culture of schools acts as a filter to what knowledge is taught about HIV/AIDS and the process by which children come to know and understand HIV/AIDS messages.

Despite the fact that the study was limited by time and to only three schools, it is hoped that its findings will contribute to an understanding of how the HIV/AIDS policy and curriculum of schools relate to the ways in which young people understand the larger situation in which they find themselves. It is also hoped that these findings will elucidate for those who have an interest in the relationship between social institutions such as schools and disease, the ways in which school cultures filter what knowledge pertaining to HIV/AIDS is taught. The findings of this study have raised an awareness of the need to include community involvement in the design of HIV/AIDS policies and HIV/AIDS programme development. This awareness will allow values held in high esteem, by particular communities, to be given preference. Finally, this study makes suggestions for in-service and pre-service teacher training.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The study investigates the influence of school culture, as a site where community and teachers' beliefs circulate, on teachers' understanding and pedagogical practices of HIV/AIDS.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the concept of culture – particularly debates around it - and notions of school culture and schooling in order to illustrate how the one feeds into the other. The chapter starts by presenting a brief historical background of education in South Africa, to situate the modern school. The background also serves to foreground the impact of the country's legacy on the culture of schooling. The chapter proceeds with an overview of culture. Through investigating constructs of the term culture and what it constitutes, it is hoped that school culture would be understood since a community's culture may be embodied within the culture of a school. In discussing culture and school culture, it is hoped that the reader will develop a sense of how society's expectations of schooling are shaped. Debates about the purposes of schooling illustrate why it is such a highly contested terrain. The last section in the literature examines related studies to the dissertation topic. This makes it possible to locate the study within an already existing body of knowledge, which illuminates the significance as well as the gaps in research.

#### **2.2 Brief historical synopsis of South African education**

It is difficult to understand schools, schooling and school culture in South Africa without taking into account South Africa's apartheid legacy. As an organisational framework that sought to keep people of different races separate, its proponents used the educational system as the main vehicle to entrench separatist political, economical and social practices. This history still manifests itself through social practices, access to resources, demographic profiles of learners, teachers and the like.

In order to understand the school culture of the three schools in the study, it is necessary to sketch a brief historical synopsis of the South African educational situation. For the purposes of this study, I trace the country's history from 1953 onward when various education acts were first passed establishing racial separation as a principle for education. The Bantu Education Act was passed in 1953, while the Coloured Persons Education Act was passed in 1963 and the Indian (or Asian) Education Act in 1965. The Coloured Education Act enabled control of education to be transferred from the provinces to a Division of Education within the Department of Coloured Affairs (Kallaway, 1984). With the passing of the Indian Education Act of 1965 "the last bricks were laid in the wall of segregated schooling" (Kallaway, 1984). Through the implementation of its separatist policies such as the Group Areas Act and the Mixed Marriages Act, the National Party separated and also hierarchalised the people of South Africa. In education, this policy, applied also, it needs to be noted, in the fields of housing, health and other social arenas, resulting in the establishment of different education systems each with their own syllabi, curricula and standards of assessment, all aimed at entrenching white supremacy. The rationale for differential schooling for blacks and whites was to prepare them for their respective dominant and dominated places, thereby preparing the white child for leadership and the black child for a subordinate role in society.

Through the policy of separate development the apartheid regime denied blacks rights economically and socially as well as access to political control. Financially there was disparity in the allocation of funds. White learners per capita were, by far, more favourably financed, with blacks being the worst funded. The Bantu Education Act ensured that the cost per student was reduced through the implementation of double sessions, employing more under qualified teachers, by paying teachers minimal salaries, discriminating further against female teachers, phasing out the school feeding scheme and abolishing caretaker posts (Kallaway, 1984). Furthermore, regulations concerning the lack of compulsory schooling for black youth entrenched inequality and access to schooling between the races (Kallaway, 1984).

While the system was provisioned inequitably, it is also important to draw attention to its ideological intentions. The curriculum stressed obedience, piety, communal loyalty, ethnic and national separation, acceptance of subordination for blacks and a

sense of superiority for whites. It allocated people to social roles and sought to inculcate in black people the belief that their cultures and ways of life were backward (Kallaway, 1984). Teachers were also, through the training they received at teacher training colleges, rigidly regimented and monitored through punitive inspectorial systems.

Through the establishment of 'homeland' territories, blacks were manipulated into believing that their destiny lay through the exercise of their political rights in their own 'independent states' (Behr, 1988). However, these states proved to be merely puppet entities. Each of these national states had a Department of Education headed by the Minister of Bantu Affairs in the cabinet of South Africa (Behr, 1988). Collaboration between the Education departments of the 'homeland' territories and the Department of Education and Training of South Africa was ensured as a means of controlling the curriculum.

According to Verwoerd,<sup>3</sup> Bantu Education was to prepare young Africans psycho-ideologically for the Bantustans<sup>4</sup> so that they "should stand with both feet in the reserves and have [their] roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society" (Kallaway, 1984, p. 93). Bantu Education was designed to back up the Bantustans. Bantu, Coloured and Indian Education was designed to help remove students psycho-ideologically and 'resettle' them in separate 'places' of subordination (Kallaway, 1984). Through mechanisms of control like the pass laws, group areas and labour bureaux, the lives of black people were controlled in every aspect (Kallaway, 1984). The systems of Bantu, Coloured and Indian Education were aimed at the mind; seeking to "control the direction of thought, to delimit the boundaries of knowledge, to restrict lines of communication, and to curtail contact across language barriers thereby conditioning them to servitude" (Kallaway, 1984, p.94).

The 1976 Soweto uprising signalled the beginning of the end of this long period of domination. The uprising was primarily directed towards Bantu Education because of its aims. According to Kallaway (1984), although several hundreds of students were killed in this protest, opposition to educational apartheid continued. Mass boycotts

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<sup>3</sup> The grand architect of Apartheid and then leader of the Nationalist government.

<sup>4</sup> Territories designated to blacks, in Apartheid South Africa, as homeland territories.

spread across the country. The state had hoped to produce a subservient black worker at the end of the school system, however, the type of student that emerged from the system was politically conscientised and often radical. This was because many schools and tertiary institutions became sites where the ideology of liberation became dominant. This uprising was significant because, it not only signalled the beginning of an era of political turmoil for schools, but also contributed to the development of a culture of resistance and challenge within schools. This significant event appears to have influenced society's expectations of schooling in a post-apartheid South Africa. Vision and mission statements in use in education today, demonstrate the democratic ideals that were forged in the heat of the post-1976 period.

World outrage and criticism of the apartheid regime, an increasing growing militancy among black youth and vociferous attacks by the African National Congress, amongst others, on the borders of the Republic of South Africa, forced the Nationalist government to consider revising its educational policy (Badat, 1991). In addition, pressure from corporate capital and reform-minded individuals within the ruling party forced the government to change its approach to black education. Big business' need for skilled labour, for example, pressurized the government to begin a process of restructuring in the education system (Badat, 1991). This process was heralded by the establishment of an investigation into education by the Human Sciences Research Committee which came to be known as the De Lange Commission (Van Zyl, 1997).

The De Lange report proposed a single education ministry that was not ethnically based. It also rejected Christian National Education as a basis for the education system (Van Zyl, 1997). The suggestions made by the report were rejected by the then Nationalist government which established four separate education ministries for the different race groups: House of Assembly (for whites), House of Representatives (for coloureds), House of Delegates (for Indians) and the Department of Education and Training (for blacks). The white, coloured and Indian houses each had ministerial representatives in parliament and could determine their own affairs (Van Zyl, 1997). However, black people were not allowed to run their own affairs and their education was controlled by central government (Van Zyl, 1997). The establishment of a democratic South Africa in 1994 brought about the control of education by a single

Department of Education. Non- racially-based education in South Africa is secured by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

In looking at the reforms that have come in the wake of the new government, it is important to note that although apartheid education has been eradicated technically, politically and legislatively, many schools remain trapped by its legacy. Schools are challenged by impediments such as infrastructure shortages and the dire socio-economic circumstances of their learners which are proving to be great obstacles in the path of progress. Significantly, schools which formerly belonged to the House of Assembly (white schools) continue to boast advantages in infrastructure and resources, whereas those schools classified as coloured, Indian and black are still trying to overcome these hurdles. Government has, however, introduced measures to address the backlog experienced by schools previously disadvantaged by the apartheid regime<sup>5</sup>.

For purposes of this study it is important to note that the legacy of apartheid continues to shape and influence various aspects of school culture. This legacy, especially its racial dimensions, continues to be felt in the lived experiences of children and their teachers in schools. With respect to the latter, black teachers continue to labour under the historic burden of their inferior training in the colleges of apartheid. While the state has put in place in-service training for the upgrading of teachers' skills, the enormity of the disadvantage inherited by black people continues to limit their ability to implement the new reforms in education. On the other hand, poor as black schools were, they also generated important social virtues during the struggle years. Schools situated in previously disadvantaged communities were often the major places in communities where mobilisation took place and political awareness was developed. The following section of this review investigates theoretical considerations of culture in order to determine how they help us understand school culture.

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<sup>5</sup> Government has embarked on a plan of funding schools according to a scale whereby previously disadvantaged schools would be favoured. Budget reforms include four dimensions: Equity in respect of educator/pupil ratios, especially in the Black system; skewed profile of teacher qualifications; user charges since an unsystematic pattern of user charges has been ethnically based.

## 2.3 Culture

Since the term culture conjures up different ideas and meanings, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the term. Clarification of the term may also serve to illuminate what is meant by it when we use it in relation to the school.

Banton (2004, quoted by Cashmore, 2004:98), argues that as early as 1871, the term culture was defined by Taylor as being “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. Over the years definitions of culture have not only proliferated but complexified to include differing perspectives. Some definitions of culture subscribe to those attributes of culture as articulated by Taylor.

Theorists like Bourdieu (1977) also defined culture as including beliefs, traditions, values and language. According to him, culture is that which also mediates practices by connecting individuals and groups to institutionalized hierarchies. Jordan and Rowntree (1990) offer one simpler definition when they define it as learned collective behaviour.

Hofstede (1984) understands culture as a collective (mental) programming of the mind which distinguishes groups of people from each other.

Wyner (1991) suggests a similar definition by explaining that culture consists of many small chunks of knowledge that are stored as a large pool of information within the bounded social group. No single member of the group has learned all of the knowledge. The amounts and kinds of information known are seen as varying widely across individuals and subgroups.

Culture is symbolic and only manifests itself through the meanings we give: it is intangible and meaningless outside the society that produces it. Banks argues that:

Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The

essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use and perceive them; the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernize societies (1989).

Damen (1989) defines culture as the learned and shared human patterns or models for living, pervading all aspects of human social interaction.

According to Smith (2000) culture can mean a great deal when its scope and relevance are clearly defined, and yet also very little, especially where it is used as synonymous for the social. He explains that the role of oppositions like those of culture/nature, masculine/feminine, civilization/barbarism, reason/emotion and same/other, were articulated together to construct complex identities. Smith adds that understanding culture means understanding the ways in which its meanings are tied to historically and socially specific situations. This involves a careful analysis of the practices and lifestyles of those involved and how people make sense of their own conditions (Smith, 2000).

The definitions clearly illustrate the complexity of the term 'culture' and that it is not constituted by a single but countless factors. As will be seen below, differing schools of thought exist in relation to the notion of school culture.

## **2.4 An overview of school culture**

### **2.4.1 Definitions and characteristics of school culture**

Prosser, an important commentator on the notion of school culture, has significantly advanced the debate around the concept. He explains that the term school culture, which has also been referred to as climate, ethos, atmosphere, character and tone, has been defined in various ways. In terms of this he argues that there is no agreement on the definition or meaning of the term. This notwithstanding, in the 1980s culture has become the dominant term to describe the 'overall' character of a school (Prosser, 1999). Noteworthy as this development has been, it does not solve the problem of

determining what exactly school culture refers to. Each school has a 'different reality or mindset of school life' (Prosser, 1999, p.33).

As a means of taking the discussion forward, Prosser (1999, p. 33) suggests that each school has a "different reality or mindset of school life". He classifies school culture into four broad categories: 'wider culture', 'generic culture', 'unique culture' and 'perceived culture'. In 'wider culture' national and local cultures are understood to be important components of all schools thereby emphasizing the relationship between a nation's culture and schools that exist within it (Prosser, 1999). Socio-cultural systems then ethnic, professional, sexual, political, artistic and communicative dimensions are reflected in the school practices (Prosser, 1999). Prosser defines 'generic culture' as that which separates institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons and banks. These are institutions that are "separated by their differing organizational cultures yet recognized as belonging to a particular institutional group by unspoken norms" (Prosser, 1999, p.8). 'Generic culture' is difficult to identify since it is taken for granted by those who share it and difficult to penetrate by those who do not (Prosser, 1999). 'Unique culture' is defined as the dominant values embraced by the institution determining its guiding policies and the institutional rules. 'Perceived culture' can be separated into two forms: 'on-site perceived culture' and 'off-site perceived culture'. 'On-site perceived culture' refers to how staffs view their own school, while 'off-site' describes outsiders' views of the school. According to Prosser, this is the means whereby parents and the local community assess the unique culture of the school through indicators such as its prospectus, newsletters, gossip, pupils' behaviour outside school and the school uniform. 'On-site' is captured in the saying of teachers who talk about [this is] "the way we do things around here" (Prosser, 1999, p.14).

Dalin (1993) agrees that school culture is a complex phenomenon and proposes that it is manifested at three levels in the school. Firstly, the transrational level where values are based on beliefs, ethical codes and moral insights, secondly; at the rational level where values are grounded within a social context, and thirdly at the subrational level where values are experienced as personal preferences and feelings (Dalin, 1993). Few schools are clear on their values on the transrational level but at the rational level, schools usually have objectives embracing values, goals, rules, regulations, customs,

ceremonies and curriculum. It is at the subrational level where the power play between individuals occurs. Values and norms appear at the individual level, the group level (classroom), the organizational level (school level), the subculture level (school versus other organizations) and the social level (Dalin, 1993). From this definition it is clear that the individual and his or her relations are very important determinants of what constitutes a 'school culture' (Dalin, 1993).

Wyner (1991) explains that the term culture presents difficulties as well as interesting possibilities when we try to apply it to a school as a whole. First of all she emphasizes that culture can differ from school to school. She uses the definitions of Sarason (1971) and Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) who propose that "culture can refer to an undifferentiated entity, the overall character or ethos of an educational setting, like a school, and of the role of a school" (Wyner, 1991, p. 1). Her general approach is that school culture is not only made up of unique characteristics but is also constituted by a plurality of factors. School culture embodies the values, beliefs and practices embedded within a school community; it is also manifested in the values, artifacts and cultural symbols valued in its community. Individual players within the school might project particular values and/or add or subvert the dominant school culture. Wyner emphasizes that one school can have a culture of collaboration while another might have a culture of teaching:

Within the culture of any particular school, persons work amidst complex and interconnected relations, rooted in language, tradition, custom, history and perceived social status: a complex equation of possibilities, disappointments, implications and meanings concealed or conveyed, depending on the values and attitudes of the participants (Wyner, 1991, p.3).

Wyner uses three conceptions of culture: In conception one, culture is regarded as knowledge bits, in conception two it is considered as conceptual structure, while conception three understands culture as political struggle. In all three conceptions culture is seen as knowledge and as a framework for establishing meaning (Wyner, 1991).

In terms of her general approach, Wyner argues that while all schools share common characteristics, each school has its own culture. To hold the possibility of indefinite difference at bay, she suggests that one can group schools into a number of different

types, namely the bureaucratic, the collegial and the toxic. The bureaucratic culture is defined as that where a head dictates to his or her teachers and places a strong emphasis on standardisation. This style leads to teachers working in isolation leaving little chance for interaction with peers. Policies are top-down with little or no input from teachers (Wyner, 1991). The collegial culture engenders a sense of cohesiveness with teachers being encouraged to grow, whereas the bureaucratic school culture leaves many teachers feeling isolated and devalued with little incentive to grow. The collegial culture values parental involvement. The toxic school culture is described as the most destructive since it views students as a problem, instead of as valued clients. This culture is hostile and suspicious of change, is reluctant to search out new ideas and celebrates few ceremonies or school traditions (Wyner, 1991). The focus of the toxic school culture is on failure; failure of students, programs, and new ideas.

Arguments of Wyner (1991), Prosser (1999) and Dalin (1993) demonstrate that school culture is a complex and nuanced term because it is constituted by a variety of factors and has many and varied meanings. Common to all, however, is the role of the teacher. This is discussed below.

#### **2.4.2 Teachers and school culture**

Teachers are the focal point of a school, and are integral in shaping its culture. The most dominant among them will be powerful in shaping its ethos, values and customs. These are usually drawn from the management team. While individuals can and will play a role in influencing school culture, the reverse can take place too. School culture can shape teachers, especially if they are young and/or new to a school. They have to fit into the existing culture of a school. This duality illustrates the concept's dynamic and fluid nature. Sarason (1996) learned, in her quest to help students and teachers on their turf, that people do not take kindly "to departures from their accustomed ways of thinking and acting even when they proclaim they are motivated to do so" (Sarason, 1996, p.66).

Sarason's article explores how school culture affects teachers. In her exploration she found that school culture is influential in affecting relations among teachers, students,

parents, administrators and the community. It also affects how teachers define their work, how problems are solved, and the way new ideas are implemented and how people will work together (Understanding School Culture, 2005). A person's belief systems and values can change and adapt to the culture that is dominant in the school.

## **2.5 The role of schooling and school culture**

### **2.5.1 Dimensions of schooling**

Pivotal to the investigation of this study is understanding the role of the school in society so that it can be determined how society's expectations of schooling feed into school culture.

Schools are, for example, commonly regarded as sites of acquisition of knowledge and values. Sarason (1996) regards school as a site for nurturing the academic-intellectual growth of children and instilling values befitting life in a democratic society. Gale and Densmore (2000), in support of this, suggest that schooling values both the all-round development of the individual and knowledge for its own sake.

Paquette (1991) suggests that schools are instrumental in shaping nations. He elaborates this argument by explaining that public support for all forms of schooling is an indication of the value people attach to schools. Schools are thus regarded as essential institutions where the young are nurtured to increase their life chances (Paquette, 1991). Popkewitz (2001) argues that schooling provides students with a set of strategies to direct how they should reason about the world-at-large and the self in the world.

The above descriptions regard schools as institutions of cultural and social reproduction and as the means by which society transmits its values (Giroux, 1981). Giroux, in taking this discussion further, suggests that this transmission is a contested process whereby dominant groups appropriate the school for their own ideological purposes and subordinate groups continually challenge those who are supposedly in control of them.

### **2.5.2 Schooling as a contested terrain**

Debates about the contradictory role of schooling abound in education. Gale and Densmore (2000) in suggesting that school is simultaneously about the academic, the vocational and the democratic, argue that the origins of the academic dimensions of school are patrician in the sense that it was designed for an exclusive ruling elite and the general education of the landed gentry (Gale & Densmore, 2000). With this view of schooling, curriculum and knowledge is organized into subjects. Certain subjects like the languages and the sciences are given a privileged status over other subjects that are considered to be less challenging mentally.

The vocational perspective is based on the assumption that schooling should complement emerging social-economic demands. Americans argued that schools needed to train future workers so that American business could compete successfully in international markets. Schools are therefore seen as essential for equipping youth with the skills needed for employment. They argue that this commitment is reflected in contemporary vocational curricula. The movement believes that investment in human capital leads to more earnings for both individuals and groups (Gale et al., 2000). This view values work experience, career counseling or school-to-work transition schemes.

The democratic perspective, according to Gale and Densmore, is about the need for schooling to prepare youth to enter the world of work whilst empowering them to operate in an increasingly multi-cultural and technological society. This perspective believes that preparing youth for the economy chiefly, may stifle creative personal growth. Education needs also to foreground the importance of the concept of democracy since this prepares a nation to be concerned with equity, social justice and cultural sensitivity (Gale et al., 2000). The premise for this perspective is also strongly based on creating individuals who can contribute intellectually and actively to creating a just and democratic society. Apple (2001) is an important contributor in this discussion and has attempted to show the impact of conservative social movements on educational politics in the USA. The focus of his work has been to reveal the powerful influence these movements have over policy and practice in education and the social arena. The major movements he identifies are the neoliberals, neoconservatives,

authoritarian populists and a fraction of the upwardly mobile professional and managerial new middle class. According to Apple the neoliberals are taking leadership to 'reform' education. He outlines the viewpoints of each movement.

The neoliberals are guided by a vision of the weak state. They propose economic rationality with efficiency and cost-reduction analysis as the dominant norms (Apple, 2001). Neo-liberals have a vision of students as human capital that must be prepared with the requisite skills to compete efficiently and effectively otherwise public schools can be deemed as failing children and using unnecessary financial resources.

The major element within the conservative social movement is neo-conservatism. Neo-conservatives are guided by a vision of a strong state. They propose mandatory national and statewide curricula, national and statewide testing, a 'return' to higher standards, a revival of the "Western tradition", patriotism and conservative variants of character education' (Apple, 2001, p.49). Teachers' work is highly standardized, rationalized and 'policed'.

The following major element is authoritarian populism or what Apple terms the "Christian Right". Education and social policy is grounded in biblical authority, "Christian morality", gender roles and the family. This group argues that public schooling should be controlled through what counts as "legitimate" knowledge in schools. Apple emphasizes how these conservative activists have influenced and pressurized textbook publishers to change and alter aspects of state educational policy on teaching, curriculum and evaluation. Whereas Gale and Densmore (2000) and Apple's (2001) arguments centered on the various perspectives of schooling, Bourdieu's (1993) theoretical framework helps in understanding how schools become programmed to reproduce cultural, social and political hegemony and how they may come to be the embodiment of the community's cultural and social practices.

### **2.5.3 Theoretical perspectives of schooling and school culture**

Bourdieu (1993) classifies capital into four species; economic, social, cultural and symbolic. 'Economic capital' refers to the command over economic and material

‘Social capital’ is the command over relationships and specifies the ability to mobilize interpersonal relationships. Cultural capital is the command over cultural knowledge and social institutions such as family, schools, churches and governments as a means of furthering one’s aims. Symbolic capital is the ability to access and mobilise the symbols and symbolic resources of a culture (Taug, 2001). Social, cultural and symbolic capital can be substituted and converted into economic capital (Taug, 2001).

Since the school is an organization where the aim is to (re) produce knowledge, it is, as suggested above, susceptible to power struggles. These power struggles are manifested in knowledge, cultural hegemony, language, pedagogical practices and struggles among individuals. My study aims to understand the school as an organization where processes of cultural, social, political (re) production occur and where, according to Bourdieu’s philosophy, “the capital species, in its various forms, represents sources of power that can be accumulated and mobilized within a field” (Taug, 2001, p. 4). My study considers the school as the field/site.

Bourdieu argues that culture embodies power relations and that intellectuals are instrumental in shaping those arenas (Swartz, 1997). His focus is on the role culture plays in social reproduction. He defines reproduction as the strategies and processes groups pursue to produce and reproduce the conditions of their collective existence (Swartz, 1997). Culture is the key factor in enabling this reproductive process. The three most important thinking tools of Bourdieu are the concepts of practice, habitus and field.

Bourdieu argues that any social formation is structured by way of a hierarchically organized series of fields (the economic field, the educational field, the political field). The “specific and differentiated fields are sites of collective symbolic struggles and individual strategies, the aims of which are to produce valuable cultural goods” (Bourdieu, 1993, p.197). Each field operates as a structured space with its own laws of functioning (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu adds that each field is autonomous but structurally homologous with others. The relationships between the positions of agents determine the structure; any change in the agents’ positions could enforce a change in the structure of the field (Bourdieu, 1993). Because of the diversity and

hierarchy in the agents' positions in any given field, competition for control of the resources specific to that field is inevitable.

To enter a field, one has to possess what Bourdieu calls habitus (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu defines habitus as a 'feel for the game', a 'practical sense' that inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated and that is not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules. It is a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions (Bourdieu, 1993). Swartz (1997) defines habitus as a set of acquired patterns of thought, behaviour and taste which constitutes the link between social structures and social practice. Habitus only exists through and because of the practices of actors and their interaction with each other and with the rest of the environment (Jenkins, 1992). This embraces ways of talking, moving and ways of making things and whatever else is part of daily living (Jenkins, 1992). Practice is played out on competitive arenas called fields.

According to Jenkins (1992) practice is located in space and time. It can be observed in three dimensions and, necessarily, from moment to moment (Jenkins, 1992). Jenkins (1992) argues that time is both a constraint and a resource for social interaction since it is socially constructed.

Bourdieu examines how institutions like schools and universities play an instrumental role in perpetuating the status quo and creating particular types of patterns of thinking through which identity construction is formulated. He is especially critical about the culture of schooling and how it enables individuals to create common thought categories which makes communication possible (Bourdieu, 1977). Schooling is considered as the means whereby moral integration is achieved. Educational systems produce particular types of thinking in individuals. Essentially, Bourdieu suggests that this whole process of thinking is patterned; that there are formal ways of doing things, which are imparted by schools. However, schools might also have hidden agendas. In other words, things that remain unsaid, like girls don't do mathematics. Training in certain disciplines like the 'arts' or 'science' would have a patterned way of thinking which facilitates understanding among themselves (Bourdieu, 1977). Hence, schools are instrumental in the "sharing of common sense which is a prerequisite for communication" (Bourdieu, 1977). Schools create common speech and language and

common ways of approaching and solving problems. The school systems create patterns of thought for a given period (Bourdieu, 1977). For Bourdieu “it is primarily through the cultural unconscious which he owes to his intellectual training and more particularly, to his scholastic training, that a thinker belongs to his society and age – schools of thought may, more often than is immediately apparent, represent the union of thinkers similarly schooled” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.195). Some schools might emphasize or value more moral patterns while others a more traditional pattern.

Bourdieu expounds on this argument by saying that the school itself needs to be organized to carry out this function of programming of thought known as culture (Bourdieu, 1977). Teachers, he argues, are programmed to perpetuate the status quo, by planning lessons, selecting texts of work and teaching learners to answer questions in accordance with the system of organization (Bourdieu, 1977). Teachers have to make concessions in their teaching strategies to comply with the requirements of the educational system. Bourdieu’s argument illustrates how field and cultural capital find expression in school through the manifestations of school culture and the power relations at play through the perpetuation of the school system. Since school culture is a mechanism through which power is orchestrated, it is essential for this study to explore its dynamics. In exploring these dynamics, the study takes cognisance of the impact of apartheid on the school.

Understanding the general concept of culture helps in elucidating not only how school culture is composed but most importantly how it may be embodied and reproduced within a school and how it impacts on the purposes society attaches to schooling. This, as Bourdieu explains, programmes schools to reproduce the community’s cultural and social practices. Situating school culture in its historical and political context explains how the legacy of our past has left an indelible mark on our schools and has, as I have tried to illustrate, significantly played an instrumental role in shaping its culture.

## **2.6 Related studies**

Finding studies relating specifically to HIV/AIDS, school culture and community/societal practices, proved to be a challenge. Those studies that I have been able to find focus on school culture, society's perceptions of HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS pedagogy, but nothing that investigates how school culture influences HIV/AIDS pedagogy. The studies I found I grouped into categories which I felt would best explain what was being highlighted. I explain these in relation to my study.

### **2.6.1 School culture and teachers work**

Key to the discussion below is the focus on how a school's culture is constituted and how it operates to both silence and allow particular practices at a school.

Gaziel (1997) conducted a study to determine how cultural differences in relation to student participation in school affairs, school improvement and academic achievement affected 'effective' secondary schools and 'average' secondary schools. In this study the researchers define school culture as shared assumptions and beliefs, a set of common values, beliefs and behaviour patterns about what a good school should be.

The sample included twenty secondary schools in towns in Israel. Ten schools were selected from what the researcher measured as 'effective' schools whilst the other ten schools were selected from those measured to be 'average'.

Results of the data revealed that in 'effective' schools the best predictor of student achievement was academic emphasis, followed by teamwork and then orderliness. However, in the 'average' schools, orderliness topped the list. Forty-four percent of the variance of school effectiveness was explained by factors attributed to school culture. 'Effective' schools valued academic improvement, continuous school improvement and orderliness whereas 'average' schools valued orderliness, teamwork and then only academic achievement. This study suggested that the 'effective' schools differed from the 'average' schools. These differences, Gaziel postulates, affected the school's scholastic achievements and illustrate how school culture helps to explain varying effectiveness among schools.

A comparative study conducted by Tungchen (2002), looking at the pedagogic practices of mathematics classes of two high schools in the Western Cape, is also helpful. The aim of the study was to determine how the pedagogic choices of teachers are influenced by the school's culture. The one school comprised classes from grade eight to twelve, while the other was a middle school consisting of grades seven to nine. One school was classified as private; the other was a former model C school. Two teachers in the mathematics department of each school teaching grades eight and nine participated in the study. The methods of data collection employed were mainly observations and interviews.

The findings showed that the one school had a culture that encouraged variety in pedagogic practices and was therefore more likely to accomplish progressive academic change more easily. However, an investigation of the other school's culture illustrated how significant players, like the head of department, determined a pedagogic authority which was based on a traditional approach to the subject. This created a stumbling block to change since change was interpreted as a challenge to authority.

A study conducted by Shaw and Reyes in 1997 in Wisconsin, USA, looked into whether there was a difference between the cultures of elementary and high school teachers in relation to commitment and workplace culture.

The study employed a survey research methodology to compare the two levels of schools, and included all the elementary and secondary schools, in Wisconsin, adding to a total of 104 schools. Five teachers were randomly selected from each school. Each teacher had to complete a questionnaire measuring organizational value orientation and commitment. Personal data focused on questions relating to organizational tenure, gender, years of experience and age. The outcomes of the study were clear and reflected differences in organizational cultures of elementary and high schools. Significantly, for example, teachers in elementary schools showed higher levels of organizational commitment. Interestingly, the study failed to find a correlation between school size and the kind of culture a school developed. According to the authors this lack of findings is important since it suggests that "school culture is more than the collective sum of organizational members; organizational commitment

is not the sum of individual teachers' dedication, but a synergy of that exists in the organization as a whole" (Shaw & Reyes, 1997, p.301).

Significant as these studies are in confirming that school culture is important, we now need to turn our attention to the more detailed discussion of culture in relation to HIV/AIDS. In putting this discussion in context, it is necessary to understand first how social groups treat questions of the disease in relation to gender.

#### **2.6.2 HIV/AIDS and community/societal perceptions**

Significantly, both studies discussed in this section highlight the disease as being gendered and how women are being blamed and held responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS. Understanding how these attitudes work will clarify how teachers come to an understanding and therefore how they teach about the disease.

The first study referred to was conducted by Haram (2001) among the Meru of Northern Tanzania to determine why women are seen as the cause and transmitters of HIV/AIDS. Situated in a qualitative paradigm, the researcher conducted in-depth case studies and participated in the daily life of the Meru between 1989 and 1995.

In coming to the conclusion that HIV/AIDS was life-threatening, the Meru focused all their attention on sexually active women. They regarded the modern, sexually active woman as the cause of the disarray in their sexual reproduction order. This they put down to women abandoning Meru values. They valued ordered sexuality and sought to regulate sexual relations as an important measure in combating HIV/AIDS. Men were absolved from all responsibility in this matter.

LeClerc-Madlala (2000), also looking at gender, carried out an ethnographic study in the Zulu community in Durban about the meanings and symbolic representations given to sexual activities and HIV/AIDS. The study, conducted between 1996 and 1997, aimed at elucidating the meanings attached to cultural constructions of HIV/AIDS among Zulu-speaking people living in a missionary station established in 1985 in Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa.

Data were derived from medical anthropological materials, interviews as well as participant observations. The study explored the key elements of Zulu sexual culture through investigating perceptions of women and disease, women and HIV/AIDS, girls' sexuality and the stigma of HIV/AIDS.

The study found that Zulu symbolism influenced how HIV/AIDS was understood. HIV/AIDS was metaphorically constructed as a “feminine” disease and women were blamed for its presence and spread. Again, as among the Meru, they were blamed for being the carriers of the disease.

The significance of these studies is great because they show how women have been blamed for the increase in infection rates. These attitudes, it needs to be said, permeate understandings of HIV/AIDS in the school setting too where women have borne the brunt of stereotyped accusations of how the growth of the disease works. The unpublished work of Baxen (personal communication) shows, for example, how women teachers have themselves assimilated social messages about ‘weakness’ and even the ‘evil’ natures of women. Using the performative theory of Judith Butler, Baxen shows how much these women teachers are complicit in reproducing negative self-images and taking on the blunder for the disease when it really ought to be shared by men. The next section shows what happens when schools deal with these stereotypes.

### **2.6.3 HIV/AIDS and schooling**

The following studies investigated HIV/AIDS pedagogy and its success rates at schools. All four studies illustrate the importance of achieving optimum student involvement as a means of encouragement and enthusiasm for the effective mediation of the pandemic. Since my study investigates the mediation of HIV/AIDS this section relates to it because these studies not only focus on knowledge and attitudes of HIV/AIDS, but also the teaching practices employed for the mediation of HIV/AIDS.

The following study was conducted at a co-educational Ugandan school by Mirembe in 2002. Pupils formed the subject of this action research study. The aim of this study

was to investigate HIV/AIDS pedagogy and democratic education in Uganda by examining pupil participation in curriculum formulation, pupils setting the agenda in AIDS education delivery and individual choice of HIV/AIDS education. The intention of this research was to elicit a more democratic approach to HIV/AIDS pedagogy that would be more relevant to the youth.

Results indicated that the proposed action research programme delivered mostly positive shifts in attitude and participation in the HIV/AIDS lessons. Previously learners felt excluded from lessons because of it being too teacher-centered. They felt that they were denied the chance of producing knowledge and of being in charge of their own learning (Mirembe, 2002). This authoritarianism prompted learners into believing that HIV/AIDS lessons were irrelevant. Communication, enthusiasm and attitudes towards the lesson improved through learner participation in the curriculum. Likewise the following study also probed student involvement during lessons.

Seven hundred and fifty-six pupils from two government secondary schools in Malawi participated in a study conducted by Maclachlan, Chimombo and Mpemba (1997). A locally derived and community orientated questionnaire survey of HIV/AIDS and sexually related behaviour was completed by the pupils. The study also involved getting 72 pupils to play an educational game about HIV/AIDS over a four week period.

The aim of the study was to investigate the benefits of introducing active learning methods into schools, of focusing on local understandings of health problems in relation to HIV/AIDS, and of establishing an accurate knowledge base for health promotion.

The results showed that the pupils who played the board game significantly improved their answers each time the board game was played; this result was interpreted as a 'trickle down' effect. Over 70 percent of the questions were correctly answered in the first survey and this suggested that there was a substantial amount of accurate information about HIV/AIDS available to the secondary school pupils of Malawi. Almost all the pupils knew that there was currently no cure for HIV/AIDS and the different ways through which the disease could be contracted. Less than half of the

learners believed that counseling could help HIV/AIDS victims. About half of the pupils knew that HIV/AIDS tests were not always accurate. Composite analysis of the questionnaire revealed that accurate knowledge about HIV/AIDS increased with years of education and HIV/AIDS knowledge, and that HIV/AIDS knowledge also increases with education. Male pupils showed the highest level of accurate knowledge. The study found that the age of the pupil was unrelated to the pupils' level of accurate knowledge. The results suggest a "promising mechanism for increasing learning about HIV/AIDS and sexually related behaviour among Malawian youth" (Maclachlan, Chimombo, & Mpemba, 1997, p. 49).

The following study aimed to explore the knowledge of and attitudes to HIV/AIDS of senior secondary school pupils and trainee teachers in Udapi District, Karnataka, India. This study was conducted in 1999 by Agrawal, Roa, Chandrashekar and Coulter, and was administered to 990 students and 46 trainee teachers in the Udapi District in India. A questionnaire was used as a means of collecting data.

The results show that the respondents' knowledge about how HIV/AIDS is transmitted was quite good despite not having received any formal sex education lessons. However, misconceptions and little knowledge regarding the biomedical facts of HIV/AIDS were displayed by the participants. The study also revealed that the mass media, teachers and health workers were the main means of acquiring information relating to HIV/AIDS. It was found that rural, private English-speaking schools and male students scored better on the questionnaire. Schools where science was taught also scored better. Pupils who were reassessed after receiving a talk on HIV/AIDS, scored better. The mass media served as an important means to acquiring HIV/AIDS information in India. The research showed that the inter-personal approaches in the education system in India lend itself to inadequate knowledge on HIV/AIDS.

The following study, conducted by Ndegwa, Wangechi, Makohaa, Kijungu, Nyongesa, Nkonge, Osawa, Osaki and Muthwii (2002) aimed to determine what knowledge, attitudes and practices towards HIV/AIDS exist among students and teachers. The study was conducted in four primary and one secondary school in the Riruta location of the Nairobi province of Kenya. Seventy teachers were sampled

from the schools and 62 students were involved adding up to a total of 132 subjects. Participating on a random sampling basis, were those in classes six and seven in the four primary schools with a 100% response rate. The study period was August to November of 1999. Interview schedules and semi-structured questionnaires were used.

The results showed that 97 percent of the respondents were aware of HIV/AIDS and knew the means of contracting the disease. Most respondents associated HIV/AIDS with loose morals and felt that abstinence was the best way of avoiding infection. Participants also displayed knowledge about the tell-tale signs of the disease. The study found that teachers were involved in activities geared to HIV/AIDS prevention like counseling, teaching in class and in general discussions with pupils/students. It was found that only 12, 9 percent of teachers do HIV/AIDS teaching daily. The study also points to the shortcomings in teachers administering HIV/AIDS mediation and recommends remedial measures to empower teachers as crucial disseminators of HIV/AIDS preventative methods to learners.

Important about these last few studies is that they point to the kind of success that can be achieved when HIV/AIDS is formally and deliberately taught in the school. The studies are relevant in that they illustrate the kinds of work being done in relation to HIV/AIDS. The studies (Maclachlan, et al., 1997; Mirembe, 2002; Agrawal et al., 1999) show that we have a body of literature that has looked at HIV/AIDS in relation to schooling: at curriculum development, ways of improving HIV/AIDS pedagogy, how much of the biomedical facts are known to learners and how they acquired the knowledge. Critically however, there is a recognised gap in the available literature in that few, if any studies have investigated the impact of school culture on HIV/AIDS mediation. None of the studies is interested in understanding the process which is involved in learning about HIV/AIDS. It is generally assumed that learning is a neutral and even a routine experience. The earlier literature looked at in this chapter make clear that this is not the case. The school is an important site for the production and reproduction of particular kinds of messages. This awareness is not reflected in the studies that were reviewed here. It is this gap that I hope my study can begin to address in a modest way. Using the work of Prosser that schools have complex cultures and the general approach of theorists such as Bourdieu, my study will

hopefully contribute to the discussion on HIV/AIDS education by investigating the factors that influence HIV/AIDS pedagogy. It is hoped that through the findings of this study designers of HIV/AIDS education material will take cognisance of the school's context as well as the possible influence of school culture and teachers' beliefs in the mediation of HIV/AIDS.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 Methodology**

This study was designed as an attempt to understand how school culture influenced teachers' understanding and teaching of HIV/AIDS in selected schools.

My main question probes how school culture in particular communities and schools shapes teachers' perceptions and their teaching of HIV/AIDS. Essentially, the study's intention is to understand how school culture and teachers' beliefs influence pedagogical practices in the classroom.

Since the study aimed at gaining a textured understanding of school culture it was necessary to locate the study within a qualitative paradigm. Certain features within this paradigm enable in-depth investigation and "inside out" perspectives (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004, p.1). Babbie and Mouton define qualitative research as "taking as its departure point the insider perspective on social action" (2001, p.270). They expand on this definition by adding that qualitative researchers attempt to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves (Babbie et al., 2001). They add that the qualitative paradigm enables researchers to understand and describe human behaviour rather than explain it. Qualitative research provides a broad methodological approach to study human action, including a collection of methods and techniques. It is distinguished by the following key features: a focus on process rather than outcome. The actor's perspective is emphasized and the primary aim is in-depth descriptions and understanding of actions and events. The main concern is to understand social action in terms of its specific context rather than attempting to generalize to some theoretical population. The research process is often inductive in its orientation, resulting in a generation of new hypotheses and theories. The qualitative methodological approach seeks to provide a better understanding of social reality by drawing attention to "processes, meaning patterns and structural features" (Flick et al., 2004, p.1). According to Green, (1998, p.83), qualitative research is "an

inductive approach to analysis, flexibility in research design and a passion to understand rather than advocate”

This study employed two approaches within the qualitative paradigm: a combination of phenomenology and narrative. The precise definition of narratives poses a problem since it cuts across a variety of disciplines like psychology, sociology, history, education and gender studies (De La Rey, 1999). There are varying perspectives about what narratives are but the agreement is that they share a fundamental interest in making sense of experience and in the construction and communication of meaning (De La Rey, 1999). Amos (1995) describes narratives as that which is derived from any data that is in the form of natural discourse or speech, like interviews; it also refers to the data form of field notes or original interview data and their written transcriptions.

Riessman (1993) identified some general features for narrative analysis that the majority of scholars adhere to. Sequencing, whether of time or thematic approach, is a general characteristic, its most significant feature being that “it tells not only about how social actors understand past deeds and events, but also how the self is constituted” (De La Rey, 1999, p.96).

Narratives help the researcher to determine how people make meaning of themselves and events. Narratives allow an understanding of the person in process and enables connections in life events to be constructed through reference to the past, the present and the future (De La Rey, 1999). They allow events to be structured so that connectedness, coherence and directionality through time, are achieved (De La Rey, 1999).

However, limitations exist within the narrative approach. Narrative ethnography, which is linked to the individual history of the ethnographer, works with the ethnographer located in his/her text, thereby creating unavoidable bias (De La Rey, 1999). De La Rey’s study on gender relations in society elucidated how gender inequality in society influenced narratives. Repertoires of stories were influenced by the speaker’s situatedness in his or her relevant gender (De La Rey, 1999).

Narratives were used for this research because the study sought to gain an understanding as to what values and perceptions of teachers influenced the way they perceive HIV/AIDS and consequently teach it. Listening to teachers tell the story of their lives, helped me understand how they positioned themselves in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The other approach used by the study was that of phenomenology. Comte cited in Babbie and Mouton (2001) defines the approach as the scientific study of social phenomenon, necessary for the attainment of the reconstruction of society.

Babbie and Mouton explain that the phenomenological paradigm is based on the centrality of human consciousness. They add that this approach emphasises the difference between the object of the natural and social sciences. Not the human body, but the human mind or consciousness forms the basis for the presumed analogy between the study of man and the study of society (Babbie et al., 2001). Phenomenology aims to understand people “as conscious, self-directing, symbolic human beings” (Babbie et al., 2001, p. 28). Phenomenologists emphasise that all human beings are engaged in the process of making sense of their (life) worlds (Babbie et al., 2001). “According to the phenomenological position, the fact that people are continuously constructing, developing and changing the everyday (common sense) interpretations of their world(s), should be taken into account in any conception of social science research” (Babbie et al., 2001, p.28).

Since this study sought to gain a deep understanding of the social phenomenon, school culture, the phenomenological approach was found to be most appropriate. School culture can be considered as a process in which people are engaged in making sense of their worlds through interpretation, creating, giving meaning to, defining, justifying and rationalizing their actions.

### **3.2 Site and Sample**

This investigation was conducted at three primary schools situated on the Cape Flats in the province of the Western Cape, South Africa. At the time of the study the three

schools were relatively small; each not exceeding a learner total of 300 to 400. Teaching staff at each of these schools varied from seven to 13 teachers.

Since the study was part of a major research project into HIV/AIDS and education, the sites were pre-selected. Five primary schools and four high schools were chosen as sites for the collection of data for the large study. Schools were selected through purposive sampling. This was to ensure that schools from all the former houses of parliament, as designated in apartheid South Africa, would be included in the study. In order to understand how I made my selection among the primary schools, it is necessary to provide an explanation of purposive sampling.

Silverman (2005) explains that purposive sampling enables the researcher to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested. Pertinent to my study was the assumption that schools each had their own culture, depending on their geographical location and history, especially in the South African context, where until 11 years ago, race was a determining factor as to allocation of funds, admission requirements and curriculum instruction. Since this study sought to investigate how school culture and teachers' beliefs influence their teaching of HIV/AIDS, my selection was determined by the fact that I sought to embrace the diversity of the South African population. The three schools selected, therefore, were from historically white, coloured/Indian and black areas.

These three schools to a very large extent determined the race, culture and religions of the teachers involved in the study. Teachers involved in teaching life-skills were selected for participation since it was in this learning area that HIV/AIDS mediation would take place. Since all three schools were relatively small schools, comprising of mostly one class per grade, this turned out to be two teachers at each of the schools for lesson observations.

In order to determine the culture of the school, it was necessary to interview other significant players in the school too. The principals and deputy principals of each of the schools were selected because I needed to determine who they were and from where they hailed in order to understand the manner in which they influenced school culture, especially in the form of their relationship with staff, community and learners.

Governing body chairpersons were interviewed to help understand what practices of the community, brought in through them, possibly influenced the school culture. Teachers serving on the school governing body were interviewed in order to help gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between staff, the governing body and consequently the community. The reason for interviewing the school secretaries was to determine their role in influencing school culture. All in all, the total number of participants interviewed at each school included the two teachers, the principal, governing body member and the secretary. Only one of the three schools had a deputy principal who was then included in the interview process.

### **3.3 Methods of data collection**

This study made use of triangulation in its research. Methods of data collection included observations, interviews and documentary analysis. Mason (1996) defines triangulation as the use of a combination of methods to explore a research question. He argues that this multiple methods approach enables the researcher to assess the same phenomenon from different angles thereby producing a more accurate reading. Mason (1996) expresses concern about this degree of reading, since this could provide different versions of answers. However, Mason agrees that validity is enhanced since triangulation "... encourages the researcher to approach their research questions from different angles and to explore their intellectual puzzles in a rounded multi-faceted way" (1996, p. 149).

Different aspects of my research question required different data collection techniques as explained below.

### **3.4 Observations**

In order to understand the culture of the school and how this impacts on teachers teaching of HIV/AIDS, observations were employed.

Babbie (2001) distinguishes between two types of observation: simple observation and participant observation. Simple observation is where the researcher remains an

outside observer and participant observation is where the researcher is a member of the group s/he is researching. This study made use of both approaches in order to collect data pertaining to school culture. All my observations were recorded in my field note book.

The importance of field notes is explained by Neuman (2000) as laying the foundation of field research. These field notes, he adds, can be in the form of maps, diagrams, photographs, interviews, tapes, video and notes jotted in and away from the field (Neuman, 2000). Neuman (2000) advises the researcher to write notes immediately after he/she leaves the field. He further advises notes to be ordered chronologically with the date, time and place on each entry, and should especially, in the case of direct observation notes, be an exact recording of the words, phrases and actions used (Neuman, 2000). Detailed notes, Neuman adds, are better than summaries. He distinguishes between direct observation notes, inference notes, analytic notes and a personal journal.

Since school culture is embedded in the values, beliefs and practices of a school, three to four weeks of intense observations were conducted so that I could gain a deeper understanding into this phenomenon because it is not always said and obvious. This entailed observations of the daily occurrences at the school. I observed lessons, meetings, and interval interactions between teachers in the staff room and learners on the playground as well as how the school, received visitors, especially parents. Practices like curriculum discourse, pedagogical techniques, and codes of conduct for teachers and learners, disciplinary measures being practiced at the school, interactions between teachers, and teachers and learners as well as the ritual of assembly were observed. Classroom and lesson observations of the participating life-skills teachers were done for a week. One life-skills lesson of each participating teacher was videoed. Life-skills lessons were observed for the purpose of understanding how school culture and teachers' beliefs were manifested in teachers' pedagogical practices. Comprehensive field notes were also written. Where observations of interactions between teachers during intervals were done, I became a participant. However, during staff meetings I used the technique of simple observation. Detailed field notes were kept to determine what was happening at the various schools and how

one 'read off' the embedded values from the practices, as these were all means of determining the culture of the school.

### **3.5 Interviews**

Interviews were conducted in order to determine who teachers were, where they grew up and what beliefs they held.

Silverman explains that interviews come as close as possible to providing a "'mirror reflection' of the reality that exists in the social world" (2004, p.125). He further explains that social worlds are achievable through in-depth interviewing. Hence, the use of interviews for this study.

Individual interviews were conducted with participating teachers so that the extent of how school culture and their beliefs influence their teaching practices could be determined. Each teacher was interviewed twice; firstly to investigate their personal life story and secondly to probe their professional trajectory. The professional interviews were conducted after lessons were observed so that questions pertaining to the lesson could be posed. Personal interviews of the life-skills teachers took place before the observations of lessons.

The interviews pertaining to the teacher's personal life enabled me to get a sense of the beliefs that could possibly influence their teaching of HIV/AIDS. Miller (2003) writes about the narrative approach being sensitive to the respondent's changing perspective, in the sense that characteristics of the interviewer may manipulate the interviewee, thereby affecting the interview. De La Rey (1999) also writes about the changing perspective of the respondent by saying how people sometimes tend to lie, forget events, become confused, or even exaggerate when talking about themselves. Riesmann (1993) explains that narrative researchers need to understand this aspect and realize that they are merely dealing with linguistic representations of experience, and that all representations of experience are limited and shifting because they arise out of social interaction between people. He adds that there is no master narrative, rather several constructions and several readings. It is because of this reason that a

series of interviews were conducted. I realized that the human factor may have affected the 'quality' of narrative I sought. So, by interviewing respondents more than once I hoped to achieve consistent stories about their personal and professional lives.

### **3.6 Documentary Analysis**

I analysed relevant school documents. These included minutes of meetings, school vision and mission statements, curriculum circulars, school committees, codes of conduct for staff and learners as well as documents regarding disciplinary procedures for educators and learners.

Documents can help us gain a deeper understanding about human behaviour and the workings of society, in this instance, the school. These documents particularly, are to help the researcher gain an understanding of the culture of the school; what is valued and how it is manifested in the curriculum, pedagogical practices of teachers, ethos, prospectus and relationship between the school community, teachers and the school: "Documentary sources supply the empirical evidence that can support sociological theories" (Miller, 2003, p. 82).

Silverman (1997) expounds on the use of documents in research studies, adding that it is important for the understanding of how organizations function. Silverman (1997) urges that particular notice should be taken of the role of recording, archiving and retrieving information. Documents "often enshrine a distinctly documentary version of social reality, hence the value of examining it" (Silverman, 1997). The documents that I have examined from schools, indeed, explained the practices that gave the school its distinct culture. Minutes of meetings helped me to determine the measure of staff interaction as well as the collegiality that may or may not exist among staff members of a particular school. The school ethos, mission and vision statements revealed the type of knowledge, values and beliefs the schools aimed to instill in its learners.

### **3.7 Data analysis process**

According to Neuman, the qualitative researcher “develops explanations or generalisations that are close to concrete data and contexts but are more than simple descriptions” (2000, p. 419). Neuman explains that the qualitative researcher’s explanations are “rich in detail, sensitive to context, and capable of showing the complex processes or sequences of social life” (2000, p. 419).

Documents, interviews and field notes were analysed for rich and detailed data. Interviews were transcribed. Once transcription was completed a narrative was written for each life-skills teacher. The information for the narrative was taken from the personal and professional interview.

I then proceeded with the analysis by writing a rich description of each school. My aim was to capture the factors like practices, values and beliefs, including influential characters, who contributed to flavouring the school culture. Documentary analysis as well as observations and the interviews with members of staff, enabled me to consider the factors that captured the school culture. Here I focused on factors as revealed through minutes of meetings and observations of staff meetings, interval interactions between teachers and school assemblies. Things like the relationship and inter-actions between staff members, parents and management (particularly towards the principal), body language and, indeed, the type of language used. The decisions taken in these meetings with regard to the curriculum, cultural and fundraising matters were also considered. The manner in which debates and challenging issues, especially towards management was resolved, was also noted. All these factors gave me insight into the relationships between staff members, the working ethos among them, what knowledge was privileged and the existence of other discourses like disciplinary, religious and academic.

Video-recorded lessons were transcribed in such a manner that all the utterances and body language of the teacher was captured. The aim of this observation was to determine the pedagogical practices of teachers in teaching HIV/AIDS. Through in-depth analysis of the lessons, categories and themes emerged. These categories and

themes revealed which factors of school culture and teachers' beliefs impacted on teachers' mediation of HIV/AIDS.

### **3.8 Ethics and confidentiality**

Silverman (2005) explains that the rich and detailed nature of qualitative research can mean intimate engagement with the public and private lives of individuals thereby impinging on the qualitative researcher. Thus, the researcher has a responsibility to those being studied (Silverman, 2005). This responsibility can be confronted through transparency of intentions, confidentiality and anonymity (Silverman, 2005). The basic ethical principle governing data collection is that no harm should come to the respondents as a result of their participation in the study (Oppenheim in Welff, 2003).

Since the study made use of human subjects, a strict code of ethics was observed. I abided with the code of ethics laid down by the University of Cape Town. Names of people and schools have been changed in order to protect the persons involved in this study. Even though the geographical locations of schools were described, the names of the actual places were not divulged at all.

Permission for this study was obtained from the WCED well as from the participating schools and teachers. Participating subjects were informed of the research proceedings and assured of privacy, confidentiality, anonymity and sensitivity. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity.

As researcher, I am committed to reporting the outcomes as truthfully and accurately as possible. All data is presented as obtained.

### **3.9 Limitations to the study**

Only three schools in the Cape Metropole were involved in this study, therefore generalizations could not be made.

Time was a limiting factor. I had only three to four weeks to spend at each school. It could be argued that this was too short a time to get a sense of the overall character of the school. Time also posed a problem for some of the interviews since some teachers were not always available after school hours.

The presence of a researcher in the classroom was intimidating to some learners. They seemed unable to concentrate fully and some seemed reluctant to participate in the lesson, thereby possibly affecting the authenticity of the lesson. Another limitation was that the lesson could have been strategically planned by the teacher to suit the expectations of the researcher.

I understand the sensitivities and taboos<sup>6</sup> surrounding the occurrence of HIV/AIDS and realize that some teachers may not feel comfortable in talking to a stranger about a topic of this nature.

The reluctance to reveal information regarded as private and personal, especially in relation to religion and life details could have been a limiting factor in the sense that respondents may not have been willing to share details of their lives.

As a researcher I am cognisant of the fact that in retelling a story “truths” can be deemed context specific, invented, manipulated, exaggerated or simply blocked out by the respondent. The fact that I am a stranger could have intimidated the respondent in the sense that they might not have felt comfortable enough to “open up”.

In certain communities it is considered improper to speak to females on sex-related matters. Some of my respondents were from communities expressing this view. So with me being female, it could have restrained my male participants somewhat.

My subjectivity as researcher, especially in relation to my religion, could have been limiting in the sense that I may have viewed the study from a certain perspective.

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<sup>6</sup> In many communities HIV/AIDS is regarded as a taboo subject because it is associated with deeply private issues.

My lack of knowledge to the background of certain community practices may have led to a misinterpretation of events thereby limiting the study.

Languages express cultures differently and since some of my respondents were mother tongue Xhosa speakers, it may have caused a language barrier.

University of Cape Town

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on three main issues: school culture, the life stories of participating teachers and the lessons taught by each of these teachers. In particular, it seeks to illustrate how the school culture and teachers' personal beliefs impact on the pedagogy of HIV/AIDS.

The data is grouped according to each participating school. Each section starts off with a description of the school so that the reader is able to 'taste' its culture. The aim of this section is to, as much as it is possible, capture all the complexities, dynamics and nuances that contribute to creating a school's culture.

Through the discussion of the teachers' life story it is hoped that the reader will get a sense of who they are, where they grew up and their understanding of HIV/AIDS.

A discussion of the observed lessons then follows. This section is presented in categories in order to illustrate the influence of school culture and teachers beliefs.

#### **4.2 Protea Primary**

Protea Primary is situated in an area that was designated "Indian" by the apartheid government, in a part of the Cape Peninsula known as the Cape Flats. The surrounding areas were designated "Coloured" areas and so the school has a mixed population of children from both these areas. In terms of religious practice, learners are predominantly Muslim, followed by adherents of Hinduism and Christianity. This is important to note as it has a bearing on the rules of engagement both with and from the community within and surrounding the school.

There is a buzz of activity when one enters the school. Throughout the day the bell acts as reminder about classroom breaks, change of lessons, as well as the end of the school day. Along with the buzz, visitors to the school are greeted with lots of greenery in the foyer, a visible school mission and vision as well as the school's code of conduct. On display alongside these are a world map, a map of Africa and a map of South Africa. The offices in the general administration/reception area are well kept. In this same area is the principal's office with piles of paper, tell tale signs of organized confusion, full notice boards and a general air of activity. Just further along is a modest and more than functional staff meeting room with a seating area, lockers and a kitchen. Adorning these walls are notice boards, an annual events calendar, important dates for the month, important dates and events specific to the current school term, scholar patrol duty, staff ground duty, fundraising events and all of the extra curricular activities. All of these are well maintained which initially gives one the feeling that both time and care had been taken. Upon further inspection, one notices colourful murals decorating the school and displaying messages like "be punctual".

After spending some time at the school interacting with the staff, the administration, and the learners, one quickly learns that the school prides itself on diversity, tolerance, acceptance, community participation, and family involvement (albeit indirect). When speaking to the school principal, Mr. Vraj, he was very explicit in his explanation of and spoke passionately on issues of virtue, discipline, direction, guidance, and equality. He was particularly concerned with fairness and equality in his disapproval of the "prefect system" which he believes favours some and not others. He said, for example, "*...parents were key figures in the community, automatically their children were prefects. It wasn't a fair system. And for that reason I don't like the prefect system...we have a system where we alternate....*" Mr. Vraj also believes that compassion is very important. Why this is interesting to note is that Mr. Vraj himself comes from an educational background that was not tolerant, compassionate and fair, and his commitment to ensuring this is very much rooted in his own negative experience during his primary school years. Having not come from an affluent family and having grown up on a farm (referred to as a "plaas"), he seems determined to inculcate a consciousness that speaks directly to compassion. When asked about "needy learners and parents" Mr. Vraj proudly claimed that "*compassion...that's what our school is famous for...we have a soup kitchen everyday...children are given*

*bread...some parents come to school and are given a loaf of bread to take home....”*

Mr. Vraj’s own experience has led him to have certain convictions which he strives to make part of the school community ethos.

These convictions are further exemplified every week when religious leaders from the community, representing Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, are all invited to the school to promote not only tolerance, compassion, diversity and equality, but it is also about actively engaging what the school believes itself to be an advocate for. It is again articulated when the topic of extra curricular and sporting activities rears its head. Protea Primary has an array of activities in which learners may participate. These include an environment club, speech & drama, art & fabric painting, swimming, soccer, cricket and netball. The principle here is about participation, teamwork, sportsmanship and about facing challenges. Although there is a recognized lack of resources, it is more about having participated and having engaged the opportunity and being allowed a chance. Again actively engaging in what the school wishes to promote and what the school believes itself to be an advocate for.

As an extension of the school community ethos, the school maintains a “disciplined” open door policy where Mr. Vraj encourages parents to participate in school affairs, be it fundraising or voicing concern over a perceived lack of professionalism or any other relevant issue. Here the understanding is that this kind of concern will only be heeded if indeed it is related to professionalism or a lack thereof and infringes directly on a) the learner/educator relationship b) the administration/educator relationship and c) the duties related to the educator on the job. The principal was clear when he explained that

*...all persons should be given an equal opportunity to respond...but let's differentiate between professional matters, social matters and personal matters. As a mediator in this instance I am interested in professional matters only...as a colleague I will step in if I can help with personal matters but I will not allow personal matters to be questioned by the learner, the parents, or a colleague...its got nothing to do with them.*

Professionalism is measured by how educators carry themselves, how all their daily tasks are performed, how well lessons are planned, and how well an educator is able to manage and discipline his/her classroom.

The interviews conducted with the school principal, a member of the school governing body, educators and the school secretary revealed similar lines of thinking in that discipline translated into personal responsibility. Interestingly, religion at Protea Primary was regularly connected to discipline and responsibility. A member of the school governing body was very concerned about the direction in which young people are encouraged to go. Although he recognizes religious tolerance, himself being Muslim, and the majority of learners being of the Islamic faith, he claims that as a part of life, the discipline of prayers, the responsibility family members have toward each other and the spirit of community sharing he deems part of his religious beliefs, are all areas that should be filtered directly into the school community. It is believed that parents send their children to school to be educated and disciplined. The word discipline is an interesting one because in some instances it was about rigidity and in other instances it was about self control, and then it was about respect. Respect was articulated in terms of relationships between the learner and the educator but very much on the grounds of “who is older”.

Interestingly, this was not really conveyed in the classroom setting of the lessons observed. There was in evidence compassion, a sense of fairness, equality, tolerance, and mutual respect. Respect in this setting was not about age but about co-operation, listening to each other, giving each other a fair chance and accepting differing opinions. It was continually reinforced when learners were asked to be quiet so they might hear what was being said by a classmate, or applause to positively reinforce the sharing of ideas and opinions, and in the soliciting of responses to make sure that everyone felt their participation was necessary for the success of the lesson.

The example set by Mr Vraj, the principal, reflecting his early experiences, his family life and his ideals were very evident in the school ethos. This was also the case of members of the governing body, who tried to turn their beliefs into practice. These were to be seen in the relationship with the school in the community and leading the community by example. The school, for example, has opened its doors to host a crèche, to facilitate literacy lessons to members of the community (to mention but a few). It is indeed interesting to note the way this value system filtered into the classroom. A question that begs asking is, “how have learners internalized some of these?” More importantly, on the issue of religious tolerance and value systems

stemming directly from religious beliefs, the question I would like to pose here is, “if there had been one dominant religion at the school, would religious tolerance be so pervasive?”

In trying to understand school culture and the factors that contribute to its form, a host of very complex issues need to be understood. How is home brought into school? How is school shaped by the community and vice versa? How are personal life experiences translated into school practice and how are learners influenced by the complex interplay? Needless to say, all of the complexities can never be captured but an attempt was made to put forward the notion of “becoming” rather than a static sense of “being”. In other words, school culture will always be in a state of flux especially in a context such as that of South Africa. Learners, educators, administrators, all bring with them their own interpretation of the world around them and this will always have a profound impact on the richness of the school culture.

In sum then, it would seem as if the school culture of Protea Primary is constituted through the beliefs, values and practices of equality, justice, fairness, diversity, tolerance and compassion. Interestingly there is a sense of continuity between school and community in terms of beliefs, values and practices. This is particularly the case in the strong belief in discipline and self-control through religion.

#### **4.2.1 Moses Molapo, 32, black**

Moses is a married Grade Seven teacher at Protea Primary. He is also the Xhosa teacher. Significantly, he is the only Xhosa speaking teacher at the school. He lives outside the geographical parameters of the school, in a nearby township, where he was born.

Schooling presented problems. Being classified black meant he had to attend schools which fell under the Bantu Education Act. Although teachers applauded him for his hard work, he admits that it would have been much better without apartheid. He is full of praise for his own teachers because “*they treated him like one of their own*”

*children.*” He regretfully acknowledges missed opportunities, even for his parents. His aunt, who was a teacher, persuaded him to enter the profession.

Molapo explains that it was upon his aunt’s insistence that he attended a local university. He was also aware of the importance of teaching as most people in his family were teachers. He explains how he experienced tension because of conflicting advice received from his father. His father wanted him to become a tradesman. Teachers and lecturers made a positive impression on him by offering him motivation and praise and advised him to plough his academic knowledge back into the community. A significant event he remembers at university is the discrimination practiced against students who did not stay in residence or receive bursaries. The local students, according to him, experienced indifference from the university SRC when they approached them for assistance of any kind. He found lecturers impressive and positive role models. The lecturers’ guidance was insightful and they took the time to offer guidance relating to academic work and personal affairs.

Born from parents who came from the Transkei, he tells of being raised Catholic. Despite his parents having relocated from the rural areas to a city, the ‘culture’ practiced is still very much the same as that practiced by his great-grandparents. The ‘culture’ he is referring to is the Xhosa tradition. He admits that it is not easy to practice the ‘culture’ in the exact manner that is required in Xhosa tradition like it was in his great-grandparents’ time “*since culture is not static so it changes over times because of the environment, because of other circumstances.*” The practice of lobola has been altered because of changing times and environments. He explains, how previously lobola was paid with cows; but because lots of people no longer stay in the rural villages, they cannot herd cattle. So this practice has changed to using money instead. He argues that practising culture that differs to what religion proposes presents problems since people are often in a dilemma as to which practices to honour. This, he fears, may cause confusion for children. He is very concerned about loss of respect from children because of this confusion. One example he cites, is initiation. According to him, it goes against his religious beliefs but because “*it is [a] rite of passage, so you follow the same route.*” This problem, he explains, is usually alleviated by people deciding to do their rituals away from the home. Following the Xhosa culture, he argues, doesn’t bring him into conflict with his religion. In his

words “*because in my religion there’s no way they can say that I mustn’t do what I am doing in the culture.*”

#### **4.2.2 Faatimah Parker, 51, Indian**

Faatimah teaches at Protea Primary. She has a Grade Three class but teaches life-skills in the intermediate phase. She resides in the area where her school is located, and is a widow with three children.

Being born to first generation Indian immigrants, she tells of her parents not being able to help her with homework because they could not speak English or Afrikaans. However, her parents were very supportive. Being Islamic, she was sent to a Muslim school. She feels that the values that were taught at school were very much the same as those taught at home. She tells of struggling with the schoolwork at first because the language posed a problem. Teachers who made a big impact on her were those who instilled confidence and positive self-worth. She fondly talks about the physical education teacher at her primary school that helped her believe in herself.

Unlike most Indian girls of her time who were expected to get married at eighteen, she decided to pursue a career in teaching and attended a teachers college. This created tension with her parents who disliked this idea. This is what she had to say:

*And it was a tough thing for me because when I came to standard eight, it was I must get out of school now, you’re too big to be at school. I must say it wasn’t easy because my father was adamant that I had to leave. Because you leave school and then they train you to cook and they train you to make a good housewife. That was the highlight of your life, that and getting a husband.*

One lecturer in particular stood out during her training years and she tries to emulate her in her teaching. “*I remember her words, if a thing is worth doing, it’s worth doing well*” quoting the lecturer’s favourite words. She remembers how this lecturer taught them to make charts with the utmost care and she thinks of her as her role model. She started teaching in a township school under a very strict principal but is thankful to him for teaching her discipline and routine.

As a devout Muslim, Parker was taught “*a certain way of living, ways of dressing, if you look at the way we eat, if you look at what we eat, how we eat and how we share this.*” She realises that her “*beliefs come across very strong.*” She adds that much of her values and cultural practices are those taught to her by her parents who are strict adherents of Islam. She explains how her parents instilled in her practices that are expected in Islam. “*There was a certain code of dress, no choice, at night you would never get supper if you didn't fast,*” she adds. Fasting is seen as a very significant practice because it is supposed to instil compassion for those starving. Her parents practised humility and nurtured this value in her. In the following excerpt she explains how, “*...we had a very humble home I must say to you too, and the people would come and even if there wasn't much the person would never leave our home without a cup of tea. I feel we're all made that way now.*”

Most of her learners come from troubled backgrounds, therefore, she needs to make them feel special. This she regards as one of her major challenges. She feels that it is important for learners to know that God has made them for a special reason so that they can have sense of purpose in their lives and work towards a common goal.

### **4.3 Highgrove Junior**

Highgrove Junior is an established school (in terms of years) situated in a relatively affluent area that had under the previous dispensation, been classified white. The school boasts a proud history, especially in academic terms. It consists of a learner population of approximately 300-400 learners. An ex-model C school, falling under the jurisdiction of what was known previously as the House of Assembly, it now consists of a learner population embracing the racial diversity of the city, that is, learners of diverse social, cultural and racial backgrounds. Adding to the diversity of the school is the fact that learners are from differing religions, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism.

All teachers on the staff are Christian and all, except one teacher who teaches a grade four class, are white. The staff complement is mostly female with only two males (the principal and the Grade Six teacher).

The setting of the school adds to its educational ambience. Expansive and carefully tended grounds make for an attractive landscape within which the school is situated. Benches are suitably placed along the garden so that learners can enjoy their intervals whilst seated comfortably. Small rockery gardens and ponds enhance the beauty of the garden. The environment is conducive to learning with well-equipped classrooms, ideal class numbers and beautifully landscaped grounds. The school has a playground as well as tennis courts. It further consists of a school hall, library, and science and computer laboratories.

Adorned along the walls of the administration block is the work of the learners. The walls are decorated with photographs of the school's staff, principals and achievements over the years. Trophies are proudly displayed in glass cabinets. Lists of prefects, dating back to 1968, are displayed along the wall. The staffroom is neatly carpeted with armchairs, writing boards, lockers and bookracks. This all helps to create a warm relaxing atmosphere, but more importantly, points to the proud academic history and the culture of academic excellence that the school strives to maintain.

The political history of a society, as explained in Chapter Two, helps to shape the school's educational practices. This advantage, especially in relation to resources, is evident in the school. It has comparatively good facilities. Educational practices are strictly academic in the sense that all activities are organised and driven by the standards the institution is accustomed to. An example of this is that the school has its own transport system available for class outings.

The school is managed by an elderly male principal, Mr Dearham. Since it is a relatively small school, there is no deputy principal, just two Heads of Department. The principal has a very relaxed, non-threatening, fatherly relationship with staff and learners. Staff meetings demonstrate the same ambience, warm and relaxed, yet professional. Over coffee, school related matters are discussed in a conversational way. Observations showed that discussions are pursued in non-threatening ways. This could be ascribed to the personality of the principal who is calm, friendly and speaks in a grandfatherly manner, especially to learners. My encounters with him were

immensely calming and enjoyable. It appears as if he sets the whole tone for the school.

Observations of the principal teaching learners tell of the same manner; gentle, caring and grandfatherly. Even when disciplining learners, the same manner and tone of voice can be detected. Learners appeared to be very relaxed with him and sought his attention and adoration. A meeting he held with the prefects of the school again illustrated the trust his learners have in him as their headmaster. He made time for each one of them, carefully listening to their reports. They all appeared to be at ease in his presence and spoke freely to him.

During the interview it became apparent that Mr Dearham strove towards maintaining the academic excellence of the school and seemed to be able to adapt to curriculum changes. The following excerpts from the interview disclose his adaptability and his vow to maintain the schools academic standards *“My ambitions while I’m at school are to develop the school. There’s a lot of development that must still take place, physical development, educational development with the teachers.”* With regards to academic standards, this is what he had to say *“The learners want to be able to cope at high school academically. We do give them input on academic coping.”* This sentiment, stressing academic importance could be detected in his comments about the school motto: *“For me I want them to go to their high schools, with our motto Truth and Courage. Truth to be able to say what they say, and courage to say it and with knowledge.”*

It appears as if parental involvement is encouraged and highly valued. Parents were present during library periods, assisting with reading, looking at homework books and helping in the computer room. A grandmother of one of the learners assists the grade threes with needlework. Parents are involved in organising school functions too. The school is advantaged because the pool of expertise offered by parents is wide. Parents seem to be mostly professional people. One example of this is the Xhosa teacher, who is a retired circuit manager. The governing body chairperson is also an educational leader.

The official curriculum discourse of the school is that of the WCED. Documentary analysis suggests that promotion standards are also those of the WCED. Observations showed that teachers taught what the curriculum expected yet were also able to exercise autonomy when they needed to during lessons. The principal confirmed this when I observed one of his life-skills lessons, that what he taught was not in the syllabus but he felt that it was necessary for the learners to know that particular knowledge.

Religious values were promoted through the school assembly. Christian discourse seems dominant even in the midst of other religions. This appears to be evident through the practices I observed during the assembly, verses, hymns and prayers were done from the Bible. The assembly was very formal. The principal spoke in a gentle, yet firm and formal manner to learners. Matters pertaining to discipline, events for the term, sports and cultural achievements were discussed. Throughout the assembly learners listened attentively. At the end of the assembly, learners were urged to stand with their hands by their sides whilst they sang the school anthem. They left the hall grade by grade to the accompaniment of a hymn being played on the piano. My evaluation of the assembly was that it was used as a motivation to instil pride for the school, pride into learners, as well as shaping them into a particular mould through practices like rules (standing with your hands by your side) and hymn singing.

All in all, it seems as if the culture of the school is one of academic excellence, as well as pride in its academic history. There appear to be distinct roles: And lines that govern these roles are adhered to strictly. The school motto of “Truth and Courage” seems to resonate with Highgrove’s culture.

#### **4.3.1 Charles Dearham, 60, white**

Mr Dearham is the principal of Highgrove Junior. He teaches many classes, including mathematics and life-skills lessons. He is married and lives alone with his spouse since all their children are now adults and have left the family home. He resides outside the area in which his school is situated.

As a child he travelled much around South Africa with his family because his father was an air force pilot. So, although he was raised speaking English, he was forced to attend Afrikaans schools in the small towns his father was working. It is in such places where he experienced some anti-English sentiment, but within time overcame this barrier by befriending them. In the following excerpt he tells about this experience: “*So you know, and a lot of the Afrikaans speaking boys, I don’t think it was their fault, I think it came from home, you know the Anglo-Boer War fought all over again.*” A teacher whom he thankfully remembers is one who offered him special lessons to improve his Afrikaans. These extra lessons were given to him after school.

As a white South African male, it was expected of him to complete a year compulsory military training. His instructor in the army encouraged him to train as a teacher and helped him apply to teaching colleges. He was accepted at a college in a Boland<sup>7</sup> town where his excellent performance in rugby earned him a place in the Boland team. The initiation culture at this particular college made life unbearable for a while. But after joining a committee dealing with student grievances, he and others were able to end the physical abuse practices characteristic of the initiation. Two lecturers made an impact on him. These were lecturers whom he regarded as “*practical lecturers, they weren’t these lecturers who lectured up in the air.*” According to Mr Dearham, these lecturers gave him good advice on disciplining children. This advice was to find out why children are erring before administering discipline so that there is understanding and compassion for the child.

Mr Dearham is a Christian and passionately explains how he strives to live his life according to the Christian principles of “*honesty, neatness and respect.*” This solid grounding in Christianity was laid in his childhood by his parents. He adds that “*I’ve always had a Christian influence, absolutely, throughout my life. At college I was influenced because of what college was like and then I would say slightly more now.*” His parents instilled the values of honesty, openness and responsibility in him. “*Because we’ve been brought up in a culture of honesty and openness,*” he relates. He doesn’t agree with some cultural practices of the community, especially those that

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<sup>7</sup> Rural towns in the Western Cape.

allow men to marry more than one wife. This is what he had to say: “*I disagree with, for example, a guy having more than one wife.*” He expressed concern about certain sectors of the community practicing prejudice against women, especially in relation to education because, according to him, “*I am anti that because I think it’s their (women’s) right.*” He realises that all the teachers on his staff are Christian, yet adds that “*I would expect my staff to carry out and not be preachers in the classroom. I think the classroom’s not the place for that.*”

He explains that he runs his school according to the policy “*What’s best for the school? Not the WCED! What’s best for the children in the school? What’s best for the staff and parents?*”

#### **4.3.2 Diane Hewitt, 43, white**

Diane is a teacher at Highgrove Junior. She is one of the two Heads of Department at the school. Although she is class teacher for Grade Seven, she teaches all the other classes because she is the school librarian. She is married with children.

She feels that she had a very secure upbringing because her mother was always home for her and her siblings. This she regards as a privilege. She relates that it was the ‘consistency’ in her parents that helped shaped her the most. The consistency she speaks about is the fact that her parents’ marriage was stable and that they were good role models.

She attended junior and high school at the same institution. The school was a very strict, traditional all-girls school. The school prided itself on its strong academic history and was then already one hundred years old. In keeping with tradition, it was very strict about uniforms. This was because they wanted students to wear the uniforms with pride. Although she praises the school she realizes that her teaching is “*very different to the way they taught and it doesn’t mean that they were wrong but at that time that’s how you did it.*” She alludes to the traditional method of pedagogy used as a means of mediation at that time. Her English and History teachers were

good and left an impression on her therefore it is little surprise that she majored in these two subjects. *“So it links what you enjoy and who your teacher is.”*

Academic and professional training was at a local university where she read for a Bachelor of Arts degree and teaching diploma in primary education. She found the lectures and subjects at university very interesting. The enthusiasm of lecturers at the university was inspirational for her as a student and by far surpassed the attitude of her teachers at school. She tells of how her English lecturer left a lasting impression on her and how his words still linger on, especially in relation to her teaching. Her first teaching post was at the school where she is currently teaching. She left after two and a half years to raise a family. During this time she did relief teaching at a number of schools. She returned to Highgrove Junior in 1994 and has been there since.

As a devout Christian she has definite principles by which she lives. The following excerpts confirm her devoutness: *“I said to my kids, if you chose to be a Christian you will have to work out what Christianity says about that (premarital sex) and if the rule says no premarital sex, well tough, you’re going to find it hard, but that is what it says.”* This, she relates, confirms her belief that certain values cannot be compromised, *“but there’s a lot of tolerance that is needed as well.”* She suggests though, that she is able to practice tolerance when teaching so that she can teach learners how to make informed choices in life: *“You know humanity says that there must be overriding compassion.”* She suggests that the same values she instils in her own children would be the values she teaches her learners at school. Her aim, she argues, is to encourage in learners *“that there is reality and the pressures that come.”*

She considers her challenge in teaching learners to be one where the *“academic grounding for high school should be laid.”* Developing enthusiasm for learning as well as a positive self-image in learners, also presents a challenge to her. These attributes, she believes, helps in promoting confidence in learners.

#### 4.4 Zunami Primary

Zunami Primary is situated in a black township and forms part of the city of Cape Town's urban sprawl. The communities of informal settlements that surround the school are often housed in temporary dwellings, with a generally transient population (often dictated by those community members seeking employment).

The morning bell, as at the other schools, usually signifies the start of the school day. Visitors are greeted by greenery in the foyer, two sitting benches for visitors; public phones should visitors (and teachers) need to make calls (without infringing on the school's resources) as well as wall plaques and school building photos. The secretary as the front line person is always ready with a smile and seemed to have a good working relationship with the school principal. The principal's office is adorned with photos of the school's achievements, messages referring to school and work ethos, a couch to comfortably seat visitors to the principal's office and a notice board displaying meeting dates. The school offices are equipped with adequate telecommunications, a computer, and a photocopy machine. The staffroom is modest with a version of the area vision and mission statement displayed on the wall. There appears to be no lack of positive messaging in the staffroom including that of how best to facilitate an effective school.

Displayed in the reception area, along with other positive and motivational messages, including messages of community safety and well-being, the school's vision is articulated as being able "to create a school for community that provides the best opportunity for every child to develop as a complete individual". This is extended even further with the school's mission, as it appears in the school foyer, which reads, "To provide to the best of the child's ability an education that will contribute to the complete development of every child through a) an efficient school management b) a professional and committed teaching staff c) extending high teaching standards d) balanced cultural and sport activities and e) parent involvement".

Given these emphases it can be said that the school is concerned with the building of community, be it a school community, a learning community, but a community nonetheless in which learners will find the necessary support. It appears to speak very

much to commitment and a sense of professionalism, which again, in keeping with a larger community is one in which there is a high level of support. It speaks also to a holistic approach in the building of community and that of healthy individualism where learners are self sufficient, competent and confident. The school choir is often asked to perform at community events, the drum majorettes are asked to participate in ceremonial community events and so an open relationship is maintained between the school and the members of the broader community. The mission statement speaks also of sporting activities which again refers to a holistic approach as the statements seem to bring together the mind, the body and the spirit.

In keeping with the mission statement highlighting management of the highest quality, the school has an open-door policy where the principal appears to be accessible at all times to staff and where the school leadership seems to be willing to offer assistance in whichever way possible. Teachers appear to be friendly, accommodating and enjoy an easy and comfortable relationship with the principal. Also, it should be noted that parents are part of this dynamic. When issues needed to be discussed with the principal it was done so privately.

The school has a number of committees. These include the fundraising committee, the portfolio committee, the finance committee, the entertainment committee, the bereavement committee, the nutrition committee and the stock control committee. It is interesting to note again, how in keeping with the mission statement, a sense of community was being fostered with tasks being delegated in the sense that through the bereavement committee, the school reaches out to the community when death strikes families connected to the school. This speaks directly to leadership as well, in that the school leadership is confident that tasks will be dealt with in a manner that is befitting of the professionalism that it wishes to instill and maintain. The notion of cooperation between teachers and the school leadership is seen as a tool for empowerment. This is articulated when the principal asserts that, “...*they do their school work, planning, lesson planning, sit down and plan because with the OBE you can't do alone...you must get ideas from others. You bring ideas from other schools; you go out to other schools and do classes with other schools to do planning. You go to workshops, they also empower us.*” The principal also speaks of trust, values, beliefs, and believes that the role of the teacher is complex and multi-layered. This is

expressed when she mentions that, “*the teacher has the trust of the parents...the teacher is the parent...the social worker...the nurse... the psychologist...the teacher must know that he must give the child education....*”

Professionalism and effectiveness can also be measured by how well teachers are able to monitor detail. According to the deputy principal, an effective teacher is one who plans lessons well in advance and has detailed lesson plans. This clearly follows on from what the principal mentioned above in terms of planning. The deputy principal further articulated that an effective teacher is one who is able to manage a class well in terms of discipline. What is fascinating to note here is that according to the deputy principal, effective school management begins in the classroom. So in his view, if a class is not well managed, no matter how effective a principal may seem, the managing then of the school would be a hard task, if not an impossible task.

Some of what I was able to pick up on was the blending of belief systems that seems to influence teaching and classroom practice. The predominant mix I was able to single out was the crossing of Xhosa culture with Christianity. Christianity was defined by one staff member as being “*Christian religions such as Presbyterian, Anglican, and Methodist.*” The emphasis, it would seem, was on prayer and ritual. It was further noted that these were not opposed to tradition but in fact encouraging of cultural and traditional practices. It was confirmed in a number of interviews that religious and traditional belief systems indeed influenced the way in which subjects were approached and the way in which teachers and learners related to each other. One of the members of staff had the following to say when asked if cultural and traditional practices and religious beliefs impacted on the job and how the school was run, “*Ja, and everyone does appreciate that...ja you see...we with a kind of group or clan or whatever....*” In some ways this is an extension of the mission statement which is concerned with the building of strong communities. One staff member noted that the shared belief systems allowed staff members to form a group of sorts which participates in community events as well as donates to community benefits so the pool of donations is more substantial as a whole.

Communal practice within the community at school seems non-discriminatory. I did however, note that the school community appears to practice gender discrimination,

albeit after school hours. In this instance, female staff members recognize that they are in positions of power while at school during the school day, but that when in the home, they assume the roles of wives and mothers. When asked why she cannot be a leader in her home, one female staff member claimed that she did not need the extra pressure at home. She also said that she knows her duty as a mother and a wife and why cause trouble in her home when she knows what is expected of her both culturally and traditionally. When asked to expound on the transfer of leadership from the school to the home, the principal said that:

*I'm like this...my husband is the head of the home, that is the culture. He is the head of the home so I'm his wife, so everything we must do together...at home I'm a wife, I'm not a leader. I'm a leader just here at school and then after school I come home and I am a mother and a wife...when we do things the traditional way then I do those things....*

She acknowledges the role reversal when back at school. One thing that we did not sufficiently explore was how this translated to the female learners in attendance at the school. Do female learners internalize this practice as have their elders? Are female learners aware of the different roles and are they as adept at negotiating their different worlds? In negotiating these different worlds, not just for female learners but for males alike, there is an expected code of behaviour when relating to elders. This is carried over into the school where learners are likely to extend that same code to their teachers.

The school culture with all its dynamism and complexities is an interesting mix of issues. These became apparent (as we have noticed in the preceding paragraphs) when we looked at things like community and interaction, school leadership, roles and expectations, gender, and the underlying Christian belief system that seems to permeate through the school. The mix of religious beliefs, traditional and modern value systems paves the way for an incredibly intricate process in trying to better understand and appreciate the school culture that exists and plays itself out at Zunami Primary. It would seem then, that there is a blurring between school and community.

#### 4.4.1 Gladys Molekti, 58, black

Gladys is a teacher at Zunami Primary School. She is responsible for teaching Grades Seven and Eight. She lives outside the school community. She is mother to four children but has also reared her niece.

She tells of growing up in the coloured areas of the city in which she resides. However with the implementation of the Group Areas Act, she and her family were forced to leave and relocate to a township allocated for blacks. Schooling presented no difficulties to her, therefore she liked it. She says that *“I liked school, maybe it’s because I didn’t have any learning problems.”* Although two years of her schooling were in a rural area, she regards herself as an urban born and raised Xhosa.

Ambitions of becoming a teacher came much later in life after a failed nursing career. Before attending a teachers’ college she worked as a clerk in various factories and only as late as 1988, did she decide to attend college. Since she has a passion for sciences, people who teach these subjects always manage to stand out as pedagogues. She tells of her Standard Four teacher who taught her science. She liked especially the way he took them outside to pick plants for experiments. One lecturer, in particular, stood out. She remembers his warning that bad teachers always stay on learner’s minds because they always remember what you did to them. Hence, she strives always to give her best to learners since she wants them to remember her kindly. She embarked on her teaching career by teaching at a school in a rural area. However, the distance and the fact that she was a voluntary teacher receiving no monetary remuneration, made it impossible for her to continue her services at that particular school. It was then that she was able to secure a post at the school where she is currently teaching.

In relation to her religion she explains *“...we do become Christians in terms of going to church and being baptised.”* Yet Xhosa values and customs are strictly observed since it is believed that disrespect of these customs brings misfortune. The initiation custom and reverence for ancestors especially is regarded as important. In this regard *“Like the initiation custom, that is a very strong custom that we are supposed to go through and another custom I don’t know what to call it in English, but the custom*

*that babies must go through. And we believe that if you don't do that custom you will get misfortunes along the way.*" Ancestors are thanked through the making of an African beer called utywala. This beer is usually enjoyed with family and friends. As she says "*We strongly believe in the connection with our ancestors; we are doing that for our ancestors to thank them, although they are not there to drink that.*" She experiences no tension between her cultural practices and her religion.

Teaching at a school with learners coming from a community ridden by unemployment, poverty, drunkenness, drug abuse and crime, presents many problems. She regards this as one of her major teaching challenges. Drug bosses who have money and beautiful cars are role models to her learners. She feels that the challenge lies in finding positive role models for learners since "*Very few are doing good things that have a good life.*"

#### **4.4.2 Adonai Moloko, 35, black**

Adonai Moloko teaches Grade Six at Zunami Primary School. He was born and raised in the area he is teaching. He also resides in this area. He is single and lives with his mother.

His story echoes that of many 'struggle' generation activists. "*My schooling was very problematic,*" he retorts. He explains that the root cause of these problems "*...was the apartheid ideology.*" He tells of having to repeat Sub B (Grade Two) because "*The comrades burnt down our school because of Bantu Education.*" He elaborates by explaining that this happened in 1980 again "*...because of the comrades.*" In 1985, he had to repeat standard nine "*...because of the stay-aways, as you may recall because the people who were rioting were the students.*" His following remark is said as a form of consolation to himself, "*So I just lost three years in my education career*" he adds.

His first choice as a career was law. He talks bitterly about being rejected to study in this field. This rejection he ascribes to politics. He says "*You know in education there are two sides to education. There is the formal curriculum and the hidden*

*curriculum.*” The hidden curriculum, he adds “...*was the method of instructing us to get thrown out.*” It is because there was no other option left for him, which enabled a friend to persuade him to apply to a local teachers college, designated to train only black teachers. He suggests that: “*I saw that time is running out, I’m sitting in the location in standard ten... In the middle of the first term, we were taken under difficult circumstances.*” He explains that teaching is not what he wanted to do because it does not give him the platform to enter the political arena. The following excerpt expresses this sentiment “*I needed to be in the courts because I wanted to do something with the law.*” He explains that teaching “...*was the only institution after standard ten.*” Other significant experiences from his tertiary years were the time he served on the SRC. He explains how as a Capetonian, he was discriminated against, by students from outside Cape Town “...*because Capetonians are not afraid to challenge the powers and authorities and Capetonians are very conscious that they are ignorant.*” This attitude, he feels, deprived him of a political platform. Lecturers left no lasting impression on him; in fact he felt that their influence was negative for his whole academic life. Motivation usually came from the Xhosas, who formed solidarity groups at his college. He embarked on his teaching career at the school he is presently teaching, and has been there ever since.

When asked what cultural practices he observed he replied “*In fact I don’t attend any cultural events formally you know. But when the time comes I do become a traditionalist.*” ‘Africanism’ is the philosophy according to which he lives his life. He explains that it is part of ubuntu. He explains how going for initiation made him learn to know more about himself. Without the practice of circumcision and initiation “*It’s just boy, boy, boy, there’s nothing in our culture.*” That, according to him, was the real education. Those with whom he was initiated, he regards as his real family. This is what he had to say “*Because they were, this big family behind my life were the ones during the circumcision time.*” Organised religion is a contentious issue for him since he believes that Christianity was imposed on the indigenous people forcing them to abandon their own forms of religious practices for the accepted Western religious practices. Certain Xhosa words made him realise that Africans must have had their own God. This he clearly expresses in the following excerpt “*By the time I grew up they were coming with some new words, Xhosa words, about this religious events, so you come to be aware that no, Africans did have their God, by the name of Komata.*”

He believes that there are two Israels in the world “...*the blacks and the whites, which is which. So that makes a big problem for us.*” He believes in the Bible but argues that it was “...*rewritten, they took the information to suit their aims.*” He regards his task in preparing youth for the future these days as more challenging than during the times when he was at school. “*It was much easier then because you find that they differ in choices you know, now they are interesting in that they want to go further,*” he adds. However, what presents the biggest challenge to him is the “*lack of education between the high and primary school.*” He feels that the big learner enrolment in high schools doesn’t allow teachers to know all their learners well causing a lack of individualism whereas in the primary school teachers are able to deal with learners more closely. And that, according to him, makes the difference.

#### **4.5 Discussion of lessons**

This section demonstrates how school culture influences teachers’ HIV/AIDS lessons, and is presented in two categories which serve to fore-ground the pertinent aspects the study seeks to explore. The first category presents aspects of lessons to illustrate how teachers’ beliefs may influence HIV/AIDS teaching. In the second category excerpts of lessons are presented to show the effect of school culture on HIV/AIDS teaching.

##### **4.5.1 Teacher beliefs and teaching about HIV/AIDS**

Through my observations of lessons it became clear that some teachers’ personal belief-systems influenced their pedagogical practices in relation to the HIV/AIDS lessons.

Moses of Protea Primary demonstrated in his life-skills lesson how Catholicism influenced his teaching. He assumed that “till death do us part” was part of everyone’s philosophy. This was evident in the following extract of his lesson:

*All I’m saying is that love doesn’t mean you have to engage in sexual intercourse. You need to know that person because some day you gonna find*

*that person you want to spend the rest of your life with. Till death do us part, you will say that to the person you love.*

Confirming this observation was his response when I probed this issue:

**Researcher:** Are you a follower of any particular religious philosophy?

**Respondent:** I'm Catholic.

**Researcher:** Do you experience any conflict between your religion and culture?

**Respondent:** Like I've said I have never, ever experienced that kind of conflict. Because of my religion there's no way that they can say that I mustn't do what I'm doing in my culture.

What stood out in the lesson of Faatimah Parker, also of Protea Primary, was the manner in which she skillfully avoided using the word condom (she only mentioned it once). This avoidance was practiced because it went against her religious principles which preached abstinence rather than condomisation. This belief was confirmed in her interview:

**Researcher:** So a lot of your personal religious beliefs come in when you're teaching?

**Respondent:** It comes in, there must be strength in learning. I don't mean to cut across other religions or so but there must be power in something called religion...What I picked up is that when you talk about HIV, all children think about is safe sex...The condom saves them. This is a one way track! Then when it comes to the sex I make sure I use the term married people... I don't think I avoid the sex stuff, I rather direct it, it's fine, and it's beautiful but within marriage. Instead of that if you emphasise more abstinence and values, you're diverting the attention this way and I feel that when you divert their attention to abstinence and what can happen to keep yourself pure.

This tendency was also evident in the two observed lessons at Zunami Primary. The following extract is from Mavis' lesson:

*T: Children do not use condoms if they are involved with sex. If they should be involved!*

The above-mentioned comment showed how the teacher's personal values came through in her teaching. Here also, the body language and facial expressions are of importance – there is a bit of “anger” and “disdain” like children have no business being sexually active.

Consider the following extract about the influence of personal beliefs on the gay and lesbian issue:

*T: There are those other issues too of males identifying themselves as females. I don't want anybody mentioning anybody's name. Okay? Okay! There is also that and recently it has been the in thing! What do we call them? There's a special name given to these kind of... What do we call them?*

**L:** *Gay.*

**T:** *They call themselves gay*

- Very obvious judgment in her tone.
- She pulls her face and hunches her shoulders.

*The women identify themselves as males! I don't know what do you think about this thing? What do you think about this gay and lesbian? Is it lesbian or lesbian? Whatever we call it!*

**L:** *Yes*

- Reply is given in unison.

**T:** *What do you think about this? I don't know! I would like to know from you! Do you have anything to say about this lesbian and gay thing?*

- She waits for response from learners.
- She then starts calling out learners' names.

- Carries a facial expression suggesting disgust.

**L:** *I want to say a feeling of a girl wanting to be a boy!*

**T:** *Of a girl wanting to be a boy. That's what he says.*

**T:** *Is there anybody else? Do you think it's natural?*

- Pulls her face

**L:** *No!*

- in unison

**T:** *Or is it a fashion thing?*

**L:** *A fashion thing*

Interestingly, the teacher pulled her face in a disgusted manner as she mentioned the words gays and lesbians! What she had to say about the gay issue during her interview, clarified her expression.

**Researcher:** Another interesting issue about the lesson was the gay issue. You extracted that word from the child, but you didn't probe it further. Why? I'm interested to know!

**Respondent:** Okay, it's because I don't know much about the gay thing. And maybe I'm old fashioned, I don't like it!

**Researcher:** Okay, you didn't want to go further with the issue because you don't like the issue?

**Respondent:** Ya, I don't like the issue and if I don't like the issue I wouldn't like them to, because I am sure somehow in the lesson, my feelings would come out and then they would have a strong place to hold onto to say my teacher also doesn't like this. And go on teasing others!

So although she held definite views about the gay and lesbian issue, she was cautious about revealing her intolerance to her learners since she understood the possible influence and power she as a teacher may hold over them.

Mavis made use of the opportunity to challenge gender perceptions in her culture thereby illustrating her perspective on women's positions in "our culture". Consider the following excerpts from her lesson:

*T: Okay, but there is also that thing "sexuality."*

- Points to the word sexuality on the board.

*T: This thing of identifying whether you identify yourself as a male or whether you identify yourself as a woman.*

- She then writes the word culture on the board.

*T: You can come to culture. There is also sexuality in culture. Especially in our culture.*

- Writes the word male and female on the board.

*T: What happens then, to the male and the female culturally?*

- She waits for responses from learners

*T: Especially in our culture Xhosa, let's say African culture*

.

*L: The man is the head of the house.*

*T: The man is supposed to be the head of the house. That's what I wanna say, head of the household, okay! And the female? The female? Most of the females are just quiet here. I don't know why?*

- Calls out the name of a female learner

**T:** *Where do we put the female? He says culturally the male are the head of the household. Where do we put the females?*

- Makes a disgruntled sound

**T:** *I think we must have a gender desk in this school!*

- Points to a learner raising her hand

**L:** *(response not clear)*

**T:** *The male is the head so the female is the tail, not even the neck!*

- Laughs in disbelief.

**L:** *The female is the body!*

**T:** *Okay, what do we mean by that when we say that the male is the head! What do we mean by that?*

**L:** *Male is the main man in the house.*

**T:** *Example?*

**L:** *When they have to... ..*

- Unable to complete sentence.

**T:** *Can I give it to someone else?*

**L:** *The male makes the rules.*

**T:** *That is the father who makes the rules. Okay.*

**L:** *The male feeds the family.*

**T:** *Is that's what's happening now? Is what you are talking happening now?*

- Boys scream out yes.

**T:** *You say yes, that's what's happening now! So it means that the mother's in the family are not working now and if they are working their money is for pocket money?*

- Shouts from learners

*Shhh.... Anybody who says anything...I said no howling when you want to talk put up your hands*

- Puts her hand up to gesture to learners

**L:** *(inaudible).*

**T:** *We are not saying so – the boys are! What do you say? Because you agreed that the male is the head, he looks after the family; he makes the rules in the house! Okay, one day you will also be families and you will also have your families, your wives. Do you think you think that it is right that one partner makes the rules and the other partner follows it?*

**L:** *Yes/no*

- screaming in unison

**L:** *(female): It is not fair!*

*T: How do you think it's supposed to be? You can answer in Xhosa too! If you think it's easier for you to think in Xhosa.*

*L: (female): Answers in Xhosa.*

*T: Okay, she says she thinks that both parties must sit down together and make the rules; husband and wife because this is their family. Right? And we must have a debate on this one day and how rules are made. Because one day you are going to be families so that the family is not one-sided.*

At this point in the lesson, the teacher brought in the “culture issue” and how it related to sexuality. She used this opportunity to conscientise learners on gender issues. The following excerpts from her interview explained her need to challenge accepted perceptions about gender and sexuality:

**Respondent:** They are the ones who influence the girls and in most cases the girls see, you heard them, the men are the head of the families, they always think that what the boys is coming up with must be done.

**Researcher:** Do you think that thinking comes from your culture?

**Respondent:** I think so.

**Researcher:** Can you tell me more about it?

**Respondent:** Yes, because mostly in our culture, okay, although the women are also working now but even if the woman is working, she sees the male as being superior to the female.

**Researcher:** And the male, how does he see it?

**Respondent:** Inferior. He sees the female as inferior. Whatever the male decides that is what must be done. And it is still like that! I was trying to bring across that in a family, both parties are equal. And they must always work as equals.

**Researcher:** Is it still prevalent in your society?

**Respondent:** Yes, it's only in households where the families are, what can I say, maybe more educated, and then you find it, but sometimes you find it even in the educated families where a husband will tell you, look here I'm Xhosa, I don't do that!

The teacher used the issue of sexuality to foreground the gender issue. She argued that because women were subjected to men in their “culture” it disempowered them when it came to safer sex practices. In her own words “...in this case of AIDS, you as a woman cannot say to your husband you must have safe sex. We cannot be just, sometimes they do have other women outside the home, but if he comes back you cannot tell him that he must use the condom because he is going to tell you, it means you are sleeping around.”

This tendency was also evident in Adonai Molokos’ lesson, the Grade Six life-skills teacher at Zunami Primary. Excerpts from his lesson illustrate this:

**T:** *So, which continent is mostly affected by AIDS?*

**L:** *Africa!*

**T:** *Don't God like us because we are black?*

This rhetorical question posed by the educator hinted at how this belief, regarding the race issue, may be rooted in his political perceptions of the South African/Western/Christian perspective:

**Respondent:** The government imposed Christianity on us; by the time we reach high school we find we are no longer attending churches.

**Researcher:** Why do you think that happened?

**Respondent:** Because they imposed Christianity on us, and there are African religions. We are not introduced to those religions. The first Christians were Africans. That is why in the Eastern Cape you find the Israelites... I meet the Israelites from overseas or abroad, I ask them what about these Israelites in the Eastern Cape, what about these in Africa? They don't realize there are two Israel's in the world, the blacks and the whites, which is which?

This influence is further demonstrated in the following excerpts of his lesson:

*T: Another big agent of HIV infection is sex! Remember boys, people may look healthy but still be infected! So condomise!*

The warning Adonai issued to the boys regarding prospective sexual partners demonstrated his belief in the male being the initiator in relationships. Significantly he used the words sex and condoms each only once in his lesson. When he used the word sex he faced the writing board with his back to the learners. When he warned the boys about condomising, he lowered his eyes and then looked through the classroom window. In his interview he explained why he did not feel comfortable with the use of these two words:

**Researcher:** Tell me about teaching sexuality and HIV/AIDS!

**Respondent:** No, I don't think I've been dealing with that!

**Researcher:** Why?

**Respondent:** ...norms and values.

**Researcher:** Can you explain that to me please?

**Respondent:** It's not easy to talk about these things.

**Researcher:** What does your values and norms say regarding that?

**Respondent:** We've got certain things that we don't talk about.

**Researcher:** Like?

**Respondent:** There are certain things we don't talk about. If you sit with your kids and talk these things, those educated ones we will force matters, it's not inside their hearts.

**Researcher:** So you are saying that there are certain things you can't talk to children about?

**Respondent:** Ya!

**Researcher:** Like Aids?

**Respondent:** I'm cautious, I'm not sure of the kids, I'm not sure!

He admitted that he was not comfortable in talking to learners about 'certain things' partly because it was not acceptable in 'the culture' and partly because not enough is known about HIV/AIDS to empower him as a teacher. He feels that accepted and popular belief regarding the facts and origins of HIV/AIDS, whether medically

proven, cannot be trusted. This sentiment was expressed in the way he emphasized the use of the herbalists' medicine.

His faith in the traditional way of healing is illustrated in the following extract from his lesson:

*T: How can the doctor inject one person with an infected needle? How do doctors make us sick from AIDS?*

He had this to say, about traditional healers in his interview:

**Respondent:** That information I also learned with my historical information..., in my history lessons where I ... I talk about traditional healers, more of preventative measures.

**Researcher:** You focused more on that.

**Respondent:** Ya

The following response shows how he experiences doubts regarding modern medicine:

**Respondent:** There are many, many, many things about it that we don't know. That's being used by the scientists.

The teachers of Zunami and Protea Primary illustrated how traditional and modern values are expressed through what and how they teach.

Mr. Dearham's lesson at Highgrove Junior was similar in reflecting the influence of his personal beliefs. Consider the following extract from his lesson:

*T: It's a Fallopian tube. The sperm goes up the Fallopian tubes, millions of them, it's a race. Because why they trying to get up the fallopian tube? One reason, if it's humans or animals, only one reason. (Hands intertwined).*

**L:** *To fertilise the egg.*

*T: To fertilise the egg. That's the only reason. Human beings have sex for fun, but what's the main idea of sex? That takes feelings out of it, imagine you were a dog. What's the main reason? Dogs don't have sex for fun, by the way, we do. It can be quite pleasant sometimes.*

Mr. Dearham appeared to use terminology describing body parts quite comfortably. He was open in his discussions about sex. Consider his remark during this lesson about having “sex for fun!” He argued that he was brought up in a culture of ‘openness and honesty’ and therefore felt that children needed to know the truth also for the sake of education. This was what he had to say:

**Respondent:** In the school for example, I picked up in the Grade Ones, they were very open, what's a boy's private part called! Most of them were quite horrified that we even talk about this. And we said penis and vagina, and now when we use it in class they now understand what it means.

**Researcher:** I picked up in your lessons that you are quite comfortable in teaching many alternatives to sexual behaviour. Can you tell me your thoughts regarding abstinence?

**Respondent:** The ideal would be just don't do it! Coming back to your question, I feel comfortable teaching like that because they want to know. The parent's say ‘don't do it.’ I'm saying ‘don't do it but here are the alternatives to it!

**Researcher:** So is what you are preaching in conflict with your beliefs?

**Respondent:** Ya, my belief is simply don't do it but because we'd been brought up in a culture of honesty and openness... but I think of my role as an educator in this, even if I'm uncomfortable with it I must talk to the children about it.

In contrast to all the other teachers whose lessons were observed, Diane Hewitt, of Highgrove Junior, practiced utmost caution whilst teaching thereby preventing personal beliefs to influence her lessons. The following excerpt elucidated how she very tactfully and cautiously approached pertinent questions of learners:

*L: Also, the issue of rape. If you are raped, you aren't wearing a condom.*

*T: Yes.*

**L:** *Your self-esteem.*

**T:** *Your self-esteem? Tell me a little more about that.*

**L:** *It's not something special. Your virginity and you just do it anyway.*

**T:** *We're talking about whether you ready to sleep with someone or not?*

**L:** *Yes.*

**T:** *When you don't think you special? Absolutely. But what do we know we must do when we decide when we should have sex, if we should have sex. What do we know that we must do?*

**L:** *Be prepared.*

**T:** *How can we be prepared? By carrying a condom before hand before you are actually in a situation. Okay, that's the bell. We really have to stop.*

**L:** *Wouldn't it be weird to carry a condom around with you all the time? How do you know you are going to get laid by walking around on the streets?*

**T:** *That's why you have to have it ready all the time. Thank you put your things away and we are going to get ready for the next lesson.*

What stood out in this lesson was Diane's technique in avoiding answers to controversial issues. When probed by learners for answers to questions regarding anal sex, nudity and the gay issue, she replied by saying "I don't know, I'm not sure, I'll have to find out, I'm not sure about that, or I don't know, you must tell me!"

Diane's skillful avoidance technique was used as a mask for her beliefs. It appeared as if she was providing her learners' with unbiased information in relation to HIV/AIDS and safe-sex. During the interview Diane described her teaching strategy as follows:

*As much as we say that everyone is tolerant these days I don't, and I think my role is more to say that there are going to be people that are going to be outside your way of thinking. And you need to understand why people make these choices. You have to live side by side. There are certain values that cannot be compromised but there's a lot of tolerance that is needed as well because there's reality and the pressures that come with it.*

All except one of the participating teachers displayed how their beliefs were influencing factors during the mediation of observed lessons in relation to HIV/AIDS.

#### **4.5.2 Teachers and school culture**

Influences of the schools' culture on the lessons of the teachers are discussed in the following section. All three schools displayed measures of influence in varying degrees. The discussion first focuses on Protea Primary, followed by Zunami Primary and then Highgrove Junior.

The word sex was the most explicit word used in Moses' (of Protea Primary) lesson. During Moses' interview, he expressed ambivalence towards using certain terminology because he feared the reaction from parents. This was clear with his repetitive use of the words 'that type of stuff,' during the lesson as a way of revealing explicit words:

*T: That's enough for now. (He reads out the words again). . Now if you see love and infatuation, it's about making love. Some people say love is about making sex and that type of stuff, but that is not correct. You need to have all of these in order to know that you love some-one (Points to the words on the board).*

Faatimah Parker refused to support condomisation during her lesson because it went against her religious philosophy. Consider the following excerpt from her interview:

**Respondent:** I try to use simple language. I try to use language that they understand. I know that as a person I do avoid all the shall I call it adult words.

**Researcher:** That's what I'm especially interested to hear. What would you avoid about these and why?

**Respondent:** I don't know, it's very personal and I feel a bit uncomfortable if you ask me to talk about using condoms, and that I feel we shouldn't be using those condoms in any case.

This is illustrated in this excerpt from her lesson:

**L:** *You must use a condom*

**T:** *Okay that falls under "sex"*

What stood out in this lesson was the way in which the teacher skilfully avoided encouraging the use of the condom. Although the curriculum prescribed teaching learners to make informed choices this teacher chose not to elaborate on the term condom because it went against her religious principles which preached abstinence.

Observations of the school culture at Protea Primary suggested continuity between school and community. Values, practices and beliefs of the community appeared to be brought in through teachers who lived within the community as well as governing body members. Faatimah Parker was one of these teachers. Her belief in discipline and self-control through religion was echoed by the principal and governing body member, both of whom lived within the school community. Hence she defied WCED discourse pertaining to what should be taught in HIV/AIDS lessons and could practice safely what she believes. This school culture, however, restricted Moses lesson since he feared reprisals from parents should his lesson become too sexually explicit.

Similarly lessons at Zunami Primary exemplified this tendency of fluidity between school and community. Community constructions and expressions regarding HIV/AIDS and sexuality messages appeared to be entrenched through the two observed lessons. It was demonstrated in the following ways in the lessons of Mavis and Adonai:

In Mavis' lesson it was evident the school culture enabled her to enforce her beliefs through the gay and lesbian and the gender issue.

*T: There are those other issues too of males identifying themselves as females. I don't want anybody mentioning anybody's name. Okay? Okay! There is also that and recently it has been the in thing! What do we call them? There's a special name given to these kind of... What do we call them?*

*L: Gay.*

*T: They call themselves gay*

- Very obvious judgment in her tone
- She pulls her face and hunches her shoulders

Similarly, in Adonai's lesson there also appeared to be continuity between school and community which allowed him to practice safely what he believes. Examples of how this continuity operated was illustrated in his lessons through the fore-grounding of the race issue of God and the Israelites, his belief of 'men being the hunters' in the sexual relationship and his stance on traditional healing. (See excerpts from these lessons in the section dealing with teachers and beliefs).

Observations of the school culture at Zunami Primary led me to believe that there was a blending of belief systems: Xhosa culture with Christianity (see description of school culture for more detail). So although Gladys lived outside the school community, she was still linked to the values, beliefs and practices through the Xhosa 'culture'. Besides, she was raised in the area and only moved out when she bought her own house as an adult. So it seemed as if the community's values were brought in through her, in this case her somewhat seeming intolerance towards homosexuals and her endeavour for 'political correctness' by challenging accepted gender perceptions. The community practices and beliefs also appeared to be entrenched through Adonai who lived within the school community.

Lessons observed at Highgrove Junior showed how academic excellence, objectivity for the sake of education and professionalism, and the belief in the school motto "truth and courage" were influential in both observed lessons.

This was especially evident in Diane Hewitt's approach to her lesson. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

*L: Why is it that teenagers are told to wear condoms to protect themselves from AIDS and why do they do the exact opposite?*

*T: Well, you are the ones who have to tell me that. We know that to practice safe sex, you have to wear a condom, but they don't. What goes on in their minds? What do you think goes on in their minds? Yes?*

*L: Many people are having experience.*

*T: Can they not have experience using the condom? Sex without a condom?*

*L: Maybe teenagers are rebellious.*

*T: Absolutely. Teenagers are always rebellious.*

Diane's lesson reflected the school motto of being truthful. Despite her personal belief in abstinence, for the sake of education, she practised avoidance.

Mr Dearham showed how the relationship between personal and professional complemented one another, when he practiced autonomy by deviating from the prescribed syllabus for the sake of the learners' curiosity. Consider the following excerpt from his lesson on teaching about twins:

*L: (Question could not be heard) Can you get girls and boys Siamese twins?*

*T: You can, but that must be awkward. The parents have to get the best medical aid so they can see if they can be separated and if they can be separated how are they going to live? They need permission and if something goes wrong, they both will die.*

During the interview with Mr Dearham, he told me that the lesson arose out of a need to clarify Siamese twins since this issue was then receiving lots of media coverage. Children became curious and started asking lots of questions, so he felt that it was important to do a lesson on the different types of twins. He had this to say in his interview:

*“Its part of my whole plan, it's not actually in the syllabus.”*

According to Mr. Dearham, he had been brought up in a culture of “honesty and openness” therefore he told the children the truth, the facts. This seemed to be in keeping with the school motto of “Truth and Honesty”. His belief in the school motto was reflected in his following comment:

*“I believe that children must know the truth, to be able to say what they say and courage to say it with knowledge.”*

In this chapter we saw how a school's culture is constituted through beliefs, practices and values. Significant players like the principal (among others) were also influential in shaping the schools culture. It was illustrated how in two of the participating schools a porous boundary existed between beliefs, values and practices of the school and its community. The third school does not illustrate this porousness between school and community.

We saw how teachers' beliefs influenced the pedagogical practices of HIV/AIDS lessons. All, except one of the teachers, demonstrated this tendency. This was especially obvious at Protea Primary and Zunami Primary. Highgrove Junior showed this tendency only in one of its respondents' lessons.

In summary then, it can be suggested that school culture and the beliefs of teachers influence, as is seen in five of the six life-skills teachers lessons, the pedagogical practices of HIV/AIDS lessons.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Analysis and discussion

The analysis of the results is done in terms of three themes. Each theme looks at a different dimension of the impact of school culture on HIV/AIDS mediation.

##### 5.1.1 Personal and Professional

This section of the discussion seeks to illustrate how personal beliefs of teachers could be complementary or conflicting with school culture. It particularly discusses how the beliefs influenced the observed lesson, whether it is in union or in conflict with the school culture and how, when in union, it helped entrench school culture.

Data revealed by the study seemed to suggest that in most of the observed lessons, the personal beliefs of the teacher were influential. This was prevalent in lessons observed at all three schools. All, except one teacher, illustrated the influence of personal beliefs. At Zunami and Protea Primary, where there appeared to be a close nexus between school and community, the personal and the professional seemed to complement each other and school culture, thereby illustrating no conflict. Further findings illustrated this to be especially evident when the teacher resided within the school community since the values, beliefs and practices appeared to be the same.

These findings confirm Bourdieu's remarks that the school is a means through which moral integration is achieved as well as being the embodiment of the community's cultural and social practices. He qualifies this, however, by adding that since schools are programmed to (re) produce knowledge, it is inevitable that power struggles ensue. These power struggles may be manifested in knowledge, cultural hegemony, language, pedagogical practices and struggles among individuals. Power struggles may be exacerbated by conflict between the personal and professional identity of the teacher especially if the teacher holds values other than those cherished by the school.

Dalin (1993) supports Bourdieu's argument about the school being a site for struggles among individuals. Dalin (1993), however, suggests that the power play between individuals happens at the subrational level of a school's culture since this is where values are experienced as personal preferences and opinions. Teachers may find prescribed values conflicting to their own as was the case at Zunami and Protea Primary. They may employ various strategies to navigate their way around this dilemma. Evidence in this study found that some teachers complied and others defied depending on various factors like the dominance of the school culture.

Data in this study resonates with findings of Haram (1995) and LeClerc-Madlala (2000) who found that perceptions of HIV/AIDS are culturally constructed and embedded in myths and metaphors.

#### **5.1.2 Allowing and Disallowing**

In this section I explain how school culture either silenced or allowed teachers to speak in relation to the HIV/AIDS lessons.

The study suggested that school culture had a profound influence on what was allowed or disallowed at a school and how things were to be done. The data also showed how culture, in two of the schools, was the embodiment of the community's culture and that it was brought in by significant players like teachers, principals and members of the governing body. This also illustrated how traditional and modern values found expression in the culture of the schools. School culture appeared to be powerful in conditioning teachers into compliance, through restraint. The study also revealed that school culture was influential in determining what terminology, knowledge, perceptions, beliefs and values would be foregrounded by the teacher during the lesson. Teachers at the two schools displaying the close relationship with the community had the freedom to practice their beliefs safely (because it was similar to their own) despite it being contrary to what WCED curriculum prescribed. Significantly, these two schools are from previously disadvantaged communities. It seems then that schools in previously disadvantaged communities have established a stronger relationship with their communities. This could be due to the fact that these

schools, during the liberation struggle, became sites of mobilisation, thereby establishing stronger ties with the community. However, the data revealed that the teacher, whose beliefs were in conflict with that of the school, was restrained because he felt that it would be safer to practice compliance, which silenced him. Significantly, this teacher lived outside of his school community. Similarly, data on Highgrove Junior illustrated how one teacher was strictly true to the professional work ethic of the school and strove to maintain objectivity in her lessons, thereby also suggesting compliance.

This limited study is in agreement with the general arguments of various theorists like Bourdieu, Hall, McLaren and Giroux who argue that school culture is shaped by society's expectations of school. These theorists argue that these expectations are realised through the school culture so that the knowledge, values, beliefs and practices cherished by the dominant culture could be perpetuated. Bourdieu says that schools are instrumental in producing particular types of thinking. He adds that this enables the integration of the values of the dominant sector in society. Giroux's (1981) argument reinforces that of Bourdieu when he explains that schooling facilitates the process of transmission of the value-system of dominant strata in society. Hall (1996) too, argues that those educational practices, especially traditional and conservative, perpetuate a social system thereby reproducing its class nature. McLaren (1989) argues that the main aim of education is to reproduce the ideologies of dominant societies. Teachers' voices may be silenced through various measures like compliance and unquestioning devotion thereby denying teachers the opportunity to develop a culture of resistance and in so doing perpetuating the status quo. (McLaren: 1989). These theorists' suggestions lean towards what Dalin explains happens on the rational level of schools through the implementation of objectives taking on values, goals, rules, regulations, customs, ceremonies and curriculum. In recounting a popular expression of teachers: "[this is] the way we do things around here," Prosser succinctly conveys how compliance works.

In the main, the findings in my study are similar to those found in a study conducted by Tungchen (2002) who investigated how school culture affected the pedagogical choices of teachers. The results of Tungchen's study indicated how freedom of

pedagogy was shaped through the culture of the school, both allowing and disallowing certain practices.

### **5.1.3 Teachers and reciprocity**

This section of the analysis examines the reciprocal relationship between teachers and school culture.

The data produced by the study showed that measures of reciprocity existed between teachers and their school culture and that they iteratively impacted upon each other. This was especially evident when the teachers' beliefs, values and practices resonated with those of the school. Contrarily, it was found that where the teacher held other beliefs, which were perhaps in conflict to those held by the school, the teacher was silenced (in this instance) and complied with the culture of the school. Upon closer inspection of the data, it was found that the values and beliefs of the school and some of the teachers' work in unison with each other, that they became intertwined. This made it difficult to decide who influenced whom. This was evident amongst teachers at all three schools.

These findings confirm what Sarason (1996) found in her investigation on school culture, and that is, that school culture is influential in affecting how teachers, among others, define their work, how problems are solved and how they negotiate their relationship with all players in the school community. Interestingly, Sarason elaborates that a teacher's belief system and values can change and adapt to the culture that is dominant in the school.

Overall, the analysis provides a lens through which to view the effect of school culture on teachers' mediation of HIV/AIDS lessons. The analysis seems to suggest that school culture is integral in shaping HIV/AIDS mediation.

## 5.2 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of school culture on teachers' mediation of HIV/AIDS by investigating:

- The culture of each participating school.
- How the school culture enables or restrains teachers in relation to HIV/AIDS lessons
- What values and perceptions of teachers influenced their HIV/AIDS lessons.

The findings suggest that school culture is both complex and dynamic and is constituted through the beliefs, values and practices of a school. It was also found to be essential in determining the kind of relationships that may exist and how these relationships are negotiated. Results illustrated how the practices, values and beliefs of the surrounding community of two of the schools found expression in the culture of the school. Findings suggest that school culture is, indeed, nuanced and that there is no way that all of the nuances could have been captured within a few pages.

The outcome of the study revealed that school culture influenced teachers and lessons. This influence was found to be either restraining or enabling since it influenced what teachers decided to teach and how they would go about teaching it.

Results of the findings showed that when the teachers' values, practices and beliefs were similar to those of their school, they could freely teach what they believed. Since most of these teachers (displaying similar beliefs) lived within their school community, they entrenched the communities' practices into the school culture. In this way traditional and modern values were able to be expressed through the teacher and the school culture, thereby influencing HIV/AIDS lessons. However, when the values of the school and the teacher were different, the teacher was restrained and complied with the culture of the school.

Interestingly, the study found that while other studies on HIV/AIDS have looked at the content of HIV/AIDS lessons, ways of improving pedagogical practices, learner – empowerment in designing interesting materials and ways of improving the

knowledge of teachers, none have investigated school culture and how it acts as a filter to how HIV/AIDS knowledge is reproduced and mediated.

It would seem then that the underlying cause for the poor results of the HIV/AIDS programmes of the WCED is the lack of focus on the context of schooling as a site for the mediation of HIV/AIDS knowledge and the role of the teacher in mediating the knowledge.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been foregrounded through the investigation:

- Programme and policy designers should take cognisance of, and be sensitive to the context of schooling as well as the culture of schools so that relevant material can be designed.
- Designers of HIV/AIDS programmes and policies should try to include community involvement so that values, beliefs and practices cherished by the school and its community, can be considered.
- Designers and developers of HIV/AIDS programmes and policies should pay special attention to the teacher as an individual with a life history of his/her own so that obstructions to objective teaching could be prevented.
- The training of in-service and pre-service teachers should focus on teaching strategies to overcome possible obstacles in relation to contradicting values, beliefs and practices so that the pertinent facts of the pandemic can be mediated.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX

### Interview Questions

Personal interview schedule for teachers and school managers:

1. Identify yourself by telling me your name and age.
2. Tell me about your parents, their religion, their culture and their attitudes, especially attitudes towards you, life and so on.
3. Who was the most influential person in your life?
4. Tell me about your family, if you're married, have children etc.
5. What cultural practices in terms of religion, customs, rituals do you observe?
6. Do you agree with all the cultural values observed in your community and religion?
7. How did you first hear about HIV/AIDS?
8. Where do you think it comes from?
9. How do think it is contracted?
10. Do you know anyone living with HIV/AIDS? Tell me your opinions regarding these people.
11. How do you think HIV/AIDS people should be treated?
12. How would you treat a family member with HIV/AIDS? Tell me about it.
13. What do you think your challenges are in preparing the youth for their future?

Professional interview schedule for school managers:

1. Identify yourself by telling me your name, age and where you are teaching.
2. What are your interests, ambitions and attitudes towards life and the school?
3. What was your schooling like? Tell me about teachers that made an impact on your career choice.
4. What was significant about your professional training and what impact did lecturers make on you?
5. Describe your job.
6. What do/don't you like about your job?
7. Tell me about your management style.

8. Who do you think is the most critical person in the school?
9. If there is conflict in the school, who do you think is the best person to solve it?
10. What are the core values of the stakeholders within a school situation?
11. What behavioural expectations do stakeholders have in the school? What would each stakeholder want to see of a Grade Seven learner when they leave this school?
12. What do the parents expect from a Grade Seven learner; in terms of behaviour?
13. What, in your opinion, is expected of the school?
14. How do you judge the success rate of the school's extra-mural activities?
15. What characteristics do you look for as a means of evaluating teachers in your school?
16. How is your school involved in its community?
17. Do you have a prefect system at school?
18. Does your school have any outreach programmes for poor communities at all?
19. How do you deal with needy learners and parents?
20. Who do you think in your school is best to deal with HIV/AIDS issues?
21. Imagine this; parents insist that boys be taught life-skills by males only. How would you respond to this?
22. Another imaginary scenario: In a predominantly Muslim school, the parents object to a Christian principal being appointed. How would you deal with such a situation?
23. Another scenario: A senior teacher approaches you, on behalf of her colleagues, to ask for a postponement in dates for official documents. How would you deal with the situation since you feel that she should set an example?
24. What would you do if pupils questioned the integrity of one of your teachers?

Professional interview schedule for teachers:

1. Start off by saying your name, age and your school.
2. Tell me about your schooling. Tell me about the teachers who made an impact on you.
3. When you were at school did you often think of what you might become one day?
4. Where did you receive your professional training?
5. Your professional training, what was significant about it and what impact did lecturers make on you?
6. Tell me about significant experiences at your college.
7. Which teachers and lecturers identities did you find attractive?
8. Where did you start teaching?
9. What grades do you teach currently?
10. Describe your job. What do you (dis)like about it?
11. What do you think your challenges are in talking to children about the future?
12. And in relation to HIV/AIDS?
13. What preparation did you do for the lesson?
14. Where did you get the information for the lesson?
15. Tell me about teaching sexuality and HIV/AIDS: about your approach to the lessons and the language usage also.
16. Why are you (un)comfortable teaching certain issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS?
17. What was your learning outcomes for this lesson and do you think you've achieved it
18. What do you think is going on in the community with regards to HIV/AIDS?

(Questions that follow in each interview then relates to each respondent's lesson).

Interview schedule for teachers serving on the school governing body:

1. Please tell me what shaped you as a person and as a teacher and what you think your responsibility is in relation to the school?
2. Where were you born?
3. Tell me about your childhood, significant people in your life, your parents, religion and interests.
4. What attitude of your parents do you think influenced you in a substantive way?
5. What are your interests and ambitions?
6. Tell me more about your family.
7. What's your role as governing body representative of the school?
8. What do you (dis)like about this role?
9. What do you think the community expects of the school?
10. When did you first hear about HIV/AIDS and how did you come to hear about it?
11. Where do you think it comes from?
12. How do you think people contract it?
13. What about people living with HIV/AIDS. Tell me your opinion regarding these people; how you think they should be treated.
14. How would you treat a family member who is HIV positive?
15. What do you think is going on in the community around HIV/AIDS?
16. Who do you think is best equipped to deal with HIV/AIDS issues at your school? What type of person do you think is best suited?
17. Imagine the following scenarios. Tell me how you would deal with it:
  - (a) Parents at a school insist that boys be taught life-skills by males only.
  - (b) At a predominantly Muslim school parents object to a Christian teacher being appointed.
  - (c) How you would balance your loyalty towards colleagues and parent community?

Interview schedule for the school secretary:

1. I'm interested to know how you add to the culture of the school. So I'm going to ask you questions about your childhood and significant people in your life. Please tell me about yourself. Start off by identifying yourself.
2. Tell me about your parents, your childhood, their attitude and how your parents helped shape you as a person.
3. What did you value about the community in which you grew up?
4. Who do you think was the most influential person in your life?
5. Describe your job.
6. What do you (dis)like about your job?
7. What's your usual protocol with visitors to the school?
8. How do you deal with troublesome parents?
9. What do you do when parents bring in the race issue?
10. How do you think your values add to the culture of the school?
11. Tell me how you feel about the school, generally.

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