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# CHAPTER 1

## ***INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY WITH REGARD TO THE PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTION, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH DESIGN***

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **Manna and Mercy : Personal motivation for my research**

One morning around 5:30 our home was struck by lightning. While everything went up in smoke and before any fire engine reached us, people arrived with words of support and prayers, hugs, rescue remedy, warm clothes, and coffee. It was such an unreal experience, having absolutely nothing except the feeling of being so cared for by close friends, family, neighbours and total strangers. The care we experienced appeared to have no boundaries. That night we had a place to sleep, sleepwear, toiletries and clothes for the next day. What surprised me was the total sense of the care being unconditional. Afterwards I began to wonder about the whole nature of caring. The people that cared did so in different ways. Some people offered accommodation. Some people brought dog food. Some people cared for our horses. Some people were available for telephone calls in the middle of the night when fear chased sleep away. Physically, emotionally, spiritually, people cared and seemed to do it in such an energising and passionate manner. It gave me a glimpse into what can happen when a community cares. My curiosity about the why and how of caring was sparked by this position that my family and I found ourselves in this scary morning of April 2004. The caring we experienced happened within a particular context at a particular time and was conditioned by particular assumptions around an unexpected disaster within a community.

With certain dominant discourses around what it means for learners to care in today's world are many assumptions. These assumptions are dependent on a



particular social context and understanding of the world that people find themselves in. This world is very different from that of my grandparents in which learners would have been called children or pupils and I cannot imagine that they would have been expected to go and find people to care for outside of their community. Today's context challenges me as a person of faith to find appropriate ways of caring within community and society – a society that is faced with rampant individualism, rights of entitlement and a city culture in which learners are often separated from the larger community.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND REGARDING THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMME AT SAGEWOOD SCHOOL IN MIDRAND**

### **1.2.1 Life Orientation learning area**

As a Life Orientation teacher and counsellor at Sagewood, a private school in Midrand (between Johannesburg and Pretoria in Gauteng South Africa), I have been involved in community outreach programmes. Sagewood is a school with students representative of the multi-racial community found in the area. They have the opportunity to share in each other's diversity of religion and culture. As it is a private school, most of the students come from privileged backgrounds.

I have been curious about the programme that we have at school since our fire at home. It has made me wonder about the different ways that people care within community. There appear to be certain discourses within schools about outreach programmes and as with any discourse it focuses on certain assumptions, procedures and aims and neglects others. Burr (2004:65) '*Each discourse claims to say what the object really is, that is, claims to be the truth*'. I am aware of the fact that any programme will look at certain ways and exclude others but in limiting the ways in which students are allowed to care, we might also limit their passion about caring. It appears to become an exclusive exercise and favours the children that care according to the outreach programme rules.

### **1.2.2 General procedures regarding the curriculum-based community outreach programme at Sagewood School**

During 2003 the school introduced the community outreach programme as part of the Life Orientation learning area. This was part of the schools initiative taken as a result of The Gauteng Department of Education's introduction of the Partnership for Sustainable Development (8<sup>th</sup> Annual Qualitative/Critical methods Conference Mafisa & Mothibe (2002:1-19). All the students in this school are expected to be involved in community outreach programmes at least 2 hours per term or 8 hours per year. The students each receive a booklet to fill in their hours, which is signed off by the organisation or people where the outreach is done (Annexure A: the booklet that the learners get to keep record of their outreach).

The feedback from past matriculants suggested that some tertiary education programmes gave preference to students that have had documentation regarding involvement in community outreach.

At the end of the year, the students write a report on their experience and plan where they would like to go in the following year. The student's personal development is of great importance. The school curriculum aims at developing the whole child, not only academically but a holistic development including personal growth. Life Orientation lessons and community outreach mainly focus on developing skills for life. It is the student's choice where and when he/she participates in outreach programmes. It must be an activity that they are comfortable with, and the idea is also not to create frustrations and financial implications for parents, i.e. by having to transport the students. Therefore the learners are encouraged to choose activities that are practical and within reach. In classes on Life Orientation learning, learners are given ideas about ongoing projects in the community. The verbal feedback during class discussions from learners with experience in community outreach activities provides inexperienced learners with various options.

### 1.3 LITERATURE STUDY ON COMMUNITY OUTREACH

#### 1.3.1 The roots of community service or outreach

The information written by authors from a Western perspective is helpful in giving some perspective on the history of community programmes. Wade (1997:23) for example mentions that community service-learning has a long history in the United States. He states that *'the roots of community service can be found in the early history of Native peoples as well as in the pioneers' ethic to help one's neighbour with harvesting crops or raising a barn. The notion of caring for others in the community and helping out when needed as a natural matter of course were not just the embodiment of an ideal, they were a prerequisite for survival. The idea of national service through government-sponsored programs can be traced back to 1910.'*

The nature of "Community" and the meaning of survival have changed and altered much over the years. . Our post-modern era, particularly in the urban context, does not require "community" as a matter of survival, which has thus faded away and left 'self' the focus. In earlier days people helped because they knew that they would need help themselves at a later stage. Today's challenge is that people often do not even know their neighbours, if one means the people living in a given community. Neighbours have been replaced by retirement policies or other methods to ensure independence rather than interdependence. This has particularly prevalent in urban societies. As mentioned before the aim is to develop the individual and success is measured in bank balances, cars and property. The aim is to be independent and self-reliant and not to rely on others. This brings with it many problems of isolation from community, a work ethic that can drive people to an early grave, and parents who are absent from their homes and children as they struggle with meeting their economic needs.

Wallis (2004:2) in a study on the new science of happiness mentions that the major source of happiness for 75% of people participating in the study was their contribution to the lives of others.

Poplau (2004:9) working in the USA suggests that although technology isolates people, especially young students, it should not be forgotten that human beings are social and relational creatures. Students need to become involved with their fellow man, and with this in mind, the mission statement and title of his book is simple 'The doer of Good Becomes Good'. He goes on to say that community service is not like the discovery of a formula, which is a static situation. Rather community service is more like the discovery of a direction that focuses on the need for human beings to be in relationship with one another.

Wade (1997:27) refers to some outcomes on research that was done regarding service-learning in the USA. These included potential outcomes of service-learning for students, schools and communities. The student outcomes are presented in three areas, social development, psychological development, and academic learning/intellectual development. I am of the opinion that this seems to show a relationship with the outcomes that we are working into the curriculum of Life Orientation at Sagewood School at present. Although outreach is definitely not done on the same scale in our school, it is clear that we are moving towards a sustainable programme.

Waterman (1997:13) mentions that the benefits derived from student's involvement can be grouped into four broad categories, namely enhancement in learning, promotion of personal development, fostering the development of civic responsibility and other values of citizenship and benefits accruing to the community. Waterman then focuses less on outcomes and categories and more on relationship and some of the factors within a post-modern context that grow or diminish relationship.

Waterman (1997:95) furthermore finds that the present-day emphasis on hi-tech living decrease student's opportunities to have relationships with people. His idea was that in doing community service, students bonded with the people they spent time with and they also felt appreciated which increased their self-worth. Letters written by some of the people who were part of the

program testified to how it changed their lives to be visited by these students. This indicates that there could be a connection between caring for others and self-identity. In this the self and the other are connected, as Wade (1997:31) suggests. This could challenge the idea of the individual as an autonomous fixed self. Wallis (2004:3) mentions that a happiness booster is performing acts of altruism or kindness. She uses examples like mowing a neighbour's lawn, visiting a nursing home.

Heshusius (1995:22) writing within education, suggests that *'to understand the self as a fixed entity can severely limit the access we have to others'*. Waterman (1997:95) then agrees by saying, *'the more we open ourselves to relationships with others, we open the access to others.'*

The results of a study referred to by Waterman (1997:96) suggested that *'most youth, although not a majority, see their service experiences as engaging them and helping them make a difference in the communities. Few (less than one in five) felt uninvolved or that their efforts made no difference.'* Although focusing on the difference caring makes, it would appear that effective outreach programmes also need to emphasise that caring is a two ways or participative process.

Apart from the voices of the authors that shed some light on the background of community outreach as discussed above, I will also examine in Chapter 2 how social construction, postmodernism and pastoral care play a part in the research story.

#### **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Although it is compulsory for all the learners from grade 8 to grade 11 at Sagewood School in Midrand to be involved in community outreach activities as part of the Life Orientation learning area curriculum, it is clear that not all are serious, passionate and motivated. In the light of the above literature and in line with my own concerns relating to a post-modern city context in South

Africa, it appears important to place greater focus on outreach programmes at school level.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION**

This problem statement has led me to ask the following question: - How could the experiences and feedback of learners and parents at Sagewood School contribute in the construction of a framework for community outreach programmes with serious, passionate and motivated participants.

## **1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

From the identified problem statement and the research question posed, it was clear that this matter needed to be investigated. Therefore, the experiences and opinions of learners and parents at Sagewood School were used to compile a framework for community outreach programmes as a compulsory component of the Life Orientation learning area at Sagewood School in Midrand.

The four aims for this study were as follows:

Firstly I aimed to explore the context of outreach programmes in a sample of other independent schools of Gauteng.

Secondly my aim was to work collaboratively with the parents in strengthening the structures for the programme

Thirdly my aim was to explore together with the learners ways of formulating an outreach programme in the school that would promote an ethic of reciprocal care. This was premised on the belief that caring with others has a significant impact on both the learners as well as the community

Fourthly I aimed at supporting the school in its endeavour to provide a relevant programme for the learners.

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design refers to the plan and structure of an investigation used to obtain evidence in order to answer research questions or in the case of quantitative research to evaluate indicative ness of the expected results posed in the hypotheses (White, 2002:42). The design describes the procedure for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. In other words, design indicates how the research is set up.

Based on Leedy's (1993:139) view that the nature of the data and the problem for research dictate the research approach, a qualitative research approach was selected for this study. This decision was based on the purpose of the study to seek to establish relationships (alignments) as a focus, on the understanding that promotion of relationship is important in such a school programme.

This research also attempted to measure effectiveness through meanings attached to this experience rather than pure quantitative fact.

A quantitative approach would also limit the potential for multiple outcomes. Having said this, as will become evident later, I did use certain amounts of quantitative data in this study, as I did not see either approach in opposition to each other. The study aims to view this reality objectively and to be concerned with conditions/relationships that exist, practices that prevail, attitudes and beliefs that are held and processes that are going on. Therefore, the approach will also be non-experimental.

### **1.7.1 Research Methodology**

Due to the non-experimental nature of the approach, a descriptive research method, using questionnaires as a medium, was used to account for what has already happened in order to describe, compare, classify, analyse and interpret the entities and the events.

### **1.7.2 Population**

The population groupings in this study were teachers from independent schools, parents and learners with experience in community outreach programmes and/or the Life Orientation learning area. By specifying this target group it affects the outcome and conclusions drawn from this work in that this research has excluded other factors, which are beyond the scope of this research (Tuckman 1978:227).

### **1.7.3 Sampling**

Vockell (1983:103) as well as Welman and Kruger (2001:47) suggest that sampling refers to strategies, which enable the researcher to pick a subgroup from a larger group and then use this subgroup as the basis from making judgements about the larger group.

In relation to subgroups, Tuckman (1978:228) indicates that by examining the variables of interest and taking into account practical considerations, the researcher is guided in choosing characteristics to be included in, and excluded from, the target population.

The study included other schools that responded to a questionnaire, Grade 8 to Grade 11 learners at Sagewood and their parents who also completed questionnaires or participated in class discussions.

### **1.7.4 Data collection techniques**

Structured questionnaires (Annexure C) for respondents from independent schools, parents and learners had been used as a data collection technique in this study. I had also conducted and recorded interviews.

Ethically it was important for me to get permission from the management team of the school before starting with this study. I used a letter (Annexure D) to



give them some background about the study and ask for their permission to complete the study at Sagewood School.

As the learners at Sagewood School who were included in this study were minors, I also had to get the permission from their parents to include their voices in this study. I used the letter (Annexure E) and at the same time also asked for the parent's feedback about what they thought about such a study.

### **1.7.5 Data analysis**

I have made use of descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are concerned with the description of data obtained from a group of individual units of analysis (Welman & Kruger, 2001:208). The data gathered from the questionnaires was condensed, summarised and simplified to represent the outcome of this study.

### **1.8 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

A big challenge, rather than a limitation of this study, was my attention to the nature of power and relationship. I attempted to position myself as a co-researcher with the participants rather than an expert who wanted to analyse the data. I was curious about the effects that this might have had on the students, parents and myself. Poplau (2004:9) in this regard, stated that '*Community service is not like the discovery of a formula*'. Possibly another challenge was to ensure that the reader does not see this study as a completed task but as a pointer in a direction. The information should not be used to set up a programme at schools but rather to look at the process used by including learners and reassessing the direction the school is going at the end of each year and ensuring that the learner's voices are heard.

## **1.9 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS**

The following is an outline of the chapters in the study:

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

CHAPTER 4: HEARING THE VOICES  
AND EXPERIENCING THE RESPONSES

CHAPTER 5: FINAL THOUGHTS, CONCLUSIONS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS

## **1.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

The focus of this chapter was to orientate the reader to the problem statement, objectives of the study, and the motivation for undertaking the study. The aim was also to introduce the reader to the participants and the setting in which the study took place. The chapter that follows will focus on the literature and the voices of authors that will inform us more about the origin of community outreach and the three pillars of knowledge that will be included as a foundation.

## CHAPTER 2

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 1, I focused on providing the reader with the background study of community outreach at Sagewood School, a private independent school in the Gauteng area. I also included the voices of authors that shed some light on the origin of community outreach and gave a brief outline of the problem that this study aims to address. In Chapter 2, I will focus on three pillars to support this study namely social construction, postmodernism and pastoral care. These three pillars become the epistemology based on certain post-modern assumptions and philosophies. I have attempted to weave voices of theologians into the text throughout the chapter on the understanding that theology does not stand apart from its context.

#### **2.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION**

In chapter one I referred to Heshusius (1995:22) who states *'to understand the self as a fixed entity can severely limit the access we have to others'*. Identity is therefore understood as something that is constructed together in relationship with others. In this I focus on the importance of addressing the problems of the individual autonomous 'self'. According to Poplau (2004:28) *'It is apparent that self-centeredness is the scourge of our age. It eats away at our very nature. Students are bombarded with media messages to take care of their needs with no reference to the needs of others.'*

John Lee (1993:15) a pastoral theologian looks at the fact that identity emerges from community. He describes it as 'Common-unity'. Burr (2003:5) a social construction theorist refers to social construction as our *'current accepted ways of understanding the world. It is a product not of objective*

*observations of the world, but of the social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other'.*

Patton (1993:27) a pastoral theologian describes care as the person-to-person response that grows out of participation in a caring community and which seeks to enable persons to give and receive care and to experience community.

Burr (2003:3) is of the opinion that *'Social constructionism cautions us to be ever suspicious of our assumptions about how the world appears to be. This means that the categories with which we as human beings comprehend the world do not necessary refer to real divisions'*. Looking at the community outreach programme through the glasses of social construction makes me suspicious of some of these assumptions and prescriptions of what caring must look like to be considered to be appropriate as part of the outreach programme. Local programmes almost inevitably involve cross-cultural activities and the caring for less fortunate people. I am curious about the 'caring for'.

After the experience of our house being destroyed in a fire, I think what I appreciated most was the fact that the caring did not feel like a one-way experience. It was respectful and we were cared 'with' rather than 'for'. It may have been because of it being an emergency, or that it was a freak disaster that people themselves could relate to (i.e. 'it could have been me'). It might also have been that the caring was not ongoing. For example it might have been different if an abusive parent or partner had beaten me up, because an ongoing commitment would have had different implications. Within a social constructionist understanding of the world it could have been any of these interpretations and any one interpretation needs to be held with caution and suspicion because of the multiple interpretations and meanings that influence action. What captured me however was that the generosity of care was not demanded, but seemed to come from an abundant source?

When a society starts being suspicious about the way the world appears to be, i.e. losing faith in “absolute truths” or even searching for them, Robert Doan (1998:381) suggests that the society is entering a post modern stage. In being suspicious I am not suggesting that a social construction position does away with things that are working for us (as we will see in some of the examples in the pilot study), but rather that it offers an opportunity to negotiate different constructions of what an outreach programme might look like. A programme must also suit the community that it is serving and the learners that are doing the caring.

While listening to the voices of teenagers, White's (1990:7) use of rituals, the ideas of which he has borrowed from ethnography, have been helpful, in my work. I am particularly referring to the ‘rite of passage’. White describes this in three phases, namely the separation phase, betwixt and between phase and thirdly the re-incorporation phase. In this study this rite of passage is of interest in that it involves the movement from childhood dependency towards the ability of a learner to assume a more adult role of responsibility. Many of these rites of passage used to be held within community practices, but now it appears, particularly in the city, that these rites of passage need to include other practices such as an outreach programme.

Using this model as a point of departure, it would appear that the learners at Sagewood are in a betwixt and between time of their lives. Social construction pays great attention to the context of our times within culturally specific situations and the ways in which meanings are attributed to such rites of passage. Youth may have moved on from the cultural aspects they had in common with their grandparents and might now be in the between phase, where confusion, discomfort and heightened expectations for the future is a reality. Our teenagers are in a unique situation as they have been born into a new ever-changing South Africa where different generations had different experiences of Apartheid. It might be that the re-incorporation phase will offer a sense of common-unity which appears to be one of the aims of the Gauteng Department of Education with the Partnership for sustainable living as

referred to in chapter 1. When we listen to the words of Doan (1998:381), it might mean in our case that we could learn from the past but the ultimate truth can never be stagnant.

### **Assumed truths**

Thinking about globalisation and the disillusionment with grand narratives has brought with it many challenges, not least being the thought that, with more traditional societies breaking down, we are faced with an 'anything goes' mentality. Dockery (1995:13) suggests that this can be "dislocating" because it tends to throw people out of the worldviews they have traditionally held. 'It is a new set of assumptions about what constitutes reality. He suggests that with no more assumed ultimate truths to guide us, we are experiencing a new disheartened generation. This is complicated further because it not only differs from pre-modern and postmodern viewpoints, but also because there are many different meanings within the movement itself. At times it can be seen as **negative challenge**, while at another time it is seen as a **positive opportunity**.

### **2.3 POSTMODERNISM**

The shift in understanding the world as a reflection of reality towards a more interpretive position is a part of the current shift in focus, from modern to post modern understanding of the world. Kotzé (2002:ix), for example, states the following regarding postmodernism. *'A postmodern world alerts us to the existence of fundamentalist "truths" present in socially constructed thinking and cultural practices in which we participate'*.

To talk about a shift in the way we understand the world and (in this research) a school outreach programme, brings with it many challenges. It then makes sense when we listen to the voice of Kotzé when we think of Post-modernity as a time in history that we are living in. That may help an outreach programme find practices that help students to find many different ways of caring. These ways of caring might become more appropriate to our context

with the understanding that cultures are never static but are moving and changing. As Doan (1998:381) mentions, '*to be relevant means a constant critique of our ways of acting and doing care in community.*'

There are other challenges that face a school such as ours living within a postmodern context. Instant gratification, self development, materialism, brand-names, challenging of authority, need for recognition, exposure to the global village all impact on the nature of pastoral care within a school community. Cell-phone communication, the need for visual stimulation, violent play station and TV games, and exposure to, or adoption, of dubious role models are part of learners daily lives.

In addressing some of these challenges that this postmodern world presents the students, it seems important that they can both critically reflect on their context and find ways of socially constructing practices that are life-giving. Anderson (1997:95) mentions that '*A facilitative position promotes a process that keeps all voices in motion and contributing.*' Assisting students to keep their voices in motion might contribute to constructing a programme that could assist students to care even with these postmodern challenges.

Poplau (2004:28) suggests that self-centeredness is the scourge of our age. He says that it eats away at our very nature. He refers to the media messages that bombard our students that they should take care of their needs with no reference to the needs of others. . Poplau refers to self-centeredness as something similar to selfishness. This makes me wonder about a balanced approach for an outreach programme. Activities should be reciprocal and enjoyable for both the parties involved; not giving focus to individual selfishness or selflessness, but rather reciprocity of care where selfish becomes decentred. Ackermann (1991:34) talks about the signs of the times and that we not only need to analyse but also interpret reality. Coming from a holistic approach it is important to see the bigger picture and not take things out of proportion.

As the community outreach programme is compulsory for the learners at Sagewood, I have to ask myself about the role that authority plays in the meaning of the word 'compulsory'. Authority has the ability to make learners resistant and feel they have less power than people in authority.

The school's management committee may be seen as a powerful and privileged group. I do ask myself if the learners would have participated in outreach if there were not a power position or top down structure.

## **2.4 POWER AND KNOWLEDGE**

As earlier mentioned my position in this research has been that of co-researcher, challenging a more traditional form of power that operates from an expert position of knowledge. This has been motivated by ideas promoted by Foucault on power and knowledge, who has challenged societies today to see modern power not as something that is owned by the person at the top and handed down. Rather a modern form of power is to be found within relationship and may well include forms of resistance. Foucault (1980:98) goes on to say that *'power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads, they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power.'* It appears that power is present in all relationships and even if learners might not feel power or authority from the top down, they might experience it with their peers. Being informed and influenced by this idea on power and its relationship with knowledge, this research is mindful to work with and alongside the participants. In so doing I hope to encourage learners to take greater ownership of the programme, thus reducing resistance to the programme and increasing resistance to some of the effects of the scourge of 'self-centredness'. In this way modern power can hopefully be found within this outreach programme through the internalising of life-giving truths.



Foucault suggested that there is a close allegiance between power and knowledge and those who create truth, not as a concrete 'given' but as a social construction that works with power. What we believe to be the truth is powerful enough for us to follow because it has power from within us, in other words, this truth becomes internalised within the individual. The fact that we are able to challenge this truth gives us the power to deconstruct it and we can then be free from one set of truths but automatically become part of another set of truths. Perhaps it is important to reflect once again on Burr (2003:3) and what is said about the fact that social construction cautions us to be ever suspicious of the way that the world appears to be, and examine what we think to be the truth. Challenging the truth of the way that outreach should be done on a yearly basis, might set us free from one year to the next. By deconstructing the truth every year, the outreach will move with the times and be representative of the group that is expected to do it. Perhaps what I am interested in is not so much 'the programme' but a respectful context that can become generative of ways of moving from childhood to adulthood where learners can understand something more about their connectedness with the world. In this way this study is not so engaged with 'truth' as a way of being in the world.

Heshusius (1995:117-219) looks at the student-teacher relationship and challenges teachers to look at the way they listen and talk to their students. I found myself experiencing great vulnerability when I moved towards this position as one who learns from the students, thus challenging the power position and its relationship with the student's resistance. The study moved towards becoming a collaborative effort in a power relationship that was not dominated by my expert knowledge. Therefore power is not a commodity but something that circulates among us within relationship. I did not want to abuse my power position as a teacher and neither did I want to abdicate my responsibility as a person of influence in a school that requires certain channels of authority and structure.

Rossouw (1993:902) looks at expertise and experience. The approach seems to relate to Outcomes-Based Education when it is stated that: *'the postmodern culture insists that those with expert knowledge are not the only ones to whom one should listen when decisions are made. Expertise must be enriched and informed by the experience of those on the receiving side of expert opinion.'*

Participating in the process of learning could assist with empowering learners. In assisting learners to take responsibility for their education and treating them with respect as a participant, the educator becomes more of a facilitator (Rossouw 1993:902). Expertise and experience are one of the aspects that Rossouw sheds some light on regarding a postmodern view. The expert's opinion is not the only factor to be taken into consideration when making decisions. This becomes a difficult challenge, given the historic power positions of teachers. Ackermann (1991:31) recognises this difficulty when she talks about the challenge of listening to the voice of a person that one sees as less educated or as having a lower status than one's own.

Lartey (2003:38) speaking from the African pastoral context, says *'Postmodernism espouses views born out of a realization that knowledge can only ever be partial, fragmented and incomplete and as such there is an anti-foundationalism that challenges and rejects the claims of universal organized bodies of knowledge that present themselves as mediating 'neutral' disinterested truth. In place of these, knowledge is seen as located and contextual. The social, economic, cultural and political location of persons significantly affects their apprehensions and interpretations of phenomena. The suppression of knowledge by powerful and privileged groups is a matter of investigation and interest to postmodernists.'*

So far in this chapter, I have focused on practical issues regarding outreach using the underpinning of social construction and the relation between power and knowledge. It is now time to look at the actual act of caring. I would like

to invite the voices of authors assisting us to understand the meaning of care, and what learners will be experiencing while caring.

## 2.5 PASTORAL CARE AND THEOLOGY

### 2.5.1 Pastoral care

The curriculum of Life Orientation introduces our students to more than just academic content. As part of personal and social development, students are encouraged to focus beyond their own needs. Studying the life stories of role models like Mother Theresa and Nkosi Johnson, students are made aware of the role of care and what a difference they can make to the lives of others. Patton (1993:19) summarizes the meaning of care as one's response to God expressed through care for self and others. He adds that care is not only based on our relation to God but also on the fundamental relationship between parent and child. By looking at theology and pastoral care, I am not assuming that the church is the only place to learn about caring but, in the light of my own experience it is where I would like to look for guidance in this study.

Louw (1998:21) explains that the phrase 'pastoral care' is not a strictly biblical concept but rather originated from ancient tradition. *'In the Greek world, 'soul care' was concerned with the development of those ideological elements and ideas which could influence people's attitudes and enable them to deal with life more effectively'.*

According to Lartey (2003:26), writing in an African pastoral care context, there is no care without action. *'Pastoral care consists of helping activities, participated in by people who recognise a transcendent dimension to human life, which, by the use of verbal or non-verbal, direct or indirect, literal or symbolic modes of communication, aim at preventing, relieving or facilitating persons coping with anxieties'.*

Lartey (2003:26) goes on to see pastoral care as one part of a holistic approach to the growth of human beings. *'Pastoral care seeks to foster people's growth as full human beings together with the development of ecologically and socio-politically holistic communities in which all persons may live humane lives.'*

Pattison (1993:18) describes how complex it is to try and capture the essence of pastoral care. He mentions that the width of this activity, its complexity and its close relation to other ministerial activities makes it difficult to summarise its meaning. He states: *'If pastoral care has no very firm outer boundaries, it should have some kind of coherent, rationally discernible centre which provides some theoretical and practical direction for its practitioners'*.

The Chambers concise dictionary (2004:188) gives the following as the description of care: *'Attention to thoroughness; Caution: gentleness: regard for safety; The activity of looking after someone or something, or the state of being looked after; Care about or for someone or something to concern oneself about them or be interested in them; to be fond of or love them'*.

Patton (1993:16) also refers to anxiety as part of pastoral care. He says *'to care is to be anxious, troubled, and even to grieve, but it also means to be concerned with, to regard, and even to love, in the sense of care for the other rather than for oneself.'*

Patton (1993:16) also refers to Martin Heidegger when he talks about the fact that care is what makes the human being human. *'If we do not care, we lose our humanity'*. He also brings in the fact that our first memories of being cared for are often found in our mother-child relationship. He linked this idea with Noddings who also makes us aware of the ever-present suffering of guilt that accompanies caring.

Pattison (1993:16) quotes Campbell when he says that *'Pastoral care is, in essence, surprisingly simple. It has one fundamental aim: to help people to know love, both as something to be received and as something to give.'*

Patton (1993:27) describes care as the person-to-person response that grows out of participation in a caring community and which seeks to enable persons to give and receive care and to experience community. It would be helpful to remember this when we examine the school as a community.

I mentioned in chapter 1, that many of the children at the school would not describe themselves as Christians and Pattison (1993:16) assists here with what he has to say about the fact that Christians have no monopoly on the use of the term 'pastoral care'. He referred to Michael Taylor who for example, distinguishes between pastoral care and Christian pastoral care. The former consists of acts undertaken by Christians. Many people apart from Taylor would want to affirm the enormous value of any kind of caring act, no matter who performs it. The pastoral care model that I am seeking in this work focuses on a reciprocal caring relationship between the learners and their communities in which love (God) is demonstrated in action.

### **2.5.2 Theology that is contextual**

Although I use theology and pastoral care as a guide for my study, the students that contributed to this study are not all from a Christian background. Vanier (2003:61) writes the following: *'when religion helps us to open our hearts in love and compassion to those who are not of our faith so as to help them to find the source of freedom within their own hearts and to grow in compassion and love of others, then this religion is a source of life.'*

Sagewood School is representative of many cultures and religions, and as such compassion and care should not be limited by religion and the outreach programme should not be exclusive only to some. In this way one is addressing a spirituality that is contextual in the current society, where spirituality has often replaced religion as a dominant discourse and Christianity plays along with other wisdoms and creeds within a community that seeks to be Christ like and care.

At Sagewood, as in the rest of South Africa, we cannot avoid the challenge of inequality. Many of the students come from wealthy backgrounds but the school also make bursaries available to students who would otherwise not be able to afford the school fees. South Africa has its own history of the poor and disadvantaged and of violence and discrimination that presents its own challenge as to how we pastorally care within communities. The school outreach programme promotes awareness of poverty and the need for liberation from economic chains of inequality. As South Africans, we are dealing with a situation saturated with the consequences of discrimination and apartheid (Ackermann 1991:67). All learners should have the opportunity to develop the skill of caring and therefore there is not discrimination between paying learners and learners with bursaries.

Living with a history of racism, poverty and discrimination I am challenged to find ways of doing pastoral care that promote healing within the communities we live in. This research is about some of the signs of our times and exploring pastoral care practices that promote healing within the community so that both those who care and those who are cared for can benefit.

#### **2.4.3 Postmodern theology and its relevance to this study**

The signs of our times present me with a particular context in a particular school and how pastoral care can be practiced within the multiplicity of both religion and privilege, in this way I am not seeking a timeless way of doing pastoral care.

Rossouw (1993:894) mentions that a theology that claims to be a timeless and closed system of theological knowledge, unaffected by cultural shift, runs the risk of becoming obsolete. Cultural changes bring an understanding of self and the world, as it is under construction in both the larger discourses of society and the discourse of what it means to do an outreach programme at a school. This fits with social construction as mentioned before in the way that we are constructed by our experiences and the meaning we attach to them.

This would support Rossouw's comment that theology has to be aware of constant changes and adapt with people and time. Likewise we might have to revise our outreach programme regularly to ensure that it does not become obsolete.

Dockery (1995:14) mentions that postmodernism presents Christians with new challenges as well as rich opportunities for evangelic witness. Rossouw (1993:895) says that '*post-modern culture, far from abolishing modern culture is more a position of questioning it*'. This is in alignment with my position of critique. Although freedom and uniqueness are present in this post-modern way of thinking, which give birth to opportunities for creativity, they may also lead to confusion. Concerning an outreach programme, I am challenged by these thoughts to find out what is helpful from past knowledge. We would like to add from personal experience, knowing the challenge that plurality, media, and hyper-individualism presents to communities today. In some ways the learners I work with could be disadvantaged by the very discourses that privilege them and I wonder what an outreach programme might offer them in terms of finding richness through other means.

## **2.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

The aim of Chapter 2 was to give the reader a background regarding the literature that I included in this study. It furthermore attempted to give a comprehensive understanding of the concept of community outreach. Specific attention was given to the three pillars namely social construction, postmodernism and theology.

Based on this theoretical foundation, Chapter 3 will be building on the research methodology used for collecting the information from the population who gave voice to this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 2 attention was directed towards the theology and epistemology of community outreach and how it has been introduced into Sagewood School. Different authors were able to give us a better understanding of the three pillars namely, postmodernism, social construction and theology. In Chapter 3, I will be dealing with the research methodology that enabled me to hear the voices of those respondents who were included in this study.

This chapter explains more about the methods of research, the participants and the ways in which I went about collecting and using the data, through questionnaires, feedback from parents, information gathered from other schools, as well as class conversations with the learners.

As the opinions and suggestions of the learners were very important for the study I chose to do the research according to the qualitative research methodology.

#### **3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The following definition of White (2005:81) regarding qualitative research suits my position within this study. He states that *'qualitative research is more concerned with understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of the participants. This happens through the researcher's participation in the daily life activities of those involved in the research or through historical empathy with participants in past social events.'*



To construct a programme that would achieve the aim of getting as many learners as possible to participate, it would be important to have the perspectives of the participants before constructing such a programme. Foucault's (1980:98) work on power and knowledge is relevant here in that I sought to research with the learners in order to reduce their resistance to the programmes. This process therefore became collaborative and relational in order to attempt to increase its effectiveness. In order to accomplish this I spent time with the learners in order to understand what their experiences were, in order to find sustainable solutions.

By spending time together and having conversations about community outreach experiences, we were able to share opinions and suggestions with each other and also reflect on past experiences by reading reports that they had written.

White (2005:81) states that for the qualitative researcher, the only reality is the one constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation. Multiple realities exist in any given situation, i.e. that of the researcher, those individuals being investigated and the reader or audience interpreting the study. The reality I am constructing and writing about emerges from education in relationship with other programmes that are running in South Africa. Because this programme and therefore this research cannot be seen in isolation from other programmes presented in other schools by different teachers, I included the opinions of these teachers using more quantitative data.

Although surveys do not normally form part of qualitative research, it was helpful for me to obtain information from other similar schools. The study therefore benefited from local information in a South African context.

### **3.3. POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

#### **3.3.1 Population**

Teachers, parents of learners and the learners themselves who have participated in outreach programmes at local schools form the population of this survey

#### **3.3.2 Sampling**

The voices that have been included in this study, as the sample, are those of the independent schools in community outreach programmes in Gauteng that participated via questionnaires. Furthermore the voices of the parents of the learners in grade 8 to grade 11 at Sagewood School were also heard via questionnaires. Lastly the voices of learners from two grade 8 classes, two grade 9 and two grade 10 Life Orientation classes at Sagewood School were heard via class discussions and the completion of anonymous questionnaires. It is this group of learners that the majority of this qualitative research is about, using the other sampling as a background to the information.

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTING TECHNIQUES**

#### **3.4.1 Independent schools in Gauteng a pilot study**

As Sagewood is an independent school, my aim was to involve other schools in similar situations in order to gain enough information to help this research process. I needed to know more about community outreach programmes that other schools are running, whether they were also compulsory, when their programmes started, who the participants were and what kind of activities they were involved in. I used a questionnaire that was very basic and direct to address my need (see attached Addendum). The questionnaires were sent to the schools via e-mail or fax and consist of the following questions:

Name of your school

Contact person regarding outreach programme

Do your learners participate in outreach programmes?

If your answer is no, have you considered it or is it something that you would not get involved in?

If your answer is yes, what initiated the drive for such a programme?

How many years have you been doing outreach at your school?

Is it a voluntary or compulsory programme?

Does the school identify the need or do the learners choose where they would like to do their outreach?

Do the learners do outreach during school hours?

Do the learners keep a record of the hours that they spend in outreach?

What do you find to be the advantages of such a programme?

What do you find to be problematic in the running of the program?

Would you please be so kind as to make comments on any other issues that you would consider being important regarding this topic?

### **3.4.2 Parents**

As mentioned before, I made a pragmatic decision to include the parents making use of the consent form I sent the parents asking for permission to carry out this study. I did this on the understanding that the learners live within families and communities, from which they form meaning and relationship. Parents as primary care givers in this regard are influential in the decisions their children make. I had to ask the parents for permission for their children to be part of this study

The parents had the option of not allowing their children to participate and they also had the choice to give feedback or not. In receiving their feedback I was able to pick up the positive aspects that they saw in the programme but also any frustrations or concerns regarding possible or previous participation.

It did so happen that one of the parents did not want his/her child to be part of the research. I sat down with the learner and we discussed the different solutions. We agreed that it would be beneficial for her to be part of the lesson and could give her opinion but that I would not use it in my study. I did not want her to feel uncomfortable in front of her peers by not participating at all.

### **3.4.3 Learners**

The focus in this study, as discussed earlier, was on collaborating with the learners and this was carried out within a social construction paradigm. The voluntary participation of participants was respected in all of the different research methods.

The learners had the option of anonymity during surveys and also whether to get involved in the class conversations or remain quiet.

Students come into class with different meanings of the concept of 'community outreach'. As these meanings were socially constructed, the students and I unpacked these meanings to enable us to work within a similar framework. By unpacking I am referring to what is termed deconstructive questioning. These questions are designed to explore the meanings attached to words and the social discourses that lurk behind them. Morgan (2000:49) suggests that deconstruction can lead to the challenging of 'taken-for-granted' ideas and open alternative stories. In this instance it helped to explore the many meanings attached to outreach and some of the less dominant meanings may provide for what Morgan (2000:49) describes as 'unique outcomes'. These are ideas that might previously have been lost where a single idea dominates.

Derrida (Weedon 1987:15, 16) focuses my attention on the meaning of words by saying '*What it means at any particular moment depends on the discursive relations within whom it is located, and it is open to constant rereading and reinterpretation*'.

It was interesting during the class conversations to listen to the 'taken-for-granted' ideas that students have of community outreach. It was also important for me to hear how they defined community outreach and how care could become part of their life. We needed to journey together to discover if the post-modern picture of community outreach could still hold hands with the picture that originated in America.

During two lessons of forty-five minutes each with two grade eight, two grade nine and two grade ten classes I introduced a topic of conversation by asking a directive question. The questions differed from one group to the next. In two of the lessons I asked one of the learners to record the lesson with a video camera. In all the lessons I asked for volunteers to make notes on aspects discussed. I also requested one learner to depict a record of discussions on a transparency to keep on track and to make sure that we captured all the information.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

The purpose of data analysis is to make sense of the accumulated information after data has been collected in the field. Research data, whether qualitative or quantitative, must be analyzed in order to answer research questions or test hypotheses. After analysis, the results are presented as findings, organized according to research questions and hypothesis and presented clearly so that they can be easily understood by others.

Qualitative data analysis is primarily an indicative process of organizing the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) within the categories. Qualitative analysis is a systematic process of selecting, categorizing, comparing, and interpreting to provide explanation of a single item of interest (White, 2003:110). The way in which I analysed the data collected from the learners was to work with them at distilling our main ideas and concerns, as well as experiences, beliefs and anxieties around the programme. These were recorded as a collective activity. I furthermore

privileged my own interpretation using my theoretical framework as a guide to connect ideas and thoughts that were generated in the classrooms with the broader implications for formulating ideas for a relevant and sustainable outreach programme for the school.

### **3.6 ETHICAL MEASURES**

Ethical measures are principles, which the researcher should bind himself to (Schulze, 2002:17). In my study, I adhered to the following research ethics:

#### **3.6.1 Permission to conduct the research.**

I wrote a letter to the management team of the school informing them about the aim of the study and asking for permission to do the research at the school. I also asked the parent's permission to include the opinions and feedback of their children in my study.

#### **3.6.2 Informed consent**

Participants should be given adequate information pertaining to the study before data collection (Schulze, 2002:17). In my study, I gave all the learners ample information about the aims of the research, the procedures that would be followed, possible advantages and disadvantages for them, and how the results would be used. This was done to enable them to decide whether to participate or not.

#### **3.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity**

A researcher has to be responsible at all times, vigilant, mindful and sensitive to human dignity (Gay, 1996:85). This is supported by McMillan and Schumacher (1997:195) who stress that information on participants should be regarded as confidential unless otherwise agreed on through informed consent. In my study, participant's confidentiality was ensured as they

contributed anonymously. I am the only person who has access to the names and data.

#### **3.6.4 Dissemination of the research findings**

As a mark of my appreciation of their input, participants will be informed of the findings of the study. Unnecessary details will not be supplied and confidentiality will not be violated. I will also be sharing my findings with other independent schools.

### **3.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

A literature study was the first step in the research. Thereafter a survey of other independent schools in the Gauteng area and their approaches towards community outreach was conducted. Questionnaires were addressed to teachers who oversee outreach projects. The next step was asking parent's permission for their children to participate in the study and to ask their opinions on community outreach programmes. The letter had a reply slip, which gave the parents the opportunity to let their voice be heard. Finally, information from the learners was gathered through class discussions and asking questions. The learners had the opportunity to voice their opinion in an anonymous questionnaire. A video, learner's notes and transparencies were used to document information.

In Chapter 4 I will provide the reader with the information gathered by means of the steps taken in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 4

### ***HEARING THE VOICES AND EXPERIENCING THE RESPONSES***

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 3 the aim was to explain the different ways, which I used to hear the voices of all the different respondents partaking in this study. I also described qualitative research as typical of this study and research design.

Chapter 4 focuses on the responses of individuals and groups who formed part of the study. Due to the limited scope of this research the voices were made clearer by means of the completion of simple questionnaires that helped to clarify some of the beliefs within the larger community. I did not seek to do a discourse or quantitative analysis on these voices, but allowed them to help me to understand some of the larger concerns in the community. The heart of the study however has been my engagement with the learners at the school, which has been recorded on video and in the learner's own records of the class discussions.

#### **4.2 RESPONSES FROM TEACHERS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN GAUTENG**

As discussed in the previous chapters, the larger discourses in society have a great influence on the ways in which we understand our world. Although limited, answers to the questionnaires help to point to larger community beliefs. These discourses both constrain as well as give opportunity for understanding this research. I requested participants from other independent schools similar to Sagewood to complete these questionnaires.

The study included 40 ISASA schools in the Gauteng area. Questionnaires were sent to all these schools. 12 responded to the survey. The following is a summary of the information gathered.



<u>School name</u>	<u>Outreach yes/no</u>	<u>Compulsory Yes/no</u>	<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Problems with programme</u>
School 1	Yes	Yes	Social integration and awareness	Getting more pupils involved
School 2	Yes	Yes and no	Awareness and skills	Not enough time, storage space and transport
School 3	yes	yes	Awareness of needs of others and benefits of reaching out	Time allocation, students can't always see immediate benefit. Lack of enthusiasm and commitment
School 4	yes	Used to be but it does not work	Humbling experience and awareness	Transport and funding and ungrateful community.
School 5	yes	Grade 10 learners Debs ball collecting money	Awareness of less fortunate	
School 6	yes	Grade 9 and 10	Awareness	Girls too involved in their own well being and status. Rather give money.
School 7	yes			
School 8	yes	Grade 10	Open pathways and cross/cultural contact.	Little appreciation. Transport Supervision Abuse of girls
	yes	Yes and no	Expectations of	Difficult to get

School 9			tertiary institutions. Opportunity to do for others	commitment if students are self-centred.
School 10	yes	All senior girls	Embrace diversity and assist those in need	
School 11	yes	voluntary	flexibility	Lack of time
School 12	yes	Compulsory grade 8 - 11	Social skills, awareness , respect Requirement for universities.	Student's priorities. Lack of commitment.

Evident from the above-mentioned responses was that although all the schools are involved in community outreach programmes and see the programmes as developing awareness and connection to other communities, the majority have difficulty in motivating learners to participate voluntarily in their programmes. Learners appear to find it unnecessary or not of sufficient importance to give of their own time. It appears to be easier for students to give money for, than spend time with community outreach programmes. It also appears that a discourse within wealthier suburbs creates a youth culture that finds it difficult to move outside their own age groups. I found very interesting the belief at schools that learners from privileged backgrounds would benefit from caring for others as a one-way process of caring 'for' rather than a reciprocal process of mutual benefit. Although beyond the scope of this research it would be interesting to engage more with parents to examine their social development skills and how they influence the different ways learners have been socially constructed.

Discourses pertaining to upbringing and the ways learners negotiate their environment are important, but another aspect of interest in this research has been to collaborate with learners on this topic in a dynamic process of co-ownership. I am mindful of this as I work with students teaching life-skills in a

way that does not generate resistance from them. This is relevant as in any dominant discourse power relationships disappear into the assumptions that are held by society. In this instance learners resist being told to care. However, the more power can work with the learners, the more likely they are to take ownership and responsibility for caring. In this way one of my own aims has been to work with learners so that they can move to a place where together we are in resistance to indifference or lack of care. For this to become sustainable within a school environment the questions I ask become significant and strategic in the pursuit of this goal.

An examination of school websites suggests that their involvement in outreach programmes is something that they would like to advertise and considerable time is spent on updating the sites with photos and articles. Most schools appear to really go out of their way to provide and care and want the public to be aware of this. This suggests that they have started painting the picture of what community outreach must look like. Post apartheid-South Africa is one in which communities remain deeply divided between the “carers” and the “cared for”. This has influenced care within communities and the ways in which an outreach programmes have been constructed.

#### **4.3 RESPONSES FROM PARENTS**

53 parents responded to my invitation to participate in this study. Their responses showed the following:

Almost 50% had no comment but gave permission for the learners to participate. The rest wrote one or more comments regarding the advantages of their children's participation, while others mentioned some concerns.

The following table is a summary of the responses received.

No comment	Will learn to care and gain other skills	Expose to social issues and reality	Great idea	Exposure to diversity	Caution regarding placement
24	11	12	12	3	6

Respondents were mainly supportive of an outreach programme and could see their children would benefit by participating. Some parents liked the idea that their children would be exposed to social issues and might appreciate their own situations more in seeing how other people live. The idea of exposure to diversity also excited some parents and life skills that they might gain also enjoyed support.

Three of the parents mentioned their concern about how the programme would be monitored and that they would prefer teacher presence when children are taken into areas where they felt their children might not be safe. This speaks of a fear of others, particularly in a discourse of violence and historical segregation such the one in which South Africa has been constructed. There is also an indication that parents consider the school to be responsible for developing the learner's social conscience. This could indicate a real pastoral need in society to attend to a fragmentation of responsibility. If we look at the responses of the others schools and their frustrations in getting learners involved, some of the resistance could be ascribed to the loss of a sense of being holistic within a community. This is very much a sign of our time to pastorally attend to such issues because our survival as human beings on this planet needs to challenge the fragmented individualism, self-centeredness and consumerism that this could imply (Poplau 2004:28). Ackermann (1991:34) talks about the signs of the times and that we not only need to analyse but also interpret reality. Qualitative research in this way allows me to access some of the meanings attached to what is said, as well as what is not said in the words that are spoken, thus pointing towards some of the discursive challenges within society. It also

allows greater freedom in interpreting the questionnaires seen through the discourses created within a particular social context. In other words I am not looking for facts and figures that mean something in isolation from the meanings attached to the discourses that live us in society.

While looking for change within a fragmented urban society it is pertinent to connect outreach programmes with a focus on re-connecting learners to the art of care in a more holistic way. Wallis (2004:2) suggests in a study on the new science of happiness, that a major source of happiness for 75% of participants was their contribution to the lives of others. One challenge emerging from this research is to expose some of the problems associated with a dominant belief that promotes the individual, often at the expense of others.

#### **4.4 THE VOICES OF LEARNERS**

The voices of the learners were listened to in class discussions, reports and questionnaires. I explained to the learners that I would like to have a conversation with them regarding community outreach. I referred to the letter I wrote to parents at the beginning of the year asking for permission for their children to be included in such conversations. During the class discussions different classes focussed on different questions. Each class focused on a question, which was crafted within the theory of social construction as well as being informed by ideas promoted in earlier discourses of power and knowledge. These questions were asked with the deliberate intention of promoting ways of knowing and inhabiting the programme that addresses some of the issues around care, and in particular care that moves beyond the individual. Learners from the different classes volunteered to be scribes to make notes during the discussions, which allowed for their own selection of data that they considered important. This was one way to promote a power relationship in which the learners themselves would take ownership of the process. One of the learners also kept notes on an overhead projector to keep track of the discussion. I found it helpful to include the learners in the process and they would then also write notes in their own words and as mentioned in

Chapter 1 I attempted to position myself as a co-researcher with the participants rather than an expert who wanted to analyse the data. I began by asking them practical questions that they completed anonymously before we started with the conversation.

#### **4.4.1 Questions and themes from conversations with grade 8 learners**

If you were approached as the image consultants for Sagewood's community outreach programme, what would your responses look like?

I am working on the assumption that within the current social context it is the grade eight learners who are mostly negotiating a rite of passage in their identity (White 1990:7). As Poplau (2004:28) says: 'Students are bombarded with media messages to take care of their needs with no reference to the needs of others'. I focused on image as an entry point in the question. According to Poplau (2004:28): "It is apparent that self-centeredness is the scourge of our age. It eats away at our very nature". This group of learners also had very little or no prior experience of community outreach before and this was their first exposure to the programme. It was important to me not to enforce my ideas and in asking them this question it enabled me to hear what their ideas were, thus co-constructing a power relationship that was not inviting resistance. It also enabled learners that came late during the year to contribute to the conversation without feeling excluded.

#### Themes that emerged from the class

The school, guided by some of the programmes of other schools and looking at the busy programmes of learners in the afternoon had to come up with a realistic guidance to the amount of hours per term. The first suggestions were two hours per term but with time we realised that the last term is a very short term and it is not realistic to expect learners to do outreach during the last term. The last term is also the final exams and learners are not focussed and

find it difficult to do constructive reflections on the years experience and in the case of negative experiences; it is more difficult to have conversations regarding these experiences. Obviously those learners that have established meaningful relationships will have more time and some learners might have less.

I started the discussions by asking the question and the learners directed the discussion by looking at the suggested hours per term. The group felt that it was just the right amount of hours. The hours seemed to be important to them as part of a structure but those that had done outreach before felt that after having started, the hours was not as important anymore. It seemed that the learners found it helpful to have the structure of the hours in the beginning but then found their own commitment that did not need the structure. This may have something to do with negotiating new territory in social skills where learners are moving into caring in ways that they are not familiar with.

Some learners mentioned that they would like more guidance and suggestions from the school and would actually prefer that the school organise the programme, and just put them on a bus to take them to a venue as a group. The guidance the learners needed suggested a difficulty in knowing where and how to make a difference and might highlight what we have seen previously about not finding care something that comes naturally anymore.

Some learners also asked that the school should give more guidance to their parents on what they should be doing and how the parents could support them.

#### Significance of not negotiating outreach alone

There was a significant idea promoted by one learner who suggested an “outreach buddy”. This connects to a belief within a social construction paradigm that human beings find ways of ‘knowing’ through acting together,

rather than in isolation. Acting together within the context of the school indicates that harnessing peer support could be a significant factor in a sustainable outreach programme. This learner was talking about the difficulty of moving into something unfamiliar and perhaps the anxiety invoked in doing this. It was clear that the learners felt security in numbers and felt a little vulnerable attempting something on their own. The learners who had completed their outreach already mentioned that they did not want to do a group thing but would enjoy the experience more if done with a partner.

Another idea that the class came up with that indicates the significance of group belonging was that learners should receive a badge or something to show that they are involved. This could become a significant step towards developing a self/other relationship, in which a group identity around care can be created within the school. In this it appears important to spend time developing group identity in order to move towards caring within another separate context in which the learner might embrace a less rigid position. Both these ideas could network with White's idea of 'rites of passage'.

### Importance of recognition

A further suggestion was that the learners must have the opportunity to promote their ideas and others could be encouraged to get involved by discussing positive experiences during assembly in the hall. This might be helpful in some of the other schools that are encountering problems in getting learners involved in outreach. Through utilising the learners own knowledge rather than the 'school's knowledge' allows the learners to be co-constructors of the programme through their own local knowledge an experience.

In addition one learner felt that community outreach should not be done for marks while others felt marks were important and part of getting recognition. Some learners who had completed their hours mentioned some fun experiences and felt that that would do wonders for the image of the programme if the fun experiences could be shared.



#### **4.4.2 Question and themes from conversations with grade 9 learners**

What would be the experiences that you would share with your grandchildren one day regarding the meaning of community outreach or what would you tell a reporter of the local newspaper in an interview regarding outreach?

##### Looking into the future

During the grade 9 learners are encouraged to start thinking about the subjects they will choose to take in grade 10. This forces them to start thinking about their future and what they may become after their final school exams. This becomes a significant step in finding meaning within their larger context. The question that I asked was in line with the grade's curriculum. During grade 9 they must explore options to enable selection of appropriate subjects. Grades 10 to 12 then specialize to enable them to go to a tertiary education system. It also encourages them not to just get caught up in their own individual success but to reflect on what might be significant for them when they are older.

The learners started off by focussing on the fact that some of them were getting work experience and having the opportunity to see if they would want to work with animals or humans one day. They went on to mention that they also gained knowledge about the organisations that they visited. In talking so confidently about the positive experiences these learners had, I was also aware of those who kept quiet. What becomes acceptable to talk about is often driven by the dominant conversation.

One learner mentioned that he found the exposure in interaction with different people very helpful and it showed him that he was more confident than he had thought. Although the focus here is community outreach, this discussion indicates how important relationship is to self- image and how individualism as well as consumerism has an ability to steal this from us.

### Different experiences

The discussion then went into the advantages of going to different places during the year and that they would then gain exposure to a variety of situations and people.

The one learner mentioned that she gained so much appreciation for her own circumstances and the relationship she has with her parents.

The learners spoke about some fun experiences that they would like to share with their grandchildren regarding cleaning dirty dog cages and being chased by a dog.

One mentioned that he would like to tell his grandchildren that it is not easy to be dependant on the help of others. He hoped he might help his grandchildren to respect a person's dignity while caring for them. At this point there was a definite change in the conversation as learners constructed and verbalised ideas that were life giving to them and as they constructed alternate meanings that moved away from dominant narratives. The alternate meanings seemed to be led by the positive experiences of those learners that had something to share. The conversation moved away from focussing on the enrichment of their lives to the enrichment of others.

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### Unspoken words

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, I was curious about the learners that did not feel like sharing their stories. Could it be that they did not have positive experiences and that because conversation had to sound a specific way, they felt left out? It may also be that some of the learners did not do outreach because they just did not want to. I wonder what would have happened if their voices became the dominant ones? It will be important to ask questions around this in future to ensure all the learners participate in the construction of the programme. For the programme to work it is equally important to include the voices of all learners, whether positive about participation or not.

#### **4.4.3 Question and themes from conversations with grade 10 learners**

Is there any difference in the way you see outreach now after three years to what it was when you started of in grade 8?

##### Expertise and knowledge

This question was asked to this group who had had three years experience of community outreach. They were able to look at what it was like three years ago and compare it to their present experiences. This was a deliberate way of asking questions that connects to time Rossouw G.J. (1993:902) Expertise and experience is one of the aspects that Rossouw sheds some light on in taking a postmodern view. An expert opinion is not the only factor to be considered when making decisions. This might sound simple and easy but Denise Ackerman (1991:31) talks about the challenge of listening to the voice of a person perceived as less educated or having a lower status than one's own.

I must constantly remind myself that I can't have conversations with teenagers and see myself as the expert when I am 40 and they are 14. What we know changes over time and this was one of the reasons for this question. It also addressed their own expertise and knowledge, thus exploring different power relationships that could harness their own group knowledge and find space for it.

One learner mentioned that outreach had been an awful experience and felt that other people had not appreciated his efforts. One of his peers suggested that this may have been because of the area of care chosen and personal expectations. He added that he could imagine that some people being cared for might be angry or frustrated with the situation that they found themselves in. He mentioned a learner who may choose to feed homeless people but arrives in a Mercedes Benz. Such a learner should expect that these people

might feel uncomfortable and inferior. This extreme reaction from the learner could be understood as a greater awareness of the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. However, it appears to me that this learners' very reaction also indicates an inability to really hear what the other learner was trying to say. It makes me think again how easy it is to talk when in a self righteous position and how difficult it is to find ways of moving towards a self/other relationship. Connecting and hearing the 'other' in a relational way in this instance is not only about how we do outreach but the real effects also on others in the class. It is as if one learner assumes a more 'aware' position leaving the other out in the cold, judged and alone.

When learners already feel vulnerable and anxious trying something new, judgement might play into this dominant fear of others. Learners should have the openness to disagree and it seems important to include ways of talking that do not polarise or judge within a life-skills programme. This appears a significant part of listening to others and the fragility of identity when not accompanied in safe spaces with others.

This conversation seemed to stimulate more experiences of exclusion and non-appreciation. Three learners described how they went to the same place and had a similar experience of feeling that their efforts were not appreciated. They felt that the specific organisation had asked for help but then treated them disrespectfully. This could mean that organisations also find it difficult to move toward the 'other'. One of the learners who decided not to do any outreach at all this year had had a similar experience last year. Learners realised that if they shared a previous experiences it might prevent the recurrence of a negative experience in the future, or at least find a way of acknowledging this difficult move from the familiar to the unfamiliar in order to be able to take the 'risks' required. It made me aware as a life-skills teacher that it is important to work with the learners in a de-briefing and discussion of their experiences in order to adequately plot a path into this unknown territory. This becomes a significant way of co-constructing such difficult and often frightening territory.

## Freedom in how learners choose to care

The discussion led to one learner to share that his previous experiences enabled him to realise that he would rather work with animals than with people and that he now enjoys his outreach much more. We were able to speak about the freedom of being honest and learning from each other's experiences. This opened up the possibility of care being more than the idea of caring for people. I then used the opportunity to share my personal experience by discussing the different ways that people cared for us when our house burnt down. It was as if between us we were constructing a way of knowing and caring using our own prior experience rather than an illustration from a book. What is important here is uniqueness but also something that is significant for their own wellbeing through connecting in relationship with people or creation in some way, utilising the learners own knowledge and experiences of being cared for? Their journey in this way becomes circular process of mutual care in which they also benefit from its outcomes.

The conversation then moved to the value of choosing outreach activity that excites passion. Some of the boys mentioned that they decided to coach soccer because it was something that they enjoyed and wanted to share the pleasure with others. It appears that their passion and energy grew by being connected and sharing with others something that was both familiar territory to them as well as enjoyable.

We also discussed the reasons why people decide to participate in community outreach. One learner mentioned that sometimes we just do it to make ourselves feel better because of feeling guilty for having more than others. The important thing here is to move beyond this 'feeling better' to being connected with others so that creation might be experienced in a healing way.

Another learner also mentioned that he thinks that we cannot teach somebody to care because such a skill is inherent. But he agreed that if we give people the opportunity to care, they might gain experience and will probably do it

more often. We tend to think that the ability to care is inherent. Maybe we might look at it as an ability that needs to be flamed back into greater existence?

### Challenging individualism

Some students appeared to extend themselves far beyond the minimum of 8 hours a year and this, as mentioned before, seems significant. It seems that younger students from grade 8 and 9 are more passionate about the programme than grade 10, 11 and 12. - Community outreach in this instance may play an important role on holding onto some of these more collective ideas at a time of transition into adulthood. In line with Poplau (2004:9) who suggests that although technology isolates people, especially young students, it should not be forgotten that humans are social and relational creatures. It could also impact their own future wellbeing in challenging the isolated individual as well as issues of loneliness.

The learners with more than the average amount of hours appeared to be committed because of the activity they had chosen. Some did hours at animal rescue shelters and spent most of their weekends and holidays caring and bonding with animals. In other words it became a part of their life-world rather than a school chore to be done. I became aware of the fact that learners who worked with people seemed to do fewer hours but gave reports of life changing experiences. These included the feeding of homeless people, spending time in townships, packing and distributing food parcels to HIV Aids patients. It appeared from the feedback that working with animals might be more time consuming and more physically challenging, whereas working with people might be more emotionally challenging.

### What must such a programme look like to get everybody involved?

It became clear that some students hate the idea of doing community outreach. According to more dominant discourses this could then imply that

these students are not caring. However I am of the opinion that it is not fair to assume this and rather believe that the activity itself limits the ways that students can contribute. From my experience of teenagers and witnessing the amount of care they give to one another (i.e. on cell phones calls etc) they are very able to care. From the feedback it seems more likely for them to get involved if they find a passionate way of caring. Also the structures of society are not providing learners with meaningful caring, as is evident from the first class's expression of their fears. The connection between sustainable relationships and a life-style indicates that unless these activities become a part of a way of being and living within their own socially constructed identities and maintained in a community of others, the caring is in danger of falling away.

#### **4.4.4 Summary of responses of learners regarding their involvement in community outreach during 2006**

<u><b>Class</b></u>	<u><b>More than 8 hours</b></u>	<u><b>Less than 8 hours</b></u>	<u><b>No outreach</b></u>	<u><b>Positive experience</b></u>	<u><b>OK experience</b></u>	<u><b>Negative experience</b></u>
Grade 10V	9	7	3	14	2	0
Grade 10 M	10	9	0	13	5	1
Grade 9 B	17	2	2	17	1	1
Grade 9 M	5	8	5	11	2	0
Grade 8 V	18	5	0	21	1	1
Grade 8 M	13	3	5	15	0	1
Total	72	34	15	91	11	4

One hundred and twenty one learners completed the anonymous questionnaire. Fifteen did not participate in the Outreach Programme this year. Only four learners had a negative experience while doing outreach, eleven learners had an average experience and the remaining ninety-one learners that had been involved in community outreach found it a positive experience.

## **4.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

Chapter 4 was an exciting journey and the main focus of this study. The chapter focussed on the learner's responses to community outreach and the findings made during conversations and the replies to questionnaires. I also looked at the responses from the parents and included information given by other schools that participated in the study.

Chapter 5 will include the analysis of the findings, conclusions and the recommendations for the study.



## CHAPTER 5

### ***FINAL THOUGHTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS***

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 4 aimed at providing the reader with all the information voiced by the respondents of this study and some reflection on this in relation to the literature, epistemology and methodology chosen. I focussed on the voices of the teachers from other independent schools in Gauteng, parents and the learners of Sagewood School and the impact that caring has on the past, future and present well-being of learners. In Chapter 5 the focus is about how the research question has been addressed. I will also briefly explore some limitations of this study and how some of the findings might be helpful in constructing programmes in Gauteng for the future.

This exploration has used a social construction epistemology that asserts that systems, such as schools in this instance, are not a given in society but constructed within a particular context (Burr 2003:5) Sagewood, a private school, has been constructed within a particular context and is at present a post apartheid multicultural school in the Midrand area. The school caters for all different racial and religious groups and embraces tolerance and respect. This same tolerance must be given to the learner's caring in community outreach as they all come from different cultures and religions. In today's world I have argued that pastoral care is looking outside traditional parameters, as something conducted within church, to include all the learners. Pattison (1993:16) suggests as stated in chapter 2 page 21, that Christians have no monopoly on the term of 'pastoral care' and therefore asserts that there is no separation between Christian or non-Christian care, This enables the inclusion of all learners in such a programme.

Within literature concerning community service, as referred to by Wade (1997:27), the emphasis is more on service-learning introduced in the USA as part of their curriculum at school. This service-learning is done during school hours and the main aim is to address isolation of learners and to encourage meaningful caring relationships. Community outreach as discussed in chapter 1 originated in mutually beneficial and reciprocal caring, such as harvesting of crops, and was often a prerequisite for survival. It is interesting how the meaning and nature of caring has been evolving since then.

## **5.2 FINDINGS**

It appears that although the roots of community outreach were found in agriculture, which later even became part of USA curricula, we have to look at our unique context and some of the discourses that drive this to understand how it will be helpful in South Africa. Some of the ideas promoted in the USA apply but others also need to be re-examined.

Looking at our history and in particular the legacy of oppression, resulting in 'have' and 'have nots', it would appear that there is much pressure on private schools to develop innovative community outreach programmes to address the poverty while behaving in a politically correct manner.

Engaging in communities in this way can promote a greater awareness of some of these powerfully constitutive discourses about caring 'for', and perhaps move towards a greater pastoral focus on caring 'with'. Caring in this way is not something that should only be promoted in schools that hold financial power.

Although a qualitative methodology was used during this study, quantitative methods proved to be very meaningful. It enabled me to see what is happening in schools, how many learners have actually done the hours expected of them, the involvement of parents and how many learners have had meaningful experiences.

During the conversations with learners, it was evident that as dominant beliefs around outreach were being discussed; other alternate meanings began to emerge from the conversations. These meanings were harnessed and used to begin to generate alternate discourses around what it means to care and to sustain this care in social processes, both in the classroom as well as at home. In this way the research entered into conversations with the learners that allowed for greater understanding of the social phenomena we discussed (White 2005:81).

Patton (1993:16) also refers to anxiety as part of pastoral care. He says '*to care is to be anxious, troubled, and even to grieve, but it also means to be concerned with, to regard, and even to love, in the sense of care for the other rather than for oneself.*'

These conversations as seen in chapter 4 addressed some of the assumed truths that the learners had about the nature of community outreach, and in particular the assumed truth that it is about caring **for** rather than **with** others and that learners should give and not look at receiving or benefiting personally. With this outcome and looking at this research now in retrospect I would have paid greater attention to forms of participatory theology (Kotze 2002:4) that places a main focus on the paradigm shift of positioning the carer alongside the cared for.

As seen in chapter 4, another assumed truth that came to light was that the learners caring for underprivileged children did something more worthy than learners that cared for animals. From this study and the voices of the participants it is evident that programmes like this need to focus on encouraging all learners to care in ways that they are comfortable with, as well as extending them beyond their known horizons, and supporting this in ways that create a structure that can reduce anxiety (refer to your quote in chapter one). Learners should be able to choose their own ways of participation and identify an area they would like to get involved in. However, within a social construction paradigm the individual is deeply influenced by the dominant group to which they belong, reducing any individual's ability to make

their 'own' choices. They may need, more help and time in class to discuss these difficulties in order to find ways of cultivating new cultures of care. A less prescriptive approach to outreach by schools, where learners have input as to where they can apply their efforts may well prove very beneficial in addressing the problem of learner motivation.

Learners seem to find it more comfortable to do community outreach amongst their peers. One of the pioneering programmes of community service was a national service government-sponsored program that Wade (1997:23) mentions. The young men doing this service were grouped according to age and this seems, within the North American context, to have worked well. It is important to realise that teenage learners need their peers and to include one or two friends as part of community outreach not only makes it more fun but also assists with support and encouragement. The younger learners starting the programme felt that they would rather want to plan and participate in community outreach in groups. This is in line with a social construction belief on how constitutive discourses on individualism are to identity. It begins to generate and move towards group practice. Most grade 8 learners are introduced to outreach for the first time in their first year in high school. It was evident from the class discussion that they are anxious and vulnerable and need both the support of their peers as well as affirmation from the places they do the outreach. This needs to be consolidated at school in order to assist in their confidence and making it a positive and enduring experience. They felt that they would be less self-conscious when they went with their groups and they felt they would also enjoy it more. Some of the suggestions were also that groups must make announcements at assembly to promote different outreach ideas and encourage learners to participate. It would therefore seem to emerge from this research process that more attention needs to be placed on building communities where identities can be nurtured.

Feedback from older learners included the idea of making people aware of the reciprocal process rather a one way giving. The idea that outreach could be fun and more enjoyable was a selling point when it came to the image of the programme. Heshusius (1995:117) mentions that nothing happens outside of

relationship. This research did not make much use of participation as a methodology and if done again I might place more emphasis on what seemed to emerge from the learners as a need for reciprocity in relationship. Something that could also be explored in future is the relationship between caring **for** and prescriptive programmes. It seems there might be some correlation between the growth of a passion for caring, that changes the **for** into **with**, and the development of a respectful relationship.

Some learners who found it difficult to initiate their own ideas of creative outreach suggested that the school must come up with ideas. When we look at the motivation that Waterman (1997:95) gives for the involvement of learners in service-learning in the USA, the isolation of teenagers from their communities is one of the reasons for their programme. Participation in programmes might reduce the isolation for teenagers, leading to them becoming more involved and enabling them identify the needs in the community themselves.

Learners also felt that the poster that the grade 10 learners made about their outreach research was very helpful and assisted with making choices about where to go and who to contact. The suggestion was to update the posters every year so that the school builds up a collection of posters with relevant articles, contact numbers and photo's for other learners to use. The learners also mentioned that it was helpful to have discussions with others who had previous experience of a specific place they were planning to visit. In this way the knowledge is not something to be held individually but grown collectively and supported in a reciprocal discourse of caring with.

These learners also felt that all these factors were building up the image of outreach at the school. The more learners that are involved and voicing their positive experiences, the more positive the learner's attitude towards outreach will become. It seems to require a mind shift from having to do something **for** other people to rather doing something **with** other people. The learners also felt that recognition by universities of outreach experience will enhance its image. As seen in chapter 1, Waterman (1997:96) suggests that most youth

see their outreach service as making a difference in the community and although learners will get recognition via certificates and universities, the experience in itself should become sufficient motivation to become involved. It would however be helpful if schools and universities could agree on their expectations and credit to be given for community outreach. This could be another topic for further studies that could benefit the schools, learners and universities.

Learners that had participated in outreach the previous year mentioned that their idea of outreach had changed completely. This emerged and exposes some of the difficulties in a discourse where such a programme is not integrated into the larger meanings in society. Most learners for example placed the programme in the context of something you were 'marked for' had the idea that it is just something that you do for marks or something that you do for other people and that you get nothing out of it for yourself. Most learners were quite surprised that they gained so much themselves by participating. This also addressed the issue of prescribed number of hours as most learners that felt positive about their experiences mentioned that the hours become less of a focus as their enjoyment grew. They felt that the hours should depend on the relationship that is formed during the outreach. The decision was made that it is necessary to have a minimum requirement for the hours to ensure a reasonable exposure to outreach for all the learners.

### **5.3 MY OWN ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT PASTORAL CARE IN A SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAMME AND HOW THIS HAS AFFECTED THIS RESEARCH**

I came into this programme with many assumptions and preconceived ideas. For example I had assumed that there could be a way of doing outreach that could become a model for both Sagewood as well as other schools. Another assumption was that there could be a prescription of hours spent doing outreach as if the more the better. I held another belief that the programme was significant in creating the image of the school. I also thought that the learners will get more recognition for doing outreach right through their school

career from grade 8 till 11 rather than just participating in one or two projects. These assumptions and beliefs emerged out of my own cultural background and that of the larger discourses in society within South Africa.

It would appear from the data collected from both schools and parents as shown in chapter four that many schools are experiencing uncertainty and frustration in finding a path forward in doing outreach. Schools generally seem to make a clear divide in outreach using age as criteria. Most schools use one specific year only for community outreach. During this year the learners get involved in a project. Other schools try and get their learners involved by transporting them to a venue and prescribing the activities that the learners must get involved in. These different approaches seem to indicate a difficulty and frustration that schools experience in getting learners to do some community outreach. One of the assumptions in this discourse is that the school feels both responsible and needs to play the role in caring for communities that are suffering through historical political structures. The main aspect that most schools seemed to have difficulty with is the lack of ownership of the learners towards the programme. Some schools mentioned that it is easier for the learners to collect money. They battled to get learners to give up time and found some learners most unwilling to participate in something other than their own social life.

Learners seem to internalise the meaning of community outreach as something forced upon them by teachers. They appear to have resistance to participating in something that they initially perceive to be of no benefit to themselves. Only after they have had an experience where they enjoy the reciprocity of the interaction do they change their initial assumption.

In her article New science of happiness Claudia Wallis mentions that 'whether it happens randomly or systematic, being kind to others, friends or strangers, triggers a cascade of positive effects – it makes you feel generous and gives you a greater sense of connection with others and wins you smiles, approval and reciprocated kindness – all happiness boosters'.

## **5.4 SOME WAYS IN WHICH THE MULTIPLE VOICES HAVE CHALLENGED ME TO ENGAGE WITH AN OUTREACH PROGRAMME IN A DIFFERENT WAY**

I have listened to the multiple voices of learners, literature and dominant ways of doing outreach in schools I have been challenged in a number of ways to embrace care and yet see the problems attached to such outreach programmes.

Working with ideas promoted by Heshusius (1995:22) that to understand the self as a fixed entity can severely limit the access we have to others, it seems significant to explore some of the problems associated with the way the cared for and the carer are divided. Poplau (2004:28) as mentioned in chapter two suggests that self-centeredness is the scourge of our age. This is a challenge in today's system of outreach programmes, and one that has been neglected.

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### **5.4.1 The problem of 'moralising'**

The good child – as the good school – if it makes a difference how the school is viewed when involved in these outreach programmes it also has an effect on the learners that are participating in these programmes. It is an image-maker for the school and a mark giver for the 'good child. This does not necessarily become internalised as a way of living in the world. Rossouw (1993:895) referring back to chapter 2 suggests that postmodern culture does not abolish modern culture but rather questions it. This is the way forward for community outreach. The idea is not to abolish the ideas of the past but rather examine what we are doing why we are doing it. Many of the schools have been involved in outreach programmes for years and are doing amazing projects. These must not be abolished but rather re-examined.

An initial reaction is to listen to the dominant voices of the learners who are positive about community outreach. These learners are outspoken about their experiences and the fact that they made the effort to participate in the



programme. The voice of the moralising child. It is easy for them to talk because the dominant discourse is that learners are meant to do outreach and they followed the rules. They will be getting the marks and the benefit from applying to the university with community outreach as an added aspect that could turn the application in their favour.

The other side of the coin is seen and heard from those who did not participate in outreach and are not intending to. They feel they are taking a stand and convinced about their point of view. They are not bothered about long term future plans and whether the university will be interested in them or not. Sometimes it is easier to focus on the voices that support our ideas and other times exactly the opposite occurs.

#### **5.4.2 A reflection on possibilities that are not talked about or languaged within a conventional setting of dominant expectation**

Having argued that dominant discourses take for granted certain ways of being in the world, it is important that I too examine my own power position within some of the assumed discourses at Sagewood. The fact that I facilitated the conversations might have had an influence because it is only the learners that supported the programme and would feel that I would be impressed by their performance that started the conversations. The outcomes may have been very different if another teacher facilitated it.

Having more than one facilitator for such a programme could make the opportunity for alternative voices to be heard. As a dissertation of limited scope however, this would become a project that could be difficult to manage. For this reason I selected themes and texts that seemed important, being aware that there could be many other ways of gathering and interpreting information.

Having a programme that runs from grade 8 till 11 that encourages participation based on passion and choice will give learners opportunity for personal growth and reflections and hopefully prevent frantic situations when

they apply for university entrance that might require certain outreach commitments.

## **5.5 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH CREATION, WHETHER PEOPLE, ANIMALS OR THE ENVIRONMENT THAT BRINGS BENEFIT TO THE LEARNERS**

Staying in Midrand we are often reminded at our churches about poverty and the conditions people live in at nearby informal settlements, thus influencing the way we give and care contextually within our environment. It seems such an over marketed idea and I keep thinking about days gone by when we cared because our community depended on it for survival, and not because of individual interest! Care has no measurement of importance; learners can grow to know themselves and what they truly care for rather than doing outreach for the right image. Wade (1997:31) suggests that there is a connection between self-identity and caring for others and we can then assume that the reciprocal process not only leads to the learner receiving the recognition of caring for somebody else but also receiving a better idea of who he/she really is.

## **5.6 THE IMPORTANCE OF LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE IN RELATIONSHIPS AND IN RELATION TO SOME OF THE SIGNS OF OUR TIMES.**

Louw (1998:21) refers back to the Greek word for pastoral care as 'soul care'. In Chapter two I explored a postmodern theology that pays attention to a specific context, as opposed to a generalised one. The context addressed in this research has been of moving from a position of assumed ways of knowing and doing care towards somewhat confusing and uncharted territory of a postmodern context. This research indicates that this uncertainty has led to confusion. In this confusion it is in programmes like these that we need to examine the challenges of our times and incorporate aspects such as ongoing reflections and hearing the voices of learners to ensure the programmes shift with time. As seen in chapter 2, the media is one of the challenges that our

postmodern life style has to deal with. Teenagers with cell phones equipped with cameras, mp3 with Internet access and 'mix it' can spend hours communicating with each other moments after they leave school where they have been together all day. Some teenagers who hardly ever speak a word out loud have extra ordinary communication skills via mix it. Although some of these communication tools have been the same medium where many teenagers have experienced rejection, cruel gossip and been exposed in secret videos, technology is here to stay. It is a fact that many teenagers find the support and care they receive from their peers via these mediums of communication very valuable. It might be wise to start thinking of ways to maintain a balance and include the very things that might be irritating now as part of new social constructions.

### **5.7 SOME LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

My own dominant discourses at the time of doing the study and also the fact that I am the teacher in charge of the programme and wanting it to work.

It could have been helpful if the groups were not limited by age or class but rather to put different grades together.

It might have been more effective to do a discourse analyses.

To have done a smaller, less ambitious study.

The fact that the survey was a co-construction with the learners may have influenced the results. This may also create difficulties in applying results at other schools.

### **5.8 HOW HAVE THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND THE AIMS HELPED IN THE PURSUIT OF WAYS OF PRACTICING IN A PASTORAL WAY?**

The study started with the question of how the experiences and feedback of the learners and parents at Sagewood School could contribute to the construction a framework for community outreach programmes in such a way that it would lead to serious, passionate and motivated involvement of everyone concerned.

The study has been able to address this question but also go further and listen to the voices of some of the learners who seemed to be in resistance to the programme. These were the previously unheard voices. It became important to me to make sure that all learners' views are noted, as they are ultimately the ones who will participate in this programme.

## **5.9 DIFFERENT PEOPLE CARE IN DIFFERENT WAYS**

In Chapter 4 the discussion with grade 9 learners raised the idea that caring for less privileged people from disadvantaged backgrounds appears to be a more valuable experience than working for instance at the Society for Protection of cruelty to animals. It seems some ways of caring are perceived to be more important or valuable than others. The conclusion drawn was that while caring for humans and for animals may involve different kinds of effort, any kind of caring is needed and valuable. I realised that we tended to assume that some caring is better than others. In the light of my own experience and the journeys of the different learners, I came to realise that we have different talents and interests and just as we choose different sports, careers and hobbies, we also have different passions with regard to caring.

## **5.10 PERSONAL CHOICE IN CARING AND SHARING OF EXPERIENCES**

It would then be valuable in the case of Sagewood's community outreach programme to allow learners to choose their area of outreach according to the causes that they feel passionate about. This would also allow learners to grow in their caring. They venture out to care in different ways to that of the first year of community outreach, moving beyond the known and comfortable.

From the conversations with the learners it also appears to be valuable for them to spend some time with other learners that had previous experiences at specific organisations. This is helpful because learners are then able to use feedback as a guideline for their own choices. They are also able to use the information posters that the grade 10 learners made with regards to community outreach opportunities within the community.

Learners also found it valuable if other learners mention at assembly what they are presently involved in and encourage other learners to join in. I was curious to determine if community outreach can become a generative process whereby the learners invite and encourage each other to join in some of the outreach experiences. Learners used assembly time in the morning to tell the school about their experiences and through that, other learners became more interested in joining in. The one project grew from two learners within two weeks to more than fourteen learners and many other learners also started to support the project.

### 5.11 REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

The feedback from the learners indicated that it would be more useful to do their hours during the term and not leave it until the last moment. There is more time for reflection while doing it during the year and learners find it more constructive to find out what they feel more passionate about when they spend time planning it rather than leaving it till last. They could try different projects and not just go with the last minute idea. With regular reflection learners might plan more constructive activities and deal with difficulties early enough so that negative experiences do not put them off from participating in the programme the next year. Reflecting might also enable the learners to be more effective in their caring and that way the person/animal receiving the care will also benefit more. Reflection could include class discussions, individual sessions but also group discussions with learners that did their activities at the same place.

Patton (1993:16) also refers to anxiety as part of pastoral care. He says '*to care is to be anxious, troubled, and even to grieve, but it also means to be concerned with, to regard, and even to love, in the sense of care for the other rather than for oneself.*' The fact that anxiety is part of pastoral care makes the need for reflection important as it can be highlighted and dealt with among their peers during discussions.

The last term should not be included as part of the hours for the programme. This time is more stressful than the rest of the year and the learner's experience of outreach might be more positive if they choose to do it in the first three terms where there is less pressure on learners. The last term is focussed on exams and they should be using this time to prepare themselves for this. Maybe the last term could be used for planning and final reflection to enable more growth for the next year.

In many ways evaluation from the school authorities cannot be avoided. Records are kept, hours completed and measured according to certain pre-requisites of what the school considers is 'good' for the students. However I am interested in co-constructing with the students ways of doing care that are not primarily driven by completing hours and having an adequate academic record when they leave school. For a sustainable process to be maintained I am interested in how students themselves might take greater ownership of the process of caring. I realised that ownership comes from being interested and passionate about what we do. Learners are able to take ownership if they find the exercise useful and enjoyable and see the benefits for others and themselves.

An annual review or evaluation of the outreach programme will be useful to ensure that the learner's voices are the ones to determine the programme. This could be done by means of class discussions or completion of questionnaires. Another suggestion from one of the learners was that it could be constructive to start a community outreach journal from grade 8. This would enable learners to focus not only on the different experiences they had but also keeping record of their own personal development and challenges by participating in the programme. The journal will be used by the learner to keep records of the hours and the learner could also asked the organisation to write a comment or letter that they can paste into the journal. It could also contain photos or notes from the people that they shared their time with. This might also change the approach to report writing or record keeping from a top down request to a personal journey.

I think being part of the initial team that decided to introduce the programme at the school, must have led me to make assumptions regarding the benefits of the programme. I realise that with a post-modern approach, it would have been more respectful to start off by having conversations with the learners. While setting up a rubric for evaluation as an educator, I will have certain assumptions and expectations of what I think should be important. An aspect that could assist in the evaluation would be to negotiate the evaluation rubric with the learners to ensure that it is representative of their voices but also including the voice of the educator.

## **5.12 SCHOOL- BASED CARE FOR GRADE 8 AND NEW LEARNERS**

It is often in grade 8 that learners have their first introduction to the idea of community outreach. It might be a good idea to get them to start off with outreach opportunities within the school first. That way it could be safer and also monitored to ensure that their first experience is constructive. There are community outreach opportunities at the school, for instance the library, aftercare or the nursery school. These opportunities are also available for new learners that have not been part of community outreach before.

## **5.13 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

The input and suggestions from the parents that participated in the study was very valuable. The parents should be part of the process. The parents are most often the first person that the learner has contact with after their experience and could be an important link in the process. It could be helpful to send out more correspondence to the parents at the beginning of the year. It could also add to the collaborative approach and be representative of all the different role players. It might be helpful to send a list of possible outreach opportunities in the community so that parents and learners can work through it and decide together earlier in the year what would be convenient for them as a family.

#### **5.14 CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN EDUCATORS OF DIFFERENT SCHOOLS**

It would benefit schools if community outreach coordinators could have regular contact and discussions with each other. They will be able to share ideas and brainstorm around frustrations. The study showed that a programme like this is not static and should be evaluated continuously. It will be helpful if educators could also make their information or ideas available to each other via e-mail or a coordinator at the office or the Independent Examination Board. Another idea is to share ideas on the website of Teenactiv.

#### **5.15 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

I found this chapter exciting and effective as it assisted me to look at what I have done so far and all the things that might assist us to work adding other ideas to increase the affectivity of the programme. It enabled me to see that we need to include learners more when it comes to their education. My wish is that this will be the first of many similar studies in which we empower learners to participate and voice their opinions regarding compulsory school projects. I was able to learn from the learners and being in the vulnerable position I realised what Outcomes-based education is all about. By offering some structure we can encourage the creativity of learners. I was also surprised by the effect that community outreach has on the lives of some of the participants. When learners find their passion they find joy in caring that not only affects the lives of the people that they care for but also their own.



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Bestptfe.com

## **ANNEXURE:**

### **Annexure A:**

The booklet that the learners get to keep record of their outreach hours and feedback from the institution where they did their outreach.

### **Annexure C**

Structured questionnaires for respondents from independent schools.

### **Annexure D**

I used a letter to give some background to the management team of Sagewood about the study and ask for their permission to complete the study at the school.

### **Annexure E**

This letter was addressed to the parents of the learners. The aims of the letter were to provide information to the parents regarding the study, ask for permission for their children to participate and also to get the feedback from the parents regarding their view on community outreach.



*Sagewood is a private day school, a member of the  
Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa,  
registered with the Gauteng Department of Education.  
We are a non-profit organisation.*

**Our Vision:**

A school with quality facilities and teachers, encouraging a rich  
diversity of student activities, appreciated by the community,  
producing enlightened, exuberant, successful graduates.

**Our Mission:**

Progressive teaching methods in small classes.  
Encouragement of individual expression. Providing the knowledge,  
skills, independent thinking and attitudes for success in the real  
world. Producing intelligent, caring young people who will have a  
real contribution to make towards the bright future of their country.

**Our Values:**

High Standards  
Competence and Professionalism  
Innovation and Creativity  
Practical Skills in Life

**Our Traditions:**

Sagewood welcomes people of all backgrounds and traditions  
and promotes knowledge and respect of all religions.

*Our wish is that each and every learner in the college  
will participate in this project. They will be required to get  
involved in their community by identifying a need and  
spending time, working on fulfilling this need.  
Will you be so kind to complete the following  
to indicate the learners participation.*

Name of person / organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

Date attended: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment regarding learners participation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person / organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

Date attended: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment regarding learners participation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Name of person / organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

Date attended: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment regarding learners participation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person / organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

Date attended: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment regarding learners participation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# SAGEWOOD SCHOOL

## Community Outreach

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

P O Box 3613

Halfway House

1685

Tel.: (011) 318-2190

Fax: (011) 318-2195



## **Annexure C**

ATTENTION: LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS

### Community Outreach Research Project

Date: January 2006

I am a master's student at Unisa as well as a Life Orientation teacher at Sagewood College. I am interested in writing my thesis on the topic of Community Service or Outreach done by High School learners. Please will you be so kind as to complete the following questions and forward it to me at your earliest convenience.

Name of your school:

Contact person regarding outreach program:

Do your learners participate in outreach programs?

If your answer is no, have you considered it or is it something that you would not get involved in?

If your answer is yes, what initiated the drive for such a program?

How many years have you been doing outreach at your school?

Is it a voluntary or compulsory program?

Does the school identify the need or do the learners choose where they would like to do their outreach?

Do the learners do outreach during school hours?

Do the learners keep a record of the hours that they do?

What do you find to be the advantages of such a program?

What do you find to be problematic in the running of the program?

Would you please be so kind as to make comments on any other issues that you would consider being important regarding this topic that I did not ask?

Hope you have a wonderful 2006.

Greetings

Harriet Stiemer

E-mail: [stiem@absamail.co.za](mailto:stiem@absamail.co.za)

Cell: 082 55 00 526 Fax: 011 314-5373

## **Annexure E**

Date: 22 March 2006

Dear Parent/ Guardian

### Research Project regarding Community Outreach

As a Life Orientation teacher at Sagewood, I am very interested in the Community Outreach Programme that our learner's are involved in. I am also busy with my Masters degree at Unisa and am looking into the possibility of doing my research for my thesis on the topic of Community Outreach. The Management Team did give permission for the study to proceed.

It is the third year that our learners are participating in this programme and the aim of the programme is to educate our learners to care for their community. They are required to complete eight hours of community outreach during the year and to keep their outreach record up to date. Some Universities and tertiary education facilities require proof of community outreach as part of their entry requirement.

The aim of my study would be to look at the contributing factors that motivate learners to participate in such a programme. I would like to ask for your permission to include some of the class discussions regarding this topic for study purposes. I would also like to ask for your feedback on this matter and would like to include that too.

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## **Annexure E (2)**

### Permission slip and feedback from parents

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as parent/guardian of my child, (name and grade)\_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_(Parent/Guardian) give my permission for my child to be part of class discussions regarding Community Outreach that might be included in the research by Harriet Stierner for study purposes.

Please will you indicate what your views are regarding such a programme and what some positive and negative aspects are when learners participate in such a programme.

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Kind regards  
Harriet Stierner

## **Annexure D**

P.O. Box 1025  
Halfway House  
1685  
4 January 2006

Management Team  
Sagewood School  
Liebenberg Road  
Noordwyk

As the Life Orientation teacher at Sagewood, I am very interested in the Community Outreach Programme that our learner's are involved in. I am also busy with my Masters degree at Unisa and am looking into the possibility of doing my research for my thesis on the topic of Community Outreach.

It is the third year that our learners are participating in this programme and the aim of the programme is to educate out learners to care for their community. As you know, they are required to complete eight hours of community outreach during the year and to keep their outreach record up to date. Some Universities and tertiary education facilities require proof of community outreach at part of their entry requirement.

The aim of my study would be to look at the contributing factors that motivate learners to participate in such a programme. I would like to ask for your permission to include some of the class discussions regarding this topic for study purposes.

Kind regards

Harriet Stierner