



**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO MITIGATING LEARNER MULTIPLE  
VULNERABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

**By**

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**PROMOTER: PROF D.J. HLALELE**

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**DATE**

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## DEDICATION

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“It’s not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.” — Epictetus

## **ABSTRACT**

The escalating number of learners facing multiple vulnerabilities globally has resulted in the holistic caring for such learners becoming one of the major challenges faced by societies today. Currently, in Zimbabwe, the major goal for supportive initiatives and developments is to meet the financial needs of such learners. Due to the political and socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe, there has been inability or lack of access to/resources by parents/guardians/service providers to ensure that such learners receive minimum basic services. Their resources and systems have been overwhelmed by the large number of learner multiple vulnerabilities. Following partial or complete withdrawal assistance by parents/guardians/service providers, individuals facing learner multiple vulnerabilities become disadvantaged, exposing them to further vulnerabilities. Learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities then suffer because not all their needs are met. Facing multiple vulnerabilities, to some extent, contributes to them abandoning their studies or ending up in exploitative situations as a means of survival.

The main aim of this study was to propose asset-based approaches to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. The study included participants within Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies in proposing for an asset-based approach that was grounded in the local community. This gave voice to rural people through active participation and ensured emancipation, transformation, and empowerment by assisting them to find solutions to their problems. An eclectic mix of Complexity Theory (CT) and Asset-Based Approach (ABA) was utilised with the understanding that learner multiple vulnerabilities are a social challenge. This made it possible to implement the approach, and that individuals can claim ownership of the process. CT, in this study, emphasises wholes, relationships, open systems, and the use of the environment as tools for survival. The theory strived for a holistic change in learners that they may evolve and adapt within the same rural learning ecology. ABA was adopted to focus on local people having capacities, skills and social resources to

attend to their problems, for the purpose of eliminating dependence syndrome in learners and achieving quality education in rural learning ecologies.

Practically, this qualitative study presents how CT and ABA principles are integrated within Participatory Action Research (PAR) as design, Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) as paradigm, an approach that addresses issues of empowerment in contexts, inequality, oppression, alienation, power and transformation through collaborative engagement, for learners to take decision that make them survive in complex situations.

Purposive sampling was utilised to identify participants. I used the focus group discussions (FGD), discussion meetings, document analysis, and participant observation to generate data. Ethical considerations were observed to guard against possible ethical predicaments, that we do not harm participants and our research be valid and reliable. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the researcher critically presented, analysed, and interpreted the written texts and spoken words combined with observed facial expression and data from analysed documents, and determined findings and implications from which the asset-based approach was formulated.

The findings and conclusions of the study have proved that learner multiple vulnerabilities exist as multiple entities that affect learners in rural learning ecologies. Further highlighted is how issues of socio-economic instability, poverty, death/separation/divorce of parents/guardians, and cultural factors are root causes of learner multiple vulnerabilities. Consequently, engagement in transformative and participatory methods that embraced local communities' capabilities formed the basis for holistic emancipation and empowerment. Furthermore, I noted that there are threats to the asset-based approach, such as donor syndrome and self-constructed philosophies. Based on findings and conclusions, I have suggested that further studies on the application of the approach should be done. Additionally, there is a need for

active participation and total commitment from learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities with potential assets and or stakeholders to find solutions to their problems. Furthermore, there is a need to collectively work together on the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (rather than on individual approaches), that holistically assist learners through sharing of experiences, knowledge, and skills on how to alleviate learner multiple vulnerabilities. This would leave learners empowered and transformed. These implications emancipate, transform, and empower those engaged in finding solutions to their problems.

**KEYWORDS:** *learner multiple vulnerabilities, asset-based approach, rural learning ecologies, mitigating, Zimbabwe*

## **CONFERENCE PAPERS DURING PhD STUDIES**

Chidakwa, N. (2019a). Drawing from the asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. Paper presented at an International Conference for Sustainable, Rural, Learning Ecologies Colloquium, (SURLEC). Lupane State University, Zimbabwe. July 9th – 12th July 2019.

Chidakwa, N. (2019b). Drawing from complexity theory to understand children's multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwe. Paper presented at an International Conference for Sustainable, Rural, Learning Ecologies Colloquium, (SURLEC). Lupane State University, Zimbabwe. July 9th – 12th July 2019.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABA	Asset-Based Approach
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CAS	Complex Adaptive System
CCF	Community Capitals Framework
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CER	Critical Emancipatory Research
CFCs	Child-Friendly Schools
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRDC	Chiredzi Rural District Council
CT	Complexity Theory
DA	Document Analysis
DM	Discussion Meeting
DoSW	Department of Social Welfare
DSI	District School Inspector
EFA	Education for All
ETF	Education Transition Fund
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LMVs	Learner Multiple Vulnerabilities
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations

OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PA	Participatory Appraisal
PA	Participant Observation
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PED	Provincial Education Director
PICES	Poverty, Income and Expenditure Survey
SCE	Second Chance Education
SGDS	Sustainable Development Goals
STI	Sexual Transmitted Infections
SWOC	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Challenges
UKZN	University of KwaZulu Natal
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFFC	World Fit for Children
ZABEC	Zimbabwe Adult Basic Education Course
ZAL	Zimbabwe Accelerated Learning Program
ZIMASSET	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZMDG	Zimbabwe Millennium Goals

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **ORIENTATION, BACKGROUND, AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY FOR THE ABA TO MITIGATING LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of the study was to propose the asset-based approach (ABA) to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities (LMVs) in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. In this study, the ABA was an approach used by Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies to guide them and other learners in dealing with multiple problems they face. This introductory chapter gave a brief background, the focus of the study, rationale, and motivation for the study. An overview of the problem was highlighted and followed by the aim and objective of the study. The significance of the study was also emphasised. I also stated the delimitations of the study. Lastly, I provided an overview of the research study and the chapter summary.

#### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Zimbabwean rural schools have been hit by a number of vulnerabilities often resulting in high failure rates, early marriages, and a high rate of school dropouts (UN, 2019). The rural spheres themselves are faced with multiple vulnerabilities due to socio-economic political situations (Hlalele, 2012a; GoZ, 2018; Vulnerability Report, 2018; ZIMVAC, 2019); henceforth the rural learners are not left out to face the same situation. In this study, I viewed LMVs having adverse impact on rural learners to suffer, drop out of school, develop behavioural problems, or those that expose them to other vulnerabilities. The greater the number of risks experienced by the learner, the greater/more complex the problems that the learner will face during their life (Chinyoka,

2013; GoZ, 2018; Katunga & Lombard, 2016). Rural learners suffer greatly from social problems, for example: diseases, poverty, low self-confidence among those who live there, harsh policy environments, and inadequate facilities if their needs (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Hlalele, 2012a). This study proposed ways we can mitigate LMVs in rural ecologies so that learners can achieve a high-quality education. Several studies addressed that schools located in rural areas face LMVs which serve as causal factors for, among others, lower performance, higher dropout rates, and earlier marriages, than learners from urban schools (Chinyoka, 2013; Myende, 2014; Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011; Hlalele, 2012a; Hlalele, 2012b; ZIMVAC, 2019). These studies were unable to create an opportunity for learners to gain the valued education their peers in an urban system receive. Thus, proposing for the asset-based approach (ABA) in the Zimbabwean context would be a good starting point in mitigating the LMVs in rural ecologies. The approach explained the importance of assets from the local community in assisting learners facing LMVs to attain knowledge that is meaningful (Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). Manjengwa, Kasirye, and Matema (2015), and Chinyoka (2013) state that poverty must first be addressed to ensure a high-quality education in Zimbabwe. Poverty results in a scarcity of teaching and learning resources in a school and at home (GoZ, 2018) and this ultimately needs to be rectified. It was my opinion that a failure to address underlying poverty (vulnerabilities) issues is the main hindrance to achieving global equitable and high-quality education. I observed that despite the Zimbabwean government's efforts to improve low-quality education, rural learning ecologies remain a challenge. Rural learners face a great challenge of these, which schools alone have failed to address (Hlalele, 2012a). The application of the ABA in assisting learners facing LMVs was perceived to be conceptual model for emancipating, transforming, and empowering learners.

In my view, **currently**, Zimbabwean government has a few programmes in place for working with learners facing LMVs that are not holistic in nature. These are; Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), Zimbabwe Accelerated Learning Programme

(ZALP), Zimbabwe Adult Basic Education Course (ZABEC), Child Friendly Schools (CFSs), Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), and feeding programmes (Manjengwa et al., 2015; GoZ, 2018). Programmes like ZALP and ZABEC allowed dropout learners to advance their education during the afternoon; each learner continues from their level of understanding. Programmes accelerate progress towards achieving the Zimbabwean Millennium Development Goals (ZMDG) goals number 1 and 2. Moreover, the updated/competence-based curriculum also known as the new curriculum in 2014, introduced task-based, practical, and these prepares learners in skills attitudes and competences (GoZ, 2018; ZIMASSET, 2013)., which was absent in the old curriculum. However, there has been little assistance by service providers to ensure that learners facing LMVs obtain the basic requirements due to the socio-economic political situation in Zimbabwe (Chinyoka, 2013; GoZ, 2018; Magampa, 2014). Based on this, I viewed efforts by the GoZ a failure to address the root cause of LMVs. I proposed an ABA that suggests that regardless of the context, individuals can find solutions to their societal problems (Myende, 2014, 2015; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). Thus, I say, learners facing LMVs possess the capability to actively construct their own meanings. If learners facing LMVs were presented with opportunities to mitigate their problems, they would be left empowered and transformed for life.

In ***Southern Africa*** (South Africa) where the ABA was tried (Myende, 2012, 2014, 2015) it was observed that if effectively employed, the ABA changed and transformed lives of individuals in rural areas by giving them life skills. However, most ABA research conducted in South Africa looked into the effectiveness of ABA with relation to issues of HIV and AIDS, and learners with disability (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003). A study conducted by Myende (2014) sought to explore how rural school resources and capacities can be of used to improve academic performance. The study positioned the school administration to create an environment in which the ABA can be utilised and to identify challenges that arose. The above study did not look into the impact of LMVs; thus, it created a gap for this study because this study seeks to

propose for the ABA to mitigate these problems using the assets available in order to improve the lives of rural learners. I argued for this approach for it seemed to be a problem solver rather than a problem identifier.

In the *international context*, ABA studies focus on community development and educational psychology as a tool in community development (Coetzee, 2006; Myende, 2014). A study carried in Scotland on learners facing LMVs, these learners who were regarded as having special educational, complex and/or additional needs were given opportunities to own some assets to cater for their needs, there was a positive change in their way of living (Ecclestone & Lewis, 2014; Foot & Hopkins, 2010; Greenspace Scotland, 2011). The above literature proves that an ABA can be used to cater for learners in a complex situation. While it has been utilised, gaps arise since it is not a universal system. In the Scotland, South African, and Zimbabwean contexts, rurality differs due to the different levels of socio-economic political situations. In this view, I proposed implementing the ABA as it results in positive effects on learners in LMVs in rural learning settings. Chikoko & Khanare (2012) state that community assets include tangible and intangible possessions and as such rural communities can use these to solve their own problems. The tangible assets include vacant land, buildings, and properties and intangible assets include human skills and services (Green & Haines, 2012; Myende, 2012, 2014). Green and Haines (2012) discovered that these assets could be employed to lessen poverty and vulnerabilities. I also saw this as useful in trying to mitigate the LMVs because the above assets are also found in the Zimbabwean context. I felt that an ABA helps to identify measures that support the holistic welfare of an individual to improve their quality of life by concentrating on readily available resources in the community. As such, it promotes independence rather than dependence (Green & Haines, 2012; Myende, 2012, 2014, 2015).

### **1.3 FOCUS FOR THE STUDY**

It was the purpose of this study to propose how the ABA can be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwe. The study anticipated finding ways in which the ABA can be utilised to reduce LMVs in complex rural learning ecologies. This was done by conducting a situational analysis with a view to understanding the current situation in Zimbabwe. The identification and discussion of circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigate LMVs was done. With this done, the study further intended to find out what can be done with the identified assets within the selected school in order to reduce the LMVs learners face. The study looked at the challenges of the approach and measures to address these challenges in order to mitigate LMVs.

### **1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

My interest in undertaking this study was to propose ways we can mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an ABA aimed at suggesting sound measures and solutions to minimising consequences of being a learner beset with vulnerability embedded in multiple societal sectors. This intention/curiosity emanated from my reflection on three different experiences, namely: personal, professional, and theoretical.

I was born and raised by a single mother who is the firstborn in a family of ten children, and I am the first in the family of two. I grew up in a deeply rural and remote area, about sixty-four (64) kilometres to the Sango border post of Mozambique, in the Lowveld area of the Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe. Since my grandparents were subsistence farmer (agricultural labourers of low social status), my mother was considered the main breadwinner because she was the only one who retained temporary employment as a nurse aide. This was also true for most families in area; most parents and guardians

were peasant, with others being worse than my situation. Throughout primary school (Grade 1-7); my mother struggled to take care of my educational needs to the extent that my fees were catered for through the government's Basic Education Assistance Model (BEAM). Two of my grandparents' children were sponsored through PLAN International and university grants. One of them, my uncle, managed to succeed despite the harsh and unfavourable rural conditions. My uncle is now a Doctor of Philosophy in Mathematics. He has been, and still is, my key role model in whatever I do in life. As for myself, BEAM took me through to secondary school up to form three (equivalent to Grade 9 in South Africa) when the privilege was withdrawn. My mother struggled through cross border trade while I did some part-time work. I used to be a cattle herder over weekends and holidays to raise enough money for my education. I also sold sweets and stationery (pens, pencils, covers, and books) to add to the little my mother was making. The school I attended was about five kilometres away from both my primary and secondary schools which meant I walked ten kilometres altogether on a daily basis. My grandparents also expected us to water the garden before we left for school. After school, they also expected us to pass through the fields to help them in the fields. Going to and from school was challenging, and very tiring, which sometimes led to a lack of concentration, moments of feeling unhappy, emotional instability, frustrations, a sense of loss, and a feeling of isolation. This did not only happen to me but was observed from other learners with similar situations, some worse than those I experienced. I went through to Advanced level (equivalent to Matric in South Africa) under harsh and unfavourable conditions, including renting a place to stay and working as a shop assistant at a local farmland shop. For example, I remember on the first day of my final examination, I first went for the examination in the morning and in the afternoon I was at work. I did not do well when results came, managing only two Advanced level (equivalent to Matric in South Africa) subjects with lowest grades (E). My uncle was a pillar of strength; he encouraged me to endure the experiences. I, however, observed that the environment I was living in was the centre of my success. I managed to operate within the environment for me to become who I am today.

As the firstborn in my family, I decided to keep working as a shop assistant for two years to look after the household. I later decided to pursue a career that would better assist me to look after my family and enable me to access high-quality education. I went and completed my teacher training which I managed through government grants. I was then deployed to teach at a rural school close to where I did my primary and secondary education. Some local community members and other learners knew me and how I became who I am today. They praised me for my positive attitude towards education, despite having faced harsh and unfavourable conditions. I would share my experiences with learners who had similar experiences as mine, encouraging them that they too could make it with a positive attitude, just as I had. I want to become one of the teachers who assist learners by alleviating LMVs in rural learning ecologies, thereby promoting resilience and achieving high-quality education. I believe, from my personal experience, I am an asset that could be used to lessen LMVs by learners and to realise their potentials in life through the model ABA. In my personal life, to some extent I received outside assistance, but I used the environment to achieve high-quality education. Implementing an ABA may mitigate LMVs in the Zimbabwean rural context and help to achieve high-quality education. These learners may not only need monetary assistance (physical), or emotional and psychosocial assistance from an external source, but may also need assets presented to them by the environment, hence this researching proposes the use of an ABA. Not all individuals facing LMVs end up dropping out of school, but when given assistance, whether it be financial, physical, emotional, social, and psychological, from the assets in the community in which they live, they will rise up to a higher position and become a living testimony (an asset for tomorrow) of what is possible when independence is supported.

In my professional life, I have observed that it has now become an accepted norm for individuals facing LMVs to attend school up to Grade 7 and leave before they even graduate from secondary school. They leave the education system because their parents cannot afford to pay, or the external support from government and non-

governmental organisations has been withdrawn. In 2015, I witnessed a 12-year-old, Grade 7, girl leave school and decide to get married because of this. Later I realised that the girl was among others, faced with LMVs and needed psychological, emotional, and material assistance. Around the ages of 14 to 15 years old, most learners facing LMVs begin to look for work; mainly as herd boys if male or housemaids (domestic workers) if female. If they fail to secure work, most engage in high-risk promiscuous behaviour for survival at a local marketplace. Again, at that age, boys and girls enter into cultural initiatives where they graduate into manhood and womanhood respectively. For those learners that remain in school, my observation has been that by the age of 18 and 19 years old, their adolescent years, some of these learners facing LMVs drop out of school for marriage since they do not have funds for further study or think that marriage is the only way to escape the LMVs they face. Going to nearby countries like Mozambique and South Africa has also become a norm in rural communities as many search for work to earn a living and support other siblings in their family. In conversations with some parents or guardians of children facing LMVs at the school under study, lack of; social, financial, psychological, and emotional support, amongst others, were highlighted as the main problems faced by learners in LMVs ecologies. When I did informal engagements with my colleagues, and some learners facing, I realised that there is lack of support (emotional, psychological, and to a lesser extent material) which ultimately prevents learners from continuing with their studies. Information through discussions with my workmates helped me realise that performance shown by the learners facing LMVs is mainly due to a lack of support by responsible people, authorities, and/organisations. Mitigation measures must be proposed for these learners to realise their full potential in much the same way other learners from better background do. My experience in the community will be an important asset to be used by those in the same situation. The full-truth is, despite challenges faced in LMVs learning ecologies, learners are likely to realise their potential should relevant people implement relevant intervention strategies. This is why I propose the use of the ABA to mitigate problems faced by learners in Zimbabwean rural schools.

Theoretically, most researchers do not see alleviating LMVs holistically as being essential to accomplishing high-quality education in rural areas. For this to be achieved the root cause of LMVs should be unearthed, not just to deal with the problems caused by LMVs. This raises the concept of poverty. Hlalele (2014a) states that poverty and rurality have the same effect on life. Additionally, poverty and vulnerability have social, economic, cultural, political, and psychological impacts on people's lives. Zimbabwe's Millennium Development Goals (ZMDG) No 1 and No 2 aim to eliminate poverty and hunger and to achieve primary education for all by 2015. However, some learners continue to suffer due to systematic weaknesses in supporting vulnerable children, particularly in rural areas (GoZ, 2012; UN, 2012, 2015). More so, as part of the global community working towards rebuilding education in rural learning ecologies, Zimbabwe is committed to achieving the 'ambitious' goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to be achieved by 2030 (UN, 2019; UNESCO, 2017b). SDG goal No 1 aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable high-quality education, empathy for others, creativity, and innovation for countries. Goal 4 requires countries to effectively offer societal protection programmes, and policies (supported by government expenditure and services) to lessen the impact of poverty and to prevent people from falling into poverty from the start (UN, 2019). Due to extreme poverty remaining stubbornly high in developing countries, I argue that it is rather difficult to achieve the 'ambitious' goals set, especially within Zimbabwean situation. Learners in rural ecologies remain affected, and services not provided to them. This is worrisome indeed.

In addition to the above, universal access to basic education for children, Education for All (EFA), and 2010 A World Fit for Children (WFFC) goals, (GoZ, 2012) were some of the goals to be achieved by 2015. This resulted in a supportive global environment focussed on improving the quality of education, with assistance from government ministries, United Nation (UN) agencies, and international donors (Chinyoka, 2013). The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), for example, introduced feeding programmes in primary schools, CAMFED, and second-chance education programmes

like ZALP, ZABEC, and CFS to cater for the needs of dropout individuals facing multiple vulnerabilities. Programmes like ZALP and ZABEC allowed dropout learners to advance their education during the afternoon, with each learner being positioned at their level of understanding. Programmes accelerated progress toward achieving SDG 2 and 3 (zero hunger, good health, and well-being). Despite the efforts made by the GoZ, many learners who, though not orphans, become vulnerable as a direct or indirect result of a multitude of variables (socio-economics, psychosocial, political, and poverty) (UNESCO, 2017a), resulting in learners facing LMVs. Learners under intense stress may continue the stress in different forms for the rest of their lives if not assisted. This study posits that addressing LMVs needs an inside out approach through the ABA resulting in empowerment and transformation of these learners in order to survive. I argue that learners need to be empowered with life skills that can transform them to alleviate LMVs. ABA aims at measuring the support available to holistic educational welfare by evaluating the assets readily accessible to the community (Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018).

Due to the socio-economic political situation in Zimbabwe, service providers have only been able to provide learners facing LMVs limited assistances through minimum basic services (Chinyoka, 2013; Magampa, 2014). Their resources and systems have been overwhelmed by the large number of learners who need assistance (Hlalele, 2012a). Following partial or total withdrawal of assistance by service providers, individuals facing LMVs became shocked, exposing them to further vulnerabilities. The learner facing LMVs suffers because their needs are not catered for. Parent or guardians fail to provide for their needs and wants, and a gap is created. If learners facing multiple vulnerabilities lack external assistance, they end up leaving school or enter exploitative situations as a means of survival. There is need for long-term sustainable assistance that concentrates on assets readily available in the community and to these learners in order to achieve high-quality education (Myende & Hlalele, 2018). This study sought to propose the application of the ABA to mitigate LMVs faced by learners in Zimbabwean

rural learning ecologies. With this ABA, learners would use the local assets presented to them in the community and ensure their life skills are further developed. Although Hlalele (2012a, 2014a) states that poverty and vulnerability are multifaceted and complicated issues, the proposition of ABA might reduce the effects of the root cause of LMVs and not just deal with the problems posed by LMVs consequences. If the root causes are not solved, problems will recur and affect most learners facing LMVs. To achieve a high-quality education, the study actively engaged learners through the application of an ABA. The ABA equipped learners with survival skills that they can use to operate within their environment.

A German study by Jopling and Vincent (2016) demonstrates that effective schools that work in partnership with other agencies can go a long way to achieving universal and selective local interventions by utilising locality-based initiatives. Implementing an ABA may help those with LMVs to gain the life skills needed to deal with challenges and achieve a high-quality education. The observed high dropout rate of children facing LMVs from schools in the Chiredzi south district led to the establishment of mitigating ways in which the ABA can fulfil the needs of learners in rural ecologies. Following the discussion above there was a need to utilise the ABA as a measure to minimise the number of LMVs encountered in rural ecologies thereby leaving learners empowered.

## **1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

From my personal, professional, and the theoretical experiences, the holistic caring of a learner facing LMVs has been of great concern in Zimbabwe. During my professional involvement, I observed that most rural schools do not utilise assets that encourage learner independence in addressing LMVs they face. They rather used dependence approach; seeking financial assistance from NGOs and other well-wishers. Despite such efforts to mitigate LMVs, the holistic needs of a learner are not realised through

the dependence approach. There was still need for Zimbabwean rural schools to apply a holistic approach in fulfilling the needs of learners facing LMVs in rural ecologies. The study attempted to close the gap by engaging rural ecology members to propose the assets available in their communities to mitigate LMVs. This was done through participatory action research methodologies resulting in empowerment and transformation of the rural communities (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2016; Mthiyane, 2015). It was observed that the holistic needs of rural learners are not fully addressed by the service providers, as is evident by an increased number of dropouts, the low pass rate, early marriages, child labour, and unruly behaviours among learners facing LMVs (Vulnerability Report, 2018; ZIMVAC, 2019) due to lack of financial, emotional, social, psychological support. This absence of support has consequently affected the quality of education among learners in rural areas. Following this observation, for Zimbabwe to have high-quality education for all learners there was need for all stakeholders to work together to alleviate poverty as this is the root cause of vulnerability (Hlalele, 2012a; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). The study proposed the use of local assets, those found within the local community (internal support), rather than relying on external support to mitigate LMVs as local assets contribute to a more holistic learner.

## **1.6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.6.1 Main aim**

To propose ways to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an ABA.

### **1.6.2 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study were:

- i. To conduct a situational analysis with a view of understanding current LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies
- ii. To map assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
- iii. To identify circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
- iv. To find ways of lessening threats (if any) that hinders an asset-based approach application to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
- v. To demonstrate how we can mitigate against LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach.

## **1.7 CRITICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED**

### **1.7.1 Primary research question**

How can we mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach?

### **1.7.2 Subsidiary research questions**

- i. What is the current situation of learners with multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?
- ii. How can we map the identified assets to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?
- iii. What are the circumstances under which the identified assets can mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?
- iv. What are the threats (if any) that hinder the asset-based approach application to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?

- v. How we can mitigate against LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach?

## **1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study was substantial to many stakeholders including government departments (Social welfare department) and the MoPSE, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as assets who can assist learners facing LMVs, learners themselves and parents/guardians, and the different political components in Zimbabwe. It helped the above stakeholders working in the education sector to plan programmes related to the mitigation of LMVs.

This study attempted to utilise the ABA to emancipate, transform, and empower all participants. Firstly, learners in the rural ecologies of Zimbabwe sought to address issues pertaining to their welfare. This also informed them on how to deal with discrimination, thereby building self-confidence and self-efficacy, thus transforming and empowering them. The application of ABA builds steady characters in rural learners rather than to live a prophesied life, thus emancipating them. With this in mind, this inspired the researcher to embark on this study.

Secondly, the study used participatory action research (PAR) methodologies to help participants identify and propose assets available in their community so that they could mitigate LMVs and achieve high-quality education. By incorporating PAR methodologies into the study, it involved and engaged participants in proposing for assets leaving them empowered and transformed in solving their life challenges. The study advanced current PAR research methodologies. Through PAR methodologies, the understanding of LMVs and their effects raised the awareness of assets available to mitigate them. Their active participation resulted in emancipation, transformation, and empowerment. I

was motivated to undertake this study due to ABA importance and the benefits to the above-listed individuals.

Finally, as previous studies predominantly looked at the effects of being vulnerable from a rural perspective, additional understanding of the effects of LMVs and the importance of the ABA in the mitigation process. The study added to literature on locally, regionally, and internationally. A holistic approach was developed to provide a greater insight into the role of assets, not only in relation to internal assistance but also in relation to external assistance. In other words, the research created knowledge which would be used by some other researchers and applied to other life situations. Findings, conclusions, and recommendations from this research would be a starting point for other researchers today and in future. Thus, new theories on how to mitigate other LMVs may, still be arrived at.

## **1.9 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

According to Simon (2011), delimitations of the study include those characteristics limiting the scope and defining the limits of the study. He further explains that research questions, participant selection, and research objectives are some of the more common delimiting factors. In this study, known delimitations were the boundaries that I set in an attempt to manage the study and findings. The participants under study were learners facing LMVs in Zimbabwean context. To extensively understand LMVs and the mitigation process, the study was guided by five research objectives and questions. These in turn shaped the literature reviewed and the themes that emerged. This helped me to remain focused throughout the study. The study was confined to one rural secondary school in the Chiredzi South District of the Masvingo province. I also discovered that there were no similar studies conducted in the Chiredzi district, and as such, it became the geographical delimitation for the study.

Delimitations of the study included the theoretical and conceptual framework utilised in the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Simon, 2011). This study took an eclectic approach through the complexity theory (CT) and the ABA to explain the complexity of LMVs and how they can be mitigated by using available assets in Zimbabwe. The two theories helped to demonstrate emancipation, transformation, and empowerment among learners, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in rural learning ecologies.

## **1.10 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

**Chapter One** served as the introduction and background to this study. In this study, the ABA was an approach used by Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies to guide them and other learners in dealing with LMVs. This introductory chapter provided a brief background, the focus of the study, and the justification of the study. An overview of the problem was highlighted followed by the aim and objective of the study, and the significance of the study is also stressed. I also stated the delimitations of the study. Lastly, I provided an overview of the research study and the chapter summary.

**Chapter Two** deliberated the theoretical/conceptual frameworks that support the study. This chapter presented CT and ABA as the two frameworks that support the study. It discussed their origin, underlying principles, and their epistemological stance as justification for their use in this study. This chapter further highlighted the role of CT and ABA in the mitigation of LMVs. The operational concepts, which served as the pillars of the study, were also clarified so that they are understood in the context of the study. Finally, a summary of the chapter and the main points of the next chapter are presented.

**Chapter Three** reviewed the literature relating to the impact of LMVs on learners and how we can mitigate them. The impact of LMVs was discussed in detail. Some measures in place to curb LMVs were highlighted. Mapping of assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs and a highlight of basic elements and features of the ABA were discussed. The chapter also discussed circumstances under which the available assets may be used to mitigate learner multiple vulnerabilities. The chapter ended by highlighting threats that may hinder the implementation of an ABA and how they can reduce further threats.

**Chapter Four** detailed the research methodology employed and validates the methodology chosen in the research. It focused on the research paradigm, mode of enquiry, research design, research methods, participant selection and procedures, and data generation methods. This chapter explained how data is transcribed and explains how data is to be analysed through CDA. An outline of the coding format of the transcript data and an explanation of how data is going to be analysed through CDA was also given. It was crucial that the researcher followed ethical considerations in order to avoid harming participants through the research study.

**Chapter Five** emphasised on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the generated data. This was done by following Fairclough (1992)'s three levels of analyses. The data presented from focus group meetings and other discussions from the collective voice of the participants. This also complemented the data generated from document analysis and participant observant discoveries. Altogether, the data led to interpretative conclusions that were based on themes linked to objectives presented in the study.

**Chapter Six** drew from Chapter Five; the discussion of findings as linked to the reviewed literature and generated data. The theoretical and conceptual framework and the methodology was presented in this chapter. The sections in this chapter were underpinned with the objectives of the research study and the emerging themes, as outlined in chapters five and one. Findings on the situational analysis, with a view to understanding current LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies, were discussed first. Secondly, the mappings of assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs come next. Thereafter, discussions on circumstances under which the identified assets may be used, as well as the threats thereof, followed. Finally, mitigating against LMVs in the Zimbabwean context through an ABA was presented. A synthesis of findings and conclusions was done here.

**Chapter Seven** concluded the thesis by proposing the approach for using an ABA to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. The chapter discussed the reflection of the approach with methodologies: how to setup the approach; the SWOC analysis of the approach; and the contribution of the study to theory, methodology, and practice.

## **1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided the focus, scope, and significance of the research study. The important concerns underpinning my reason for embarking on this particular study were outlined, with background information providing the nature and state of learners in rural learning contexts included. This gave a clear understanding of contextual issues and how the ABA has become a crucial alternative to the challenges of mitigating the LMVs challenges. Critical objectives, sub-objectives, and research questions were presented in relation to the study. The following chapter outlined the theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO MITIGATING LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding introductory chapter gave a brief background, the focus of the study, validation, and inspiration for the study. The objective of this study was to propose ways ABA could be utilised to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwe rural learning ecologies. In other words, the study sought to empower and transform rural learners so that LMVs can be reduced in the region. In order to achieve the aim of the study, this chapter presented CT and ABA as the theoretical and conceptual framework respectively, that underpins the study and discussed their origin, underlying principles, and epistemological stances as justification for their use in this study. This chapter further highlighted the role of CT and the ABA in the mitigation of LMVs. The operational concepts, which served as the pillars of the study, were also clarified and clearly well-defined to fit within the context of this study. Finally, the summary of this chapter and the main points of the next chapter were presented.

#### **2.2 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK DEFINED**

According to Grant and Osanloo (2014, p.12), a theoretical framework, “serves as the structure and support for the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions”. Moleko (2018, p.17) adds that a theory affords the scholar an opportunity to move from merely describing the phenomena to generalising numerous characteristics of the phenomena. In this research, a theoretical framework is regarded as a blueprint that supports the rest of the

study. By utilising the theoretical framework, it assists one to understand how the study correlates with the literature. For this reason, Chidarikire (2017, p.20) states, “the theoretical framework offers a grounding base for the literature review and, most importantly, the methods and data analysis”. This was important because the theoretical framework provided a guide to achieve the focus of the study thereby reducing unsuitable realities and narrowing what is required to be done. Since the current study was emancipatory in nature, the theoretical framework was the starting point to reflect on the cause of the problem (LMVs), leading to the development of consciousness of what can be done to mitigate the problem (solution to the problem).

Equally important is a conceptual framework, which is a set of well-articulated, interconnected concepts that guide a research study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Additionally, a conceptual framework is a set of comprehensive thoughts and principles that are employed to construct a presentation. In this study, the conceptual framework permitted us to have a prepared programme from one chapter to the next.

An eclectic approach of the CT and the asset-based approach (ABA) was used to understand the current situation how we can mitigate LMVs in the rural learning ecologies of Zimbabwe. The subsequent section deliberates on CT in general.

### **2.2.1 Complexity Theory**

Complexity is a phenomenon existing in biology, geography, mathematics, physics, and group structures (Ni & Branch, 2009; Turner & Barker, 2019). Deogratias (2018) argues that using complexity theory (CT) in understanding a context, ideas from every individual are respected, and everyone is open-minded enough to listen to each other and articulate ideas into meaningful learning. It was additionally useful, in this study, to

gain a deeper insight into the selection of methods/assets used during the mitigation process. Since a complex entity is a unique phenomenon (Ni & Branch, 2009), it was vital for the rural ecologies members to understand the relationships that exists within, and the relationships between, themselves and the environment. This was among the best methods of gaining meaning, and making important, difficult decisions within the complex entity. For these and other reasons, I preferred to utilise the CT as the main theoretical concept because a complex situation arises first, then a solution would consequently be to minimise the complex situation. This is because, in CT, an individual first senses and reacts to the environment, thereby charging itself proactively to suit the changing environment. The process is self-motivating because it is continuously leading to the individual's change of behaviour to suit the environment (Morrison, 2008, 2010). In this case, the ideas drawn from CT were helpful to rural learning ecologies members in order to sense and find ways to survive the harsh environment they live in. The study took a central approach to the founding origins and views of CT, which are path dependency, emergence, adaptation, and self-organisation through working together. These offer significant understandings and methods of mitigation of LMVs in rural learning ecologies, mainly by empowering people through interactions, networking, connectivity, and relationships. The following section provided an account on the origins of CT. Later, I presented ideas, definitions, and principles of CT and introduced tools and methods used in CT to understand the mitigation of LMVs in rural learning ecologies. The assessment also included CT success and relevance to the study.

### **2.2.2 Origins and overview of CT**

CT refers to the study of a complex system in trying to understand how the system operates (Capra, 1996). CT began at the Santa Fe Institute, a nuclear laboratory founded by George A. Cowan in New Mexico (Capra, 1996; Levy, 1992; Mitchell, 2009; Ni & Branch, 2009; Turner & Barker, 2019). In addition to its founders, CT's leading proponents are Stuart Kauffman, Howard Sherman, Ron Schulta, and John Holland.

They argue, through CT, that there is an unseen order to the behaviour (and progression) of multifaceted structures. This behaviour results from the interaction of the individual and the environment. After the interaction, the individuals react according to the environment and will learn to organise themselves in ways that ensure survival (Capra & Luisi, 2014a). Founders of CT believe that individuals have specific traits that are complex, and these help the individuals to self-determine their behaviours. These traits help the individuals to react to their environment, such as during natural selection (Ni & Branch, 2009). There is interdependence between the individual and the environment, which ultimately determines certain behaviour (Capra, 1996; Capra & Luisi, 2014b). I understand that CT attempts to explain how rural learning ecologies members can unintentionally demonstrate certain behaviour patterns. Therefore, the philosophies of complexity can be used to understand the behaviour of learners facing multiple vulnerabilities (Bondarenko & Baskin, 2016; Browne, 2010). In this study, I used the word “complex” inferring multiple, or a wide variety of interrelated problems in life of an individual. I also used the word “system” referring to a set of interconnectedness of problems (De, Bot, Ortega & Han, 2017; Turner & Barker, 2019). There are numerous vulnerabilities that exist, which need to be mitigated differently across all the systems. This is why De et al. (2017) explains that a complex system sees a combination of different problems interacting together. In this study, I viewed complex systems as equated to a number of LMVs that must be dealt with simultaneously by the individuals. Rural learning ecologies are certainly classified as complex systems (Hlalele, 2012a), and as such they need a deeper analysis of how they affect the lives of rural dwellers. Since these ecologies are associated with an increased number of complex outcomes (Hlalele, 2012a; Myende & Hlalele, 2018), there was need to understand how learners responded to such LMVs.

CT encompasses a body of knowledge aimed at analysing complex systems (Morrison, 2008, 2010; Ni & Branch, 2009). Rural life and rural education are certainly classified as complex social systems that are non-linear, dynamic, and natural, and they need

deeper explorations on how they affect the lives of learners in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. In CT the individual's mind does not react to a single problem and can simultaneously react to many problems (Levy, 1994). In other words, the individual can define what they want and how to react. The individual can adapt to the complex system through learning; thus, I argue that the learners understanding of the environment helps them to adjust to it (Morrison, 2010). The fact that they can learn to change, implies that the change can be resisted; simply put, individuals can decide what to do or not which means they have the power to make decisions. Rather than parts, CT emphasises *wholes, relationships, open systems, and use of the environment* as a tool to survival (Capra & Luisi, 2014a; Davis & Sumara, 2007, Davis, Sumura & D'Amour, 2012). In this study, I viewed CT as a theory that emphasises working together to find solutions to the problem learners face by using what is available in the environment to survive. In this research, I considered it the best theory for understanding how relationships are built between and among learners, parents/guardians, teachers, headmaster, faith-based representative, NGO representatives, and a social worker in solving LMVs faced in the rural ecology under study.

Furthermore, in this study, by using the CT principles I strived for a holistic change in learner facing LMVs so that they may *evolve* and *adapt* within the same rural learning ecology in which they live. In multiple vulnerabilities settings, the learner as an organism who lives in the environment and faces LMVs due to poverty, socio-economic political challenges, death/divorce/separation of parents or guardians, harmful cultural beliefs and psychological issues (Chinyoka, 2013; Hlalele, 2012a; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). The learner needs to *change, evolve, and adapt* in the interest of survival (Cilliers, 2010; Hasan, 2014). Applied to learner facing LMVs in this study, this body of understanding gave learners a powerful tool for creating new insights that learners may change, evolve, and adapt to the learning environments in which they live in the interest of survival. Capra (1996) concurs that individuals have network of life problems within the environment that makes me believe that complex situations are there in life. Therefore,

the learner, as an organism, needs to find solutions to these problems within the rural learning ecology they live in. In other words, one's pile of problems may result in a more complex multitude of consequences and a wholesome, complex way of solving things in the quest for survival. An entity may not survive well if it fails to find solutions to the problems it faces (Davis & Sumara, 2006; Davis, Sumara & D'Amour, 2012; Turner & Barker, 2019). For this reason, I argue that the system may not fully survive if a holistic person is not shaped through the search for the solutions they have faced. This is because CT promoted active participation in discovering solution to our own problems (Morrison, 2008, 2010).

### **2.2.3 Underlying principles of CT**

CT grounds itself by giving the individual power to proactively survive, through relationship building, within the environment they live. These relationships are created as they interact with the environment, thereby enabling feedback. New behaviours would be learned as the individual and the environment interrelate within the same environment (Haffeld, 2012). As they interact, different forms of behaviour are created and valued (Morrison, 2008, 2010). This can only be achieved through a complex adaptive system (CAS) creating a wholesome individual. This CAS is manifested by several principles such as *path dependency*, *emergence*, *self-organisation*, and *adaptation*, which I will indulge below.

#### **2.2.3.1 Path dependency and LMVs**

Path dependences are outcomes predicated through combined activities taking place over specified periods (Peirson, 2004; Cilliers; 2011). Prigogine (1997) defines path dependency as the way in which individuals find themselves perpetuating certain behaviours due to the circumstances they face within the environment. Depending on

the situation, the behaviours they develop may be maintained and the individual can depend on those behaviours to survive the environment in future. Due to environmental changes at a later stage, it is difficult for individuals to adapt as they may be trapped in old behaviours (Ferreira, 2001; Fong, 2006; Morrison, 2008). However, the individual will have to think of other behavioural patterns in order to survive. The purpose of this study was to unlock ongoing those dependency activities (being recipients) in order to nurture independency (using the environment) through the lens of CT. Rural learners need to depend on the environment in order to avoid becoming recipients of support in times of need. As the rural learning ecology changes over time, learners should not continue in their old behaviour state (dependence syndrome), instead, they should adapt to changes. If the ecology (external support) continues to be successful over a long period, people can find themselves depending on it, losing self-control to support themselves in the environment (Deogratias, 2018; Morrison, 2010). The dependence syndrome breeds weaknesses and complacency, as people tend to forget how to adapt to new ways of survival. I argue that lack of funding from external supporters can causes more complex and individuals locked into the set of behaviour. When applied to Zimbabwean context, learners who always receive assistance from external support may find themselves locked in old behaviours of dependence syndrome. Learners, who depend on help and is always in a comfortable and suitable position in life, move to *equilibrium* state, dies or moves towards *entropy* (Fong, 2006; Morrison, 2010). Morrison (2008) argues that if the ecology falls short of basic needs and wants (the external support), learners in multiple vulnerabilities environments go into a *disequilibrium* state and discover ways to operate. They actively construct their own meanings and understandings relative to their prior and existing knowledge and practices, especially when they are positioned into a *disequilibrium* state (Morrison, 2005; 2006; Ni & Branch, 2009; Tuner & Barker, 2019). The learners should, therefore, respond to the ecology by using the locally available assets and by reconfiguring themselves in order to survive/self-organise. The learners must develop a survivalist mentality. If the external ecology is harsh, they adjust their internal ecology (the brain) to cope with the fluctuating ecologies. I believe survival skills can only be achieved through

the utilisation of assets in the environment they live in under the lens of CT. CT incorporates concepts that may offer considerable leverage in understanding LMVs, needs, and demands, and provides a link between micro and macro assistance needed by changing the learner in the environment. I was aware that in CT, the learners are the ones who are active in order to adapt (Tchiang, 2006; Tong, 2006). Some guidance is needed during that period to get those surprising behaviours patterns in order. There is need to unlock *dependence behaviour*, moving to an approach that caters for the holistic learner rather than to the problems, they face. Leaving them in their old behaviour, at that point (Deogratias, 2018; Morrison, 2010), the individuals maybe stake, failing to cope up to a new challenge, resulting in increasing crises. The following subsection deliberates on the principles of emergence and LMVs.

### **2.2.3.2 Emergence and LMVs**

In CT, emergence is well-formulated aggregate behaviour arising from localised, individual behaviour (Cilliers, 2006, 2011). According to Morrison (2010), emergence is an act resulting from actively being involved in a complex situation. He further explains that entities are determinant to create change in themselves. To be able to emerge, individuals need to (i) *self-organised criticality*, the need to realise a need change. Applied to rural learners, an individual needs to emerge from the dependence path they are locked.

To be able to emerge, there is a need for both (ii) an *intrapersonal* and (iii) an *interpersonal* dialogue within an individual. Intrapersonal assessments, for example, refer to our evaluation of a learner's work; *between the lines* insights into what they are saying and doing (behaviour); and our literal sensing of what is written about and by them. Interpersonally, may be our dialogue both with academic colleagues and, at times, with learners (Cilliers, 2011; Tuner & Baker, 2019). These dialogues give us

*feedback* too about the reality in behaviour and the needs of the person. Reality is emergent because it is constructed through interaction and dialogue (Stacey, 2001), which should involve good relationships and an exchange of information. Thus, I argue, the process of creative emergence causes disequilibrium, which is important and helps an individual to connect with other important individual for feedback purposes (Morrison, 2010; Stacey, Griffin & Shaw, 2000).

Additionally, for a learner to be creative, imaginative, and adaptive, they need to undergo a state of (iv) *disequilibrium* because it triggers thinking and emergence into an adaptive life skill. In respect of capabilities, I argue that emergent conditions allow the learner to self-organise themselves. Creating relationships is curial to create new actions that can be useful in life (Deogratias, 2018; Eppel, 2017; Morrison, 2010). A learner in rural settings needs to emerge away from the dependence path towards the independence way of living. Staying away from equilibrium (dependence syndrome) implies the learner should be in a disequilibrium situation (described as order-disorder transitions). In order to emerge from the state they are in involves progression to another state in order to survive (Arévalo & Espinosa, 2014; Martin, McQuitty & Morgan, 2019). As Gould (2010) observes, emergent states should not be abrupt. Instead, they should be prepared for with the environment in mind to ensure higher survival probabilities. The following subsection will reflect on the principle of self-organisation and LMVs.

### **2.2.3.3 Self-organisation and LMVs**

In CT, self-organisation is the ability of an individual to arise from a locked state in the environment and respond to the stimuli (Kauffman, 1995; Morrison, 2010). If the brain is re-activated, a learner is able to survive the complexity they face in life. I do not dispute that if the external environment is harsh, they make the internal environment (the brain)

adjust and develop in order to survive those changing environments. Self-organisation contributes to such changes involved through the use of the internal environment. If the internal environment operates effectively, the individual is able to adapt, learn, communicate and give required feedback (Cilliers, 2006; Cilliers; 2011). When the internal environment scans the external environment, it can make decisions that improve the odds of survival in those changing external environments. Change is a basic need for an individual to survive (Morrison, 2006, 2010). Thus, I argue that CT provides fertile ground for considering how individuals can learn new behaviours and adaptations to changing environments. What is important is to let learners use the environment to adapt and to evolve in positive ways by exchanging positive feedback and communication through self-organisation.

In support of its capabilities, I argue that the ability of enabling learners to learn and adapt is the basis for the emergence of complex self-organised structures (Holland, 2014, Mayfield, 2013). In learner's multiple vulnerabilities environments, an individual needs to discover learnings from personal observation in order to survive in a complex environment. Holland (2014) emphasises that building blocks, tagging, and internal models are central to self-organisation. By *building blocks*, learners are able to build on their experiences by using behaviours that work well in one setting to refine their adaptation in another similar setting. By *tagging*, learners are able to identify and discriminate among the regularities in their environment (Holland, 2014; Wilson, 2017). By *internal models*, based on their inheritance and learning, learner construct a set of imperfections, usually implicit, conditional expectations about the likely outcome of alternative actions and so are able to choose appropriately self-interested actions. Thus, to self-organise themselves, the learners identify the best solution from the environment to ease their LMVs. The learner should not be obliged to believe that this be the perfect solution to the problems they face. Rather they should search for more meaningful information so they may develop an appropriately self-interested action within the environment. The learner should not be satisfied with the outcome present, rather they

should continually *search* for meaning and solutions in order to survive and adapt in the environment. Self-organisation is ultimately a process for learner advancement, without it, there is no evolution (Cilliers; 2011). The following subsection ponders on the principle of adaptation and LMVs.

#### **2.2.3.4 Adaptation and LMVs**

Having self-organised, the learner has to adapt to the situation in which they live (Holland, 2014; Mayfield, 2013). The adaptation means changing your system over a specified period of time to be compatible with the changing environment. The time taken to adapt depends on motivation causing change (Marchi, Erdmann & Rodriguez, 2014). There must be some confusion for the individual to make the right decision. When the confusion state begins, the learners understand their current environment and decision to make. If they continue in such a state, they find patterns of behaviour they are able to make, important decision needed in order to survive and adapt. Because these forms help them survive in more and more situations, the patterns become habitual (Bondarenko & Baskin, 2016; Holland, 2012). CT here embraces the processes of *evolution* and *adaptation* for species to survive in an environment. I believe survival skills can only be developed through the utilisation of assets in any environment. Therefore, I felt that interactions of CT are vital in changing the learner in LMVs settings to be creative and evolve in the process of co-evolution.

In summary, Morrison (2010) admits that individuals change and adjust to micro and macro-societal change through path *dependency*, *emergence*, *self-organisation* and *adaptation*, which are a part CT. These processes occur through learning from the environment. This study specifically linked the learner and the need to locate individual acts within LMVs. The following subsection will deliver illustrations on how CT was used in other similar situations.

#### 2.2.4 CT and multiple vulnerabilities in learning ecologies rural

In this section, I demonstrated and illustrated how CT was employed in similar situations. This section explained how we can successfully mitigate LMVs through the lens of CT.

Firstly, CT is a *holistic and interactionist* approach. In Fong's (2006) research, CT takes a complete and interactionist approach to understanding the change in behaviour of individuals when applied. In her argument, Fong stresses that the activities done by participants during her research were self-organised and would allow individuals to change their behaviours. Fong discovered that *openness* and *collegiality* were key results when CT was applied. There was improvement of the *inter-relationships* among individuals involved as they self-organised during development activities (Fong, 2006; Hasan, 2014; Snyder, 2013). If similar activities are applied to learners in rural ecologies, they may also develop holistically through an interactionist approach with other individuals in the environment. By allowing learners to be actively involved in sharing what they face in life with significant others, this helped learners to emerge from the situation, self-organise themselves, and adapt in order to survive. Learning of new behaviour takes place through the sharing of information within the environment. Therefore, in this instance of learning, as the learner gains experience, they learn new rules that can change their lives. I believe that learners may move from dependence syndrome to independence status when we call for *inter-relationship* with other individuals from the environment they live in, utilising the assets available to them.

Secondly, Tong (2006) found that in Hong Kong schools, there was great change in behaviour among students who had difficulty in understanding English. The inter-relationship activities helped students to self-organise themselves through openness and providing feedback to each other. Tong's study illustrated that leaders need to give

chances to learners to solve their problems through interaction with the environment. I argue that the involvement of parents/guardians, teachers, headmaster/principal, NGOs, social workers and faith-based representatives as *facilitators* enables learners to emerge with solution to LMVs they face. For learners to emerge well in the harsh environment they live, they need to move towards a level of *disequilibrium* through active participation and involvement of assets within the environment for survival (Morrison, 2008, 2010). This is active participation in learning by letting learners discover solutions to the problems they face. This active participation is known as creative emergence. It involves determined individuals who actively participate in order for change to take place and this rests upon the willingness of the organism/individual (Cilliers, 2011; Stacey, 2001). That way of thinking drove me to the application of CT to find ways to mitigate LMVs learners face in rural learning ecologies. I argue for CT as it advocates working together through interaction and dialogue resulting in an individual recovering from a difficult situation and survive.

Concisely, CT redefines *the basics* of assisting an individual to initiate change away from *controlled assistance* towards a discovered, inter-disciplinary, and emergent and adaptive way of problem solving. Additionally, CT proposes for change by utilising the local and institutional assets within the environment, through *learner-centredness* and experiential and active participation (Morrison, 2010). In other words, CT emphasises the skill development process (learner-centredness) rather than helping the learner in need, as it advocates for the active participation of learners facing LMVs. Emergence and self-organisation require room for development; active participation is vital to success and progression in life for learners in rural learning ecologies. The next subsection delivers challenges of CT in education.

### **2.2.5 Challenges of CT in education**

Just as with any other theory, CT exhibits both strengths and weaknesses and is open to critique (Morrison, 2008; Radford, 2006). The framing of a lasting strategy was necessary and needed in order to develop long-term plans to affectively alleviate LMVs. Behaviour prediction is difficult especially in an unstable economic environment (Morrison, 2008, 2010). For this reason, the theory undermines its potential use as it cannot offer a guarantee behaviour trend regarding what will happen in future (Morrison, 2008; Radford, 2006) if the environment in which the agent lives changes due to political, cultural, economic, and social reasons. Changes into the above results in change in agent behaviours, thus it is difficult to predict the future behaviour related to the future problem. Stacey (2001) resolves that although temporary behaviour can be foreseeable, individuals can be unpredictable and as such, it is difficult to foretell the definite lasting consequences of their actions. Consequently, the connection between uncertainty and time is unpredictable. However, the collaboration of CT and ABA helped to determine specific assets to be used to lessen the continuing consequences of their behaviour.

Many practitioners remark that CT is conceptually interesting but is often difficult to apply in practice. CT rejects positivism and linear causality (Morrison, 2008, 2010). This is because most researchers align themselves with postmodernism (reality) and are positive about what life is (Ni & Branch, 2009). CT here was inadequate to explain LMVs because it could not offer guarantees about how things would work in the future. There was need for a theory that describes and prescribes specific behaviour and strategies to guarantee the effects on future contents. For these reasons, this was addressed by acknowledging the value of the ABA that concentrates on the use of local assets. Thus, CT linked with ABA, assumed that the character of reality is non-linear and the results would be positive. The subsequent section deliberates on ABA as a conceptual framework to be utilised in this study.

### **2.2.6 Asset-based approach**

According to Myende (2014), an ABA is a conceptual framework that acknowledges that local people are able to identify their problems and solutions to the same problems. The framework acknowledges that local people have capabilities within them to address issues affecting them (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001; Khanare, 2009). For the purpose of eliminating dependence syndrome in learners and achieving high-quality education in rural ecologies in Zimbabwe, I proposed applying the ABA concept as a conceptual framework in the study. I preferred employing the ABA concepts as the second conceptual framework because it recommends rural communities to actively participate in problem solving (Myende, 2014, 2015; Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Rippon & South, 2017). This study proposed the use of local resources/assets (learners, parents, the headmaster, teachers, and faith-based, NGO representative, and social workers) to mitigate LMVs in their environment. Addressing rural challenges can be attained by building on the assets the community has access to (Myende, 2015; Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Rippon & South, 2017). As a local teacher in the community under study, I was fascinated with ensuring that these problems be reduced through the utilisation of local assets. I decided to use the ABA as the second conceptual framework because as the learner faces complex systems, it suggests the learners use local community assets to alleviate their difficulties.

In addition, the proponents of the ABA argue that it creates sustainable initiatives that empower communities and creates sustainable livelihoods (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Khanare, 2009; Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1996; Myende, 2014). ABA activities are participative in nature. I argue that active participation creates ownership. At this point, PAR was most important, and I believed that empowerment was the key to the success of any approach. Venter (2010) and Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) support the view that the ABA empowers disadvantaged people and rebuilds their lost political and social personalities. Findings by Myende (2014) cemented the belief that this approach is a

local initiative involving local people, ultimately leaving local people empowered on how to develop solutions to their problems. I argue that if the ABA is effectively applied in rural learning ecologies, then the LMVs will be eradicated in learners' lives leaving them empowered and changed. ABA as a model, equips all rural people to initiate change for themselves in problem solving. The following subsection deliberates the origin and claims for this framework and its justified use in this study.

### **2.2.7 Origins and a brief overview of ABA concepts**

Developed by Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) at North-Western University Centre for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, the first ABA was established in the 1990's to counteract problem-based projects for community improvement. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) challenged the dependence syndrome created by relying on service providers and shifted participants towards independent, active participation, found in finding solutions to their problems. The aim of an ABA is to ensure that individuals and communities are no longer clients of charity, but rather are guided to become independent and to gain control over their lives (Hernandez, 1998). Thus ABA, as proposed by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), has the potential to enable communities to recognise their strengths and focus on those assets in their possession rather than merely being receivers and in that way they contribute to innovative ways of problem solving while creating new, valuable connections (Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Rippon & South, 2017). With ABA active participation, the concern lies in utilising what we have to gain what we want (Coetzee, 2006; Lubbe & Eloff, 2004). To apply the ABA, there are framed, basic principles that need to be followed when conducting research, as well as approaches required in order to integrate in the research. These are examined below in the next subsection.

### 2.2.8 ABA and its underlying principles

The study proposed for the ABA to mitigate learners' multiple vulnerabilities in rural learning ecologies. These challenges in the rural learning ecologies can be addressed by building on the principles and assets the community has at their disposal (Myende, 2015; Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Rippon & South, 2017). When applying ABA, Foot and Hopkins (2010, p.23) suggest ten principles one should consider when building participants' self-confidence:

- *Everyone has gifts.* There are unrecognised capacities and assets in every community. Find them and provide opportunities for people to offer them.
- *Relationships build a community.* See them, build them and utilise them.
- *Citizens are at the centre.* It is essential to engage the wider community as actors not just as recipients of services.
- Leaders involve others as *active members* of the community.
- *People care* about something. Find out what motivates individuals.
- *Identify what motivates people to act.* Every community is filled with invisible 'motivations for action'.
- A listening conversation is a way to *discover motivation and invite participation.*
- Ask, ask and ask. People must be *offered an opportunity to act.*
- Asking questions rather than giving answers invites stronger participation. A powerful way to *engage people* is to invite communities to find their answers – with agencies following to help.
- A citizen-centred 'inside-out' organisation is the key to *community engagement.*

From the ten principles set out by Foot and Hopkins (2010), this study utilised the central elements of ABA, which effectively address the mitigation of LMVs in Zimbabwean situation. These were: everyone has gifts — *change is within people;*

relationships build a community — *mobilising and utilising asset from the community*; citizens are at the centre — *community engagement*; and active participation of community members — *empowerment and sustainable livelihood*. The resulting subsection discusses the four principles and their application in this study.

### **2.2.8.1 Everyone has gifts: Change is within people**

In arguing for an ABA, it was important to appreciate that rural communities have resources that may be useful. According to Myende (2015), assets are capabilities communities can draw from to create change from. Chikoko & Khanare (2012) and Green and Haines (2012) add that these community capabilities are intangible and tangible possessions inherent within all rural communities. The tangible assets include vacant land, buildings, properties at their disposal, intangible assets include skills, and talents individuals possess connections the community may have as a network to others, and the general resource capital. According to the above definitions, assets are possessions and/or resources by local communities, which could be used to mitigate LMVs in a rural context. These can be in the form of abilities and capacities people have, associations and/organisations found in rural communities that can be used to reduce injustice individual face. I argue that these can be useful in Zimbabwe in trying to mitigate the multiple problems learners in rural schools deal with.

Furthermore, Foot and Hopkins (2010, p.7) add that people have capabilities that are;

*The practical skills, capacity and knowledge of local residents, the passions and interests of local residents that give them energy for change, the networks and connections (known as 'social capital') in a community, including friendships and neighbourliness, the effectiveness of local community and voluntary associations, the resources of public, private and third sector organisations that are available*

*to support a community, the physical and economic resources of a place that enhance well-being.*

When applied to this study, assets utilisation encouraged relationship building and promoted attachments, thus creating connections among people in the community. I argue they transformed and empowered the rural communities to control their future and their well-being through self-esteem improvements. The utilisation of capabilities, talents, and know-how within these local communities lead to people having control over any outcome. Additionally, people have opportunities to decide on what they want to see happening in their community (Foot & Hopkins, 2010). The following section briefly highlights what Chikoko & Khanare (2012) call the three tiers of assets found in communities. These assets could be classified as primary, secondary, and external or tertiary tier.

**Primary assets** are the immediate and easily accessible. They are also the assets often located within the schools (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2014) and identified as learners, teachers, management, and school infrastructures. Myende (2012) further identified the teachers and headmasters (principals) as important in addressing the needs of learner at school better than other aforementioned. Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo (2008) state that teachers and headmasters act as *human capital* in the ABA though time is a limiting factor in achieving goals with such a resource. In this research, teachers, headmasters, and school projects, gardening and vacant rooms were identified by participants as primary assets to mitigate LMVs. I was one of these assets (teacher) needed to address these problems. My own life represented practical skills, capacity, and knowledge which could be of benefit to local learners because these were derived from personal experience as a person who faced LMVs. I was also available to help these learners by guiding and counselling them when in need.

**Secondary assets** as those assets within schools' neighbourhoods that are not owned or controlled by the school (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2014). Faith-based organisations, charity organisations, local businesses, parents, and families form crucial components of the school and are examples of secondary assets identified that positively or negatively contribute to mitigating LMVs to rural learning ecologies. To address rural education challenges, an activity-based approach should be applied (Foot & Hopkins, 2010; Whelan & Timpson, 2014). Thus, I argue that allowing for the mitigation of LMVs in their learning ecologies would result in emancipation, transformation, and empowerment. I observed that in the rural community I teach, there are a lot of charity and faith-based organisations that could be accessed as secondary assets, for example, Red Cross Society, Jairos Jiri, and several churches (Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Blessed Hope Ministries, and Free Methodist). The study identified positive opportunities these assets contribute towards lessening LMVs in Zimbabwean context.

Lastly, are '**tertiary assets**' identified by Myende (2014) as the outside asset both locally and nationally. Chikoko & Khanare (2012) state that tertiary assets consist of private companies, NGOs, public companies, institutions of higher education, and research organisations. Thus, I believe that schools are important in bringing together all other assets to mitigate LMVs in rural schools. In the community I teach, school work is done in collaboration with NGOs like PLAN International, World Vision, and CARE International who contribute food and skill initiative programmes. Chowdry and Oppenheim (2015) and Jopling and Vincent (2016) explain that schools act as leverage by building social trust and providing human capital as assets to mitigating LMVs. I feel it is most often at the school where all stakeholders (all assets) meet to ensure locally generated solutions towards improvement. From the above discussion, I utilised the assets available to the rural ecologies to address the challenges rural learners face in the field of learning. The subsequent subsection deliberates on the principle that

relationships build a community through the mobilisation, utilisation, and application of community assets.

#### **2.2.8.2 Relationships build a community: Mobilising and utilising community assets**

There must be good relationship between the community and the school in order to mobilise and utilise available assets within the community (Rippon & Hopkins, 2015). As a result of relationship building, people have the opportunity to contribute to the mitigation of LMVs. There are many assets available in different forms, in the environment. What needs to be done is to identify and mobilise them and provide the opportunity to use them (Foot & Hopkins, 2010). I concur with Foot and Hopkins that everyone is worth a chance, that they have something to offer to this life, whether big or small, and that they can make a difference to the community. Given the opportunity, all selected participants offered something to their own and the lives of others. Oakley and Tsao (2007), argue that social trust and strong relationships are needed between the school and potential asset contributors as they facilitate people interact together within the environment. School administration should be able to connect all the assets and their capabilities together through relationship building (Chowdry & Oppenheim, 2015; Jopling & Vincent, 2016; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). The relationship building processes and connections created are key elements in the success of the ABA application. The utilisation of existing local ecologies assets results in local investment. With regard to this study, I argue that it was important to mobilise and build relationships for the purpose of empowering rural communities by creating good relationships and connections. Thus, in support of ABA, it was crucial to value relationship building between the school and assets to create better associations with the public. The following subsection reflects on the principle of citizens at the centre of community engagement and their application in this study.

### **2.2.8.3 Citizens are at the centre: Community engagement**

Citizens value being at the centre of discovering solutions to their problems as they feel ownership over the process (McLean et al., 2017). I do not dispute that when citizens from rural learning ecologies contribute gifts, skills, passions, knowledge, or a blend of all four, they are central to co-producing the outcomes. According to Rout and Gupta (2017), a programme that places citizens at the centre involves locals in deciding the programme and establishes the programme's outline. If people are at the centre of co-producing outcomes of the programme (Foot & Hopkins, 2010; Rippon & Hopkins, 2015) they often, grow in self-confidence and begin to contribute to broader civic activities, which shape their well-being and resilience. Myende (2014) and Myende and Hlalele (2018) support citizens being at the centre of co-producing their own results; as a consequence, communities see an increased possession of gifts, skills, passions, and knowledge. I argue that when proposing for assets to mitigate LMVs, asset mapping must start from what communities already have. Applied to rural ecologies, rural citizens may possess capabilities, which can contribute towards mitigation of LMVs. Linked to this; citizens at the centre of co-producing contributed towards connectedness, collective assets, and collective knowledge, empowerment, transformation, and social capital. In respect to this, I argue the application of ABA in this study has generated results that can be appreciated by the citizens of the rural learning ecologies. The following subsection reflects on the principle of active participation of community members-empowerment and sustainable livelihood and their application in this study.

### **2.2.8.4 Active participation of community members: Empowerment and sustainable livelihood**

The proponents of the ABA concur that ABA creates sustainable initiatives that empower communities and creates sustainable livelihoods in learners (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Myende, 2014). Citizens should be empowered to be able to live a sustainable life through active participation (Rout and

Gupta, 2017). Applied to this study, PAR methodologies are used that result in empowerment, transformation, and the emancipation of local citizens. In this study, participants identified the assets that mitigate LMVs, which further created sustainable livelihoods and empowered them. I argue ABA aims at reducing dependency syndrome and transforms and empowers the community members through skill development. At this point, PAR methodologies would be most important, as empowerment would be certain (Chidarikire, 2017). The effective application of ABA in rural ecologies helps learners to utilise the available assets to find solution to their current problems they face. The following section discusses ABA and LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

### **2.2.9 ABA and multiple vulnerabilities in rural learning ecologies**

Several benefits of applying the ABA as a measure to mitigate LMVs include empowerment, transformation, emancipation, relationship building, and the development of networks (Ferreira, 2001; McLean, 2012; Myende, 2015). A study carried out in United Kingdom on the promotion of health outcomes contributed to self-confidence in participants' health welfare, transformed their social action and behaviours and created strong relationships within (Rippon & Hopkin, 2015). In Scotland, ABA promoted and strengthened the laws that supported the good health and wellness of local citizens (Greenspace Scotland, 2011; McLean et al., 2017). When applied to this study, this process would also lead to improved wellbeing of learners by boosting their understanding and self-confidence in problem solving through active participation. This is because ABA activities involve local citizens in transforming and empowering thereby leaving them changed. Consequently, ABA strives to include those affected as involved in the mitigation process. As a result, ABA was crucial in this study in the mitigation of LMVs.

In Africa, particularly in Sub-Saharan African countries, ABA was understood to have a ripple effect on a system; a process that informs the local residents of their power to create networks and associations through active participation (Nel, 2018). According to Myende (2012, 2014, 2015), the approach encouraged the utilisation of local resources in mitigating societal problems. In his studies, Myende explains the principles of ABA in that local residents have the necessary capabilities to solve the problems they face. Thus, people should identify and mobilise capabilities within the community, rather than depend on external support. When applied to this study, I argue that an ABA proposes measures that promote the holistic welfare of an individual utilising the possessions readily available in the community. Myende (2015) argues that an ABA should be used to create pride, within communities and for solutions to their problems. The purpose of this study is to propose ways through which local assets can be used to reduce LMVs in rural ecologies of Zimbabwe. In their studies using an ABA, Mahlomaholo and Netshandama (2010) observe that rural communities are resourceful and are agents of their change within their context (problems). I believe the application of ABA could result in community members who can acknowledge the effectiveness of their capabilities in finding solution to their problems. This is because in the community I teach, I realised that local residents undermine themselves as not able to reduce multiple vulnerabilities. They have little knowledge about what ABA is all about. Suggesting together with them assets to promote sustainability within them would be important. Thus, an attempt to solve rural ecologies LMVs should build solutions from assets they have, hence an asset-based approach (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2015). I argue the same would be achieved in the community under study through utilisation of assets available in the community. The subsequent section deliberates on the challenges of ABA.

### **2.2.10 Challenges of ABA**

An ABA, as proposed in this research, incorporates constructive strategies towards alleviating LMVs in rural learning ecologies, but there are restraints found in its

application. Mathie and Cunningham (2003, 2005) acknowledged one such great challenge their research as the collective participation of all the selected participants. If local people feel positive towards the development or implementation of the ABA, this may yield positive results from the implementation of an ABA. However, this may be reduced by the inclusion of the participants. In this research, learners were the core participants. As such bringing them together with interested stakeholders to work on ways to alleviate LMVs in order to build a vision for the future with a positive outcome ensured this research was a success.

Apart from the afore-mentioned, McLean (2012) observed that there are differences with regard to the meaning of success to what an asset can achieve. Kayuni (2010) argues that there is complexity in evaluating an ABA, which is ever evolving what it does, thereby naturally making it difficult to assess its progress towards the established goals. In this study, the evaluation was approached as a reflective practice and process of learning. The involvement of the participants in the real-life situation made it possible to evaluate the value and benefits of ABA activities.

Moreover, communication is important in identifying and mobilising, which assets are to be used in the community. If not done well, this may affect the whole process. When inviting participants and stakeholders, there should be proper communication on what is to be done and how it should be done so that people may understand the gist of the approach (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003, 2005; Myende, 2012, 2015). In this research, all key stakeholders (learners, teachers, headmaster/principal, parents/guardians, NGO, faith-based and businesspeople representatives) were invited and discussion meetings were held. They were informed of the purpose of the research, which is, proposing ways to mitigate LMVs using an ABA. Failure to communicate may create gaps between the initiators and implementers of the ABA in that they may fail to understand the goals of the approach (Myende, 2015).

### **2.2.11 Integrating CT and ABA to mitigate LMVs**

This study was informed by the collaboration of the ABA concept and the CT in trying to understand the multiple processes and interactions involved in alleviating the LMVs in Zimbabwe. In rural settings, the learner as an organism who lives in the environment faces multiple challenges due to political, cultural, socio-economic and psychological problems (Hlalele, 2012a; Myende, 2014). CT is the main theoretical framework because in CT, an organism (learner) in the complex system has to proactively utilise the environment in order to survive (Levy, 1994; Fong, 2006; Morrison, 2010). In such situations, a learner needs to find solutions to these problems, which brings forth the ABA concept as the second theoretical concept. The study proposed the application of the ABA to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural schools. I believe that ABA is an approach that equips learners in complex situations to increase their control over their lives through active participation.

In addition to the above, CT has principles that subject the (system) individual to a problematic situations and causes them to change, develop, learn and evolve in the interest of survival (Holland, 2014; Mayfield, 2013; Wilson, 2017). The implication here is that systems change, develop, learn, and evolve using anything it meets from the environment, whether good (using the environment positively) or bad (using the environment negatively). When applied to this study, the learners reacted to the environment just for change, whether positively or negatively. Negative reaction, the learner may engage in bad behaviours (high-risk sexual behaviours, stealing, and drug abuse) or positively, the learner may develop good behaviours (starting a project), for survival in the environment, they live in. CT lacks this clarity in its principles for best-fit outcomes. The triangulation of CT with ABA resulted in the best fit in LMVs environments in order for learner survival and advancement. The ABA advocates use of the local community assets (tangibles and intangibles) in alleviating LMVs. ABA is

specific of what to use, thus its collaboration with CT best fitted this research (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2012).

Furthermore, Morrison (2010) observes that long-term plans to alleviate LMVs are needed. However, they are missing CT if it is applied alone in this research. He further states that prediction is challenging in disequilibrium systems. Therefore, CT, on its own, undermines its influence because it cannot offer a guarantee regarding prescriptions for future contexts (Morrison, 2008; Radford, 2006). While CT's principles for utilising environmental resources are valuable, the lack of guidance on how and what to use becomes a problem. An active individual in the environment does not however guarantee a better future. In other words, CT does not guarantee how things will work in future. There is a need for a theory/approach that strategizes, describes, and prescribes specific behaviours to guarantee the effects on future contexts. This can be addressed by acknowledging the value of ABA as it concentrates on the use of local assets as solutions to learners in rural ecologies. Therefore, ABA includes strengths in what to use within local environments, thus its inclusion in collaboration with CT go a long way in finding solutions to LMVs.

Above all, complexity can lead to path dependency, where individuals find themselves locked in old behaviours (Ferreira, 2001; Fong, 2006; Morrison, 2008). CT states that the agent (individual) should try to find ways to deal with crises, but it is not specific on how this should be done (Morrison, 2008, 2010). In the past, learners have become trapped in dependency syndrome and feel comfortable. To move from a state of equilibrium to disequilibrium, complexity does not explain on how this can be done. However, linking CT with ABA can address this as it is assumed this will go a long way in alleviating LMVs. This is because ABA reduces community/individual dependency through transforming and empowering learners (Kayuni, 2010). As such, it increases the wellbeing of learners. ABA demonstrates transformative and progressive work towards

lessening the LMVs in rural ecologies. The following section deliberates on understandings of the key concepts used in this study.

## **2.3 CLARIFICATION OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

This section briefly explains the four key concepts used in this study. The definitions of *learner multiple vulnerabilities*, *mitigation*, *rural learning ecologies*, and *learner facing learner multiple vulnerabilities* have been and continue to be used in this field of study.

### **2.3.1 Learner multiple vulnerabilities**

Multiple vulnerabilities make learners vulnerable in every aspect. LMVs can be summarised as many problems faced by learners that hinder them to access high-quality education (Bialobrzaska et al., 2012; Mackenzie et al., 2014; ZIMVAC, 2017). Katunga and Lombard (2016) describe LMVs as problematic behaviours exhibited by a person that extremely affect the person to attain quality education, including behaviour that will possibly prevent the person from performing their specialised duties. In this first perspective, I defined LMVs as those multiple complex situations affecting a learner in rural learning ecologies that prevent them from achieving the high-quality of education they are capable. These multiple challenges affect learners psychologically, emotionally, socially, and culturally thereby exposing learners to more vulnerable situations. One problematic situation may cause learners to fall into another problem leading to a vicious cycle of problems (Mapesela & Alexander, 2012). Statistically, such learners are more likely to drop out of school, are persistently absent or excluded from school, and engage in offensive and anti-social behaviour (Vulnerability Report, 2018). Thus, LMVs have direct or indirect impact on: (i) how rural learners gain access to a high-quality education; (ii) on the wellbeing of learners; (iii) on learners' likelihood of surviving in the community they live in; (iv) and all other forms of abuse. Thus, learners

facing LMVs may be prevented them from gaining the high-quality education they need in life.

From a different perspective, LMVs has been described as the complex situations also necessary for effective behaviour change within the human being (Motsa & Morojele, 2016; Vulnerability Report, 2018). This suggests that such multiple challenges should not always be regarded as negative and destructive, as it carries some constructive possibilities. I therefore understand that LMVs may promote meaningful behaviours in the environment. In this respect, misbehaviours cannot be completely considered as distressing as it has some beneficial effects on environment (Capra, 1996; Capra & Luisi, 2014b). Motsa and Morojele (2016) explain that LMVs helps different stakeholders to identify approaches to deal with such problematic situation faced. Thus, LMVs also act as a catalyst for appropriate methods to transform and empower learners in a rural learning ecologies (Ni & Branch, 2009). For instance, a teacher may use these approaches to investigate the cause and consequences of such behaviours (the *behaviouristic approach*), in which the teacher promotes and/or rebukes it. The most applicable to this study is the *interactional approach*, where teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders work together to encourage the obligatory actions. Accordingly, this study takes LMVs to be a construct that is somewhat constructive for the educational fraternity in all contexts, particularly in rural learning ecologies.

### **2.3.2 Learner facing multiple vulnerabilities**

A learner facing LMVs is someone who faces many challenges that affect them in one way or the other (Bialobrzaska et al., 2012). It is a learner who faces any physical or mental handicap or any other long-term difficulty that would make it difficult for them to function independently. This would include illnesses such as HIV and Aids; emotional or psychological problems; emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; or high levels of poverty, which prevent normal life such as nourishment, schooling, and play (Mackenzie et al., 2014; Bialobrzaska et al., 2012). This study defines learners facing LMVs as those

faces multiple, complex situations that hinder them from achieving a high-quality education.

Since learners live in a complex environment (Ni & Branch, 2009), it is vital to understand the relationships that exists within, and the relationships between, themselves and the environment in order to make an informed decision. The learners should be able to sense and react to the LMVs, thereby charging themselves proactively to manage the situation. The process is self-motivating because it is continuously leading to the individual's change of behaviour to suit the environment (Morrison, 2008, 2010). The process offer significant understanding of the pros and cons of the behaviour, thus empowering learners through interactions, networking, connectivity, and relationships. This is among the best methods of gaining meaning, and making important, difficult decisions within the complex entity, leaving the learners transformed and empowered.

### **2.3.3 Rural learning ecologies**

At the start of this research, I began by explaining the concept of a learning ecology. Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) define a learning ecology as context encompassing diverse activities, relationships, and the interactions that emerge from them (context and physical state). As such, *rural learning ecologies* are schools in the rural context with rural conditions that rural learners find themselves in (Hlalele, 2012a, 2014a). This study defines the rural learning ecologies as places where teaching and learning takes place. It is such an organisation in which change occurs over time, modifying individuals and interactions, without destroying their overall cohesion and balance. If we consider schools and communities through an ecological framework, we can say that stakeholders, educators and learners are part of a learning ecology (Hlalele, 2012a). Thus, the concept of a rural learning ecology helps us to go beyond the narrow view of

schools and other educational institutions as sole providers of education and other assistance for rural learners. Instead, a rural learning ecology takes into account the myriad of people and places encountered by learners as they encounter their learning journey (Barron, 2004). The rural schools tend to reflect the characteristics or contexts of the community in which they belong, thus, in this research, I refer to schools located in rural area, with similar characteristics as rural learning ecologies.

Traditionally, focus on rural ecology and rural schooling has more often focused on structures that materially support the institution, rather than the activity that support the learning (Hlalele, 2014a). This is because the notion of learning ecology places the emphasis directly on the learner and the learning, and maps the multiple connections and interactions they have that contributes to learning happening for that individual, and collectively for that society. This study thus considered rural learning ecologies as centres where an individual faces and learns behaviour through interaction. Since schools are also required to deliver teaching and learning services to learners in preparation for tertiary education (Hlalele, 2012a), rural learning ecologies should also provide a safe and effective learning environment for every learner. Although Myende (2014) argues that rural schools are characterised by socio-economic problems which results in poor performance among rural learners, rural communities have other resources that they can utilise to mitigate LMVs learners face. Rural learning ecologies thus, are rich in assets, however, they need to be **conscientised** to utilise locally available resources in a collaborative manner. According to Chidarikire (2017), this can be done by engaging them in participatory research to address their situation, leaving them transformed and empowered. Thus, despite socio-economic hardship, rural learning ecologies have survived, pointing to rural communities' resilience and determination to make the best of what they have. At the same time, the government policies have played a key role in shaping and changing the lives of rural community by donating food and providing part payment of OVCs levy payment (Manjengwa et al., 2015; GoZ, 2018), however, there is need to actively involve them in finding solutions to

other problems that cannot be managed by the government. A holistic or integrative approach is necessary for understanding the origin of such social and economic problems of the rural community, in order to conceptualize a strategy for their solution, thus active participation is required.

### 2.3.4 Mitigation

*Mitigation* is the effort taken to lessen or reduce the impact or risk of a disaster or problem (Weichselgarter, 2011). In general, to mitigate means to minimise the degree of harm to human beings. Thus, in this research, I argue that there are mitigating strategies that could be applied to minimise the effects of LMVs in rural ecologies. This is why I suggested ABAs as mitigating tools to LMVs. In this study, I suggested that mitigating strategies incorporate three components, namely: mitigation goals, mitigation actions, and an action plan for implementation. **Figure 2.1** below can illustrate this:



**Figure 2.1: The mitigation strategy**

Based on these definitions, mitigation can be viewed as a process of bringing different people together to work collectively to find solution to a problem faced. Finding solutions for LMVs in a rural learning ecology is a complex issue that needs a particular plan to be followed (Figure 2.1). It is therefore important that different stakeholders in the rural learning ecology work together to mitigate LMVs for rural learners to achieve quality education like their urban counterparts. Although Myende (2014) argues that rural schools are characterised by socio-economic problems which results in poor performance among rural learners, it is the role rural learning ecologies communities to

embrace collective values and expectations to promote interactions among different stakeholders, resulting in interpersonal caring and support that encourages meaningful education. Thus Chidarikire (2017) argues that active participation and collaborative working promotes goal sharing, relationship building, and reciprocal interdependence as a way of life within a rural community, hence supporting their achievement. If people in a rural learning ecology work together with a common mitigation goal, they might be inspired to collectively own success, thus an achievement in mitigating LMVs in their rural community.

## **2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In summation, any individual positioned within a rural context, which is characterised by complex multiple problems is bound to be facing LMVs. This was well described through the CT lens. The same individual in a rural ecology can be in a position to find solutions to multiple vulnerabilities they face. This chapter discussed how ABA illustrates the importance of assets in the mitigation of multiple vulnerabilities. Additionally, the ABA in conjunction with the CT were discussed to evaluate how they might be utilised to propose solutions to LMVs by creating a map of assets the communities have access to. Such capabilities are within the communities the individuals live in. The reasons for utilising the two theoretical/conceptual frameworks were highlighted. The preceding chapter discusses the literature review informing the asset-based approach to mitigating LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW INFORMING THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO MITIGATING LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter presented the complexity theory and the ABA as the theoretical/conceptual frameworks that underpin the study. This chapter further highlighted the role of complexity theory and the ABA in the mitigation of LMVs. This chapter reviewed literature informing the asset-based approach (ABA) to mitigating LMVs in Zimbabwean context. An analysis of the current situation in Zimbabwe was conducted in relation to the underlying issues causing these vulnerabilities. Their impact were discussed in detail. Some measures in place to curb them were highlighted. Mapping of assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs and highlight basic elements and features of an asset-based approach to mitigating LMVs were discussed. The chapter discussed circumstances under which the available assets may be used to mitigate LMVs. The chapter ended by highlighting threats (if any) that could impede the application of the ABA and how we can reduce these threats.

#### **3.2 AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

Various studies mainly generalise the orphan situation in Zimbabwe (Ganga, 2013; Ganga & Maphalala, 2013; Gomba, 2018). Only a few studies document how we can use the ABA to mitigate LMVs, especially in Zimbabwe. In the existing literature, I argue that much is reported on the difference in learner welfare between rural and urban learners, and a little has been said how we can assist the rural learners at risk. These

numerous factors have now caused learners in rural communities to face numerous problems (LMVs). These LMVs have now affected learners causing learners to drop out of school, girls getting married at a young age (some as young as 14 years old) due to lack of school fees. Some school going girls are found working as house girls and boys as herd boys and some are found indulging in promiscuous behaviours. This has caused low pass rates in rural ecologies. These facts motivated me to select a school surrounded by such a situation to try the ABA to address these LMVs. Against this background, I discussed the current LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

### **3.2.1 Understandings of LMVs**

In this study, I argue that LMVs in Zimbabwe are due to socio-economic, cultural, political, and psychological factors. According to Munyati (2006), a vulnerable learner is one facing many problems, for example, learners living: in poor households; in child-headed households; with unhealthy parents; and with disabled parents. For developing this study, learners facing LMVs are defined as all learners at risk of dropping out of school due many problems they face in life, thus affecting them from achieving high-quality education. Thus, when I say LMVs, I mean the problems learners face that go beyond simply affecting the learner's mental and emotional growth and thus affecting their contact with society. These are likely to disadvantage learners in their cognitive and behavioural development as they grow. In addition, the learner must be provided with love, self-esteem, pastoral care, socialisation, and education (Tumbul & Tumbul, 2001). The absence of these, to learners attending school, will expose learners to more LMVs (GoZ, 2018; Magampa, 2014). Furthermore, Zimbabwe's fragile governmental situation has and is depriving learners of a high-quality education and causing some to be more exposed to LMVs (UNESCO, 2017a; UNESCO, 2017b; ZIMVAC, 2019). I further argue that the increased lack of basic needs of already vulnerable learners leads to LMVs. This has exposed some learners to sexual harassment, harmful forms of cultural practices, all forms of abuse, a shortage of levies, and learner labour, resulting

in them getting married earlier than expected in Zimbabwe. Political and economic meltdown has resulted in reduced external assistance by the government. High dropout rates are evident in Zimbabwe often leading to early marriages and promiscuous behaviours by learners (UNESCO, 2017a; UNESCO, 2017b; UNESCO, 2018). Based on the above arguments, I conclude that these are the LMVs learners in Zimbabwe. The following subsection discusses categories of LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

### **3.2.2 Categories of LMVs**

The term multiple vulnerabilities profoundly various; it has various categories according to what caused it and the effects on the learner facing it. It can be caused by being poor, being an orphan due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, different forms of abuse (sexual, emotional, physical, drug), or any other factor (King, 2013). These can be;

- i. Learners receiving support/care for from social services.
- ii. Learners are experiencing all forms of abuse or being taken advantage of because of the situation they are in.
- iii. Learners living with disability, living with disabled parents or guardians, living with mentally ill parents.
- iv. Learners from poor households, families, or locations. These situations are likely to affect their future.
- v. Learners at risk of failing to acquire identity documents due to various reasons.
- vi. Learners at risk of being involved in gangsters' activities at school or at home.
- vii. Learners looking after other youngsters and elderly people (Vulnerability Report, 2018; ZIMVAC, 2017)

I understand that the learners facing the above are at risk to exposing themselves to other multiple vulnerabilities. At risk learners also experience feelings of loneliness and hopelessness which lead to frustration and prevailing feelings that disturb their emotional welfare (Chinyoka, 2013). Such learners end up dropping out of school

and/or getting married. Thus, I argue for the ABA to propose ways to mitigate the detrimental effects of LMVs.

### **3.2.3 Situational analysis of LMVs in rural ecologies**

Of the 13 million Zimbabweans, 48 percent are learners. About 72 percent live in rural communities making it difficult to access good education, proper information and other basic commodities to have good quality of life (GoZ, 2018; ZIMSTAT, 2013). Due to political and economic situations, the country is failing to deliver the basic services needed by its people. The education and health sectors have been severely affected and youth people suffer most during this adverse period. Poverty has a learner's face in Zimbabwe. Notably, there are over 6.3 million boys and girls in Zimbabwe, the poor constitute 78 percent including 26 percent in situations of extreme poor. Of the 78 percent, 34 percent are extremely poor rural learners. Thus, nearly nine out of ten learners in rural communities are considered poor (GoZ, 2018; ZIMSTAT, 2013). The geographical location of schools in the Chiredzi South District (Masvingo Province) does not spare learners learning in such schools to face problems these communities face. I observed that poverty is a common denominator for LMVs and causes a failure of most learners' rights to be realised. This is because Masvingo has a rural *consumption poverty prevalence* rate of 78 percent while those in extreme poverty range from 22 percent to 54 percent for the province where the study was carried (GoZ, 2018; ZIMVAC, 2019). It was observed that poverty has a direct or indirect impact on: how rural learners gain access to a high-quality education; on the wellbeing of learners; on learners' likelihood of surviving in the community they live in; and all other forms of abuse (Chinyoka, 2013; Chinyoka & Ganga, 2011; Chinyoka & Naidu, 2013). In such areas where poverty is prevalent, it affects learners' holistic development across multiple contexts, including in their family, at home, in their neighbourhood, and at school (Chireshe et al., 2010). In summary, poverty determines the learners' type of accommodation, school they attend and type of teachers who teach them, resulting in

facing other vulnerabilities (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). The learner will then be facing multiple problems that will prevent them from gaining the high-quality education they need in life. I observed that the above is reflected in most Zimbabwean schools, thus, the need for the ABA, which advocates for emancipation, transformation, and empowerment to mitigate LMVs.

Vulnerability is perceived to have wider spectrum-affecting learners in rural ecologies (Katunga & Lombard, 2016; Potter & Brotherton, 2013). Having two or more of the above is deemed as facing LMVs. Statistically, learners from poor families are more likely to drop out of school, are persistently absent or excluded from school, and engage in offensive and anti-social behaviour (Vulnerability Report, 2018; ZIMVAC, 2017, 2019). One problem may cause learners to fall into another problem leading to a vicious cycle of problems (Hlalele, 2012a, 2014b; Mapesela, Hlalele & Alexander, 2012). I argue that the learner facing the above is facing LMVs. It was important for participants in this study to work as a team to mitigate above problems. Findings by Kent in England show that due to their socio-economic background, most learners perform poorly or drop out of school (Kent Country Council, 2018). King (2013) and Modise (2014), in their research in South African, argue that being vulnerable because of poverty leads to a learner dropping out of school and engaging in activities that could ruin their lives. In Zimbabwe, using ABA could prevent such vulnerabilities.

As earlier alluded, poverty, child abuse, sex abuse, drug abuse, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic has resulted in multiple vulnerabilities being faced by learners living in rural ecologies (Chinyoka, 2013; Hlalele, 2012; King, 2013). Understanding poverty and vulnerability is significant in improving the solutions to challenges in rural ecologies. The two are interrelated though they differ (Atkinson, 2008). Atkinson further adds that vulnerabilities refer to exposure to a number of problems, while poverty is having a limited access to basic needs and wants to survive in life. I argue that, while being

different, as explained above, both concepts result in learners facing LMVs. Having understood the two thoughts, there was need to propose for the ABA utilisation to achieve high-quality education in rural ecologies.

Due to poverty and economic hardships, few families are willing to take care of learners at risk because of resource constraints to meet the needs of the learners (Chinyoka, 2013; GoZ, 2018; Katunga & Lombard, 2016). While there are programmes put in place to assist such learners, there are financial and human resource constraints that have hindered the full enjoyment of rights by learners facing multiple vulnerabilities (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; ZIMSTAT, 2013; ZIMVAC, 2017, 2019). Programmes of support implemented by NGOs to support learners are small scale such that they leave a large number of vulnerable learners at risk, especially in Chiredzi district. Approaches used by the majority of organisations are welfarist in nature and are not aimed at providing long-term sustainable solutions to the plight of learners (GoZ, 2018; Justice for Children, 2013). Since Zimbabwe's economic and political crisis has critically affected social assistance systems, resources are inadequate to provide for the needs of learners facing multiple vulnerabilities (Triegaardt & Kaseke, 2010), (Katunga & Lombard, 2016). Considering the welfare nature of assistance, as earlier alluded to by Justice for Children (2013), I argue that trying the ABA was a long-term solution to problems they face as it is transformative, empowering and emancipating.

### **3.2.4 Underlying issues causing LMVs in rural ecologies**

Within this section, I have discussed the effects of the following on learners in rural ecologies: poverty; HIV/AIDS; the geographical location of rural communities; cultural beliefs; death/divorce/separation of parents/guardians; and socio-economic situation.

### 3.2.4.1 Poverty and LMVs

The main obstacle for most people in Zimbabwe remains poverty (GoZ, 2018; ZIMVAC, 2019). Approximately 220,000 to 250,000 families (with 625,000 to 700,000 learners) are poor and cannot afford to take care of their families (UNICEF Zimbabwe & ZNSA, 2015; Vulnerability Report, 2018). Poor families spend about 20 to 30 percent of their disposable income on basics. The government of Zimbabwe acknowledges that poverty is the biggest constraint in people's lives and there is need to address it through the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) (2013-2018) (GoZ, 2018; ZIMASSET, 2013). The ZIMASSET aims at empowering and developing societies to eradicate poverty through active participation. Food Security and Nutrition, and Social Services and Poverty Eradication are the two important aspects aimed at addressing the necessities of poor citizens. Two important factors to this study are *human capital development* and *empowerment of the society to eradicate poverty*. When applied to this study, learners in rural ecologies are not excluded from development and are empowered to mitigate poverty causing the LMVs they face. If the government seeks to address poverty, I argue that it has to start from the grassroots up. The study seeks to propose for the ABA to mitigate these vulnerabilities. The ABA principles promote for the active participation of the marginalised communities to seek solutions to the problem they face, an inside out approach (Myende, 2014), thus, leaving the society empowered and transformed. The study utilised ABA, which has proven to play a vital role in improving the lives of learners in rural ecologies (Myende & Hlalele, 2018).

I began by looking at poverty data and how it affect the rural learners in the education fraternity. While the data is outdated, it still provides a significant picture of the current situation in Zimbabwe. Statistically, Zimbabwe established that poverty affects mostly those in rural areas (ZIMVAC, 2017). The poor suffer from hunger and malnutrition and can often only afford one meal per day; meeting their nutritional needs is a challenge

(Katunga & Lombard, 2016; Triegaardt & Kaseke, 2010). In addition, the poor find it difficult to invest in their future and normally are negatively affected by diseases they could survive (GoZ, 2018; UNICEF Zimbabwe & ZNSA, 2015; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; ZNSA, 2013). For these reasons, it was my will to address poverty through the application of the ABA in the hope that it would leave learners emancipated, transformed, and empowered in accordance with ZIMASSET (2013) requirements.

Poverty negatively affects learners. The National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP 111) highlighted that more than two-thirds of Zimbabwean learners live below the poverty datum line and gaining access to the basic needs of life (education and health) is a challenge (GoZ, 2018; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; ZIMVAC, 2017). These conditions are because of Zimbabwe's economic instability (ZNSA, 2013). Failure to rationalise wealth is problematic in rural communities (Motsa & Morojele, 2019). The environment in which the poor live makes them think more that they cannot afford anything, further making them believe that poverty is permanent in their lives (Chinyoka, 2013; UN, 2015). I argue that, if the mind is colonised by poverty-based thinking, one cannot see what assets are available to alleviate LMVs. I realised that due to the detrimental effects of poverty there was need for the ABA to reposition the thinking of rural dwellers to propose for assets to mitigate the LMVs caused by poverty.

Studies by Chinyoka & Naidu (2014) and Chindanya (2012) indicate that poor learners usually have under-educated family members. As such, learners received limited guidance in their schoolwork. This has a great impact on learners' education (Threlfall, Seay & Kohl, 2013). I felt that if learners lack such care and support, interventions are needed so they may receive family warmth, *loco parentis*. Such involvements enable learners to build self-confidence in their schoolwork so they may excel (AIDSTAR-One

Project, 2011). The need to use the ABA is opted-in to bring back the status core of learners who have less educated parents to mitigate LMVs they may face further in life.

Furthermore, many rural learners facing LMVs come from poorer families and are less likely to access the basic needs of life than those learners from better families (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014; Dixon-Roman, Everson & McArdle, 2013). The dwellings of these poor learners in rural areas are often located in vulnerable locations where they have limited access to healthcare, food, and education services. I observed that Zimbabwean rural learners have such experiences. Therefore, multiple vulnerabilities arise because of the social circumstances rural learners face. One dimension of being a learner facing LMVs leads to other multiple vulnerabilities including cases of abuse, child labour, and social segregation (Hlalele, 2012a). The inability of a learner to cope with multiple vulnerabilities will expose learners to other socially multiple vulnerabilities. I was driven to undertake the study by such situations in rural ecologies, thereby applying the ABA to mitigate the social problems learners face.

#### **3.2.4.2 HIV/Aids pandemic and LMVs**

Zimbabwe has a population of 13.1 million, with HIV prevalence at 13.7%. Due to HIV/Aids pandemic, there are 1.6 million orphans and other vulnerable learners supported by equally vulnerable caregivers (ZNSA, 2013). Research has proved that as learners grow they increasingly face diverse multiple vulnerabilities caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Coovadia & Mantell, 2010; Muguwe, 2012). These include orphanhood and caring for unhealthy caregivers (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; ZIMVAC, 2017). Facing all these, a rural learner faces emotional vulnerabilities that lead to other multiple vulnerabilities. If these issues are not addressed, they affect the lives of those young people living under such situations (Chinyoka, 2013; Chinyoka & Ganga, 2011; Chinyoka & Naidu, 2013). Additionally, HIV/AIDS cannot be prevented from

increasing the LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. This may result in uncertainty, doubts, worries, and confusion in learners. Their vulnerability situation may expose them again to other vulnerabilities. This reflected the need for the ABA as an alternative to mitigate LMVs due to the HIV/Aids pandemic. In this study, I realised learners needed to be emancipated, transformed, empowered, and equipped with the skills underpinned in the ABA.

Additionally, learners living with HIV experience many challenges at school due to discrimination by others. They usually fail to attend school because of poor health and problems in finding school levies (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; ZIMVAC, 2019). The psychological wellbeing of such learners was found to be low and at risk of depression. The study revealed that problems (all forms of abuse and stigmatisation) faced by these learners affect their academic performance. It cannot be disputed that such learners can suffer a number of vulnerabilities such as stigmatisation and discrimination if their fellow peers discover their statuses (Ganga, 2013; Ganga & Chinyoka, 2010). It was, therefore, the purpose of the current study to address LMVs through the application of the ABA.

Furthermore, early problems learners face affects their social life, their education, and can become life-long (Barnett and Whiteside, 2002) due to the orphan-hood caused by HIV/AIDS. A study conducted in the Rakai District of Uganda showed that NGO groups working with learners facing LMVs established that situations of poverty and hunger been exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Ganga, 2013; Mogotlane et al., 2010; Muguwe, 2012). Again, studies have confirmed that some of these young learners, as they become sexually active, end up dropping out of school due to pregnancies and early marriages. Regional studies have confirmed that among rural learners facing multiple vulnerabilities, there are programmatic gaps in helping them to control their sexual and reproductive health needs (ZIMVAC, 2017; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017).

For this problematic gap, it was my feeling that the application of the ABA could result in helping learners to mitigate LMVs resulting from HIV/Aids pandemic. Research done in Kenya and Uganda show there is need to upgrade existing support services to help learners to be cope with complex life situations (Muguwe, 2012). I argue that the data shows that learners in rural areas are subjected to a number of vulnerabilities that affect their ability to access high-quality education and they need to be assisted. There need for an approach to mitigate such vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean situations, like the ones done in Kenya and Uganda, was justified due to the effectiveness of the approach in other countries.

### **3.2.4.3 Cultural beliefs and LMVs**

Studies conducted in Zimbabwean rural ecologies revealed that where families are affected by poverty, the girl learner withstands the worst of it as she may drop out of school where there are limited resources (Chinyoka, 2013; Katunga & Lombard, 2016). They further explained that, if assistance is offered, some parents would rather have the boy learner signed up for OVC assistance than the girl learner, stating that the girl learner will get married instead. As a result, girl learner may enter into early marriage or engage in risky behaviours such as prostitution. The girl learner's right to speak and be heard is curtailed by cultural beliefs, as they are normally relegated to the lowest rung in decision-making resulting in high school dropout rates (Chinyoka, 2013). Thus, cultural beliefs have some impact on girl learner education. Given the above, I felt that, through the ABA, parents/guardians need to be counselled and advised on available resources to create an environment that encourage learning of both boys and girls. Evidence from study by Chinyoka and Naidu (2013) show that girl learners from poorer rural families generally drop out of school due to cultural effects (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). Cultural beliefs favour male learners over female learners, causing female learners to drop out of school (Hlupo & Tsikira, 2012). In support of female education, UNESCO (2017b) posits that most parents value educating boys over girls as they view educating girls as

a monetary loss. This bias towards educating boys is based on the notion of future advantage, where boys are seen as the future breadwinners of the family and girls are suited only for marriage (Chinyoka, 2013; Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). This calls for early interventions by schools alongside other community agencies to care for all learners in schools. In the context of this study, utilising the ABA would be of great help in decolonising people's traditional cultural beliefs that all learners are different, they need to be treated the same. Thus, implementing the ABA would be of paramount importance in reducing the bias towards the girl/boy learner education.

In addition to the above, findings by Chinyoka (2013) show that soon after initiation ceremonies, girls tend to have negative attitudes towards schoolwork, resulting in early marriages and dropping out of school. Boys too are not spared this situation. I realised that it sounds as if the initiation ceremonies practised in these rural place fuels early marriages and promiscuous behaviours these learners portray. Such displayed behaviours may cause learners engaging in various bad behaviours exposing them to increased vulnerabilities. The ultimate goal of applying the ABA is to help people from different cultural beliefs to adjust and accept that learners are the same and need to be treated equally. The ABA was identified as a mitigation measure to reduce such effects in rural girls' lives.

#### **3.2.4.4 Death/separation/divorce of parents/guardians and LMVs**

The death/separation/divorce of parents or guardians has a psychological impact on learner's experiences. Findings by Chinyoka (2013) show that Zimbabwean rural learners display traumas related to the death of a parent and this affects their performance in school. Such learners display withdrawals, being emotional short-tempered, crying, and bullying other children when at school. The cognitive, behavioural, and emotional health and intellectual growth can be permanently be

affected if learners experience the above (Gomba, 2018; Vulnerability Report, 2018). The effects are manifested through affective, behavioural and emotional manifestation. These can be summarised as below.

**Affective manifestation** includes depression, despair, anxiety, guilt, anger, hostility, and loneliness. **Cognitive manifestations** include preoccupation with the deceased, low self-esteem, self-reproach, helplessness, hopelessness, a sense of unreality and problems with memory and concentration. **Behavioural manifestations** include agitation, crying, fatigue, and social withdrawal. **Emotional manifestations** include moody behaviour, bullying, and frustrations (Gomba, 2018; Magampa, 2014; Vulnerability Report, 2018). These LMVs often require support for mental health conditions and communication issues beyond the family. If this help is not provided, these conditions can escalate and lead to a range of poor outcomes and experiences for the learner. In the understandings of the aforementioned view, the adverse consequences of LMVs were not only limited to learners facing them but also threatened the future of their peers, schools, communities, and other stakeholders. It was, therefore, the attempt of this study to create suitable actions, through the application of ABA, which would change the situation for the better. This is because LMVs are linked, meaning some learners have problems adding to problems leading to more problems. I realised that this is unpleasant for learners, particularly when learners have vulnerabilities that can have extensive long-term consequences for their other peers. Such learners need psychosocial support, such as plenty of love and care, to improve the wellbeing of a person and to motivate both the individual and society as a whole (Gomba, 2018; Mwoma & Pillay, 2015; Vulnerability Report, 2018). In this current study, I regarded the ABA as an opportunity to mitigate such LMVs faced by learners in rural ecologies.

Findings by Magampa (2014) indicate that household members depend on the system to meet their specific and mutual needs. This shows that involving parents in addressing the needs of learners is very important and considering this through the ABA was important. The absence of a family member, parent, or guardian to cater to these individual needs is detrimental and exposes the learner to LMVs (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014; Magampa, 2014). The family must provide love, self-respect, non-physical guidance, economic support, socialisation, and education (Chindanya, 2012). If learners lack these due to death of one or both parents, they will become victims of discriminatory practices in the society they dwell in (Okeke, Nzewi & Njoku, 2012). Such learners usually experience social stigmatisation and as such might be/feel isolated. They often need assistance in the form of guidance and counselling. Thus, for the unity and safety of a learner's socialisation, championship, and affection, the family's function is of vital importance. I realised the involvement of parents, social workers, and faith-based representatives through the ABA was important in assisting the above learners facing LMVs in rural ecologies. This brought to mind the need for a partnership of teachers and parents in identifying the problems learners face to attain high-quality education in rural learning ecologies through the ABA.

Moreover, some learners raised by emotionally abusive parents/guardians may learn bad behaviours from them as they grow. As a result of their emotional and financial vulnerabilities, these teenagers are more likely to be forced into exploitative situations like prostitution, as a way to survive, and are often sexually abused (Chinyoka, 2013; Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014; Magampa, 2014). Therefore, the possibility of these learners dropping out of school is very high and they could be recruited into child labour. In their studies, King (2013) and Magampa (2014) discovered that usually the eldest children found themselves taking the parental role in families, doing household chores, taking care of other siblings, and caring for an ill or surviving parent. This means that facing LMVs affects the social life of learners. Thus, poor social conditions in rural ecologies build an unfavourable atmosphere, which affects academic progress of such learners.

Owing to these views, this study assumed that a single vulnerability leads to other vulnerabilities resulting in multiple vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, findings, in South Africa, by Modise (2014) and King (2013), show that LMVs, because of economic poverty; can lead learners dropping out of school. In Zimbabwe, Chinyoka (2013) found that many girls willingly become involved in relationships for economic, transactional reasons. As they engage in such activities, young children sometimes cannot think of having protected sex rather they are exposed to possible HIV/AIDS infection, or they risk pregnancy, or other sexually transmitted diseases. Falling sick or pregnant may further deprive to be successful in their education. Therefore, in order to reduce the social impact of LMVs, learners need to be assisted, through ABA, so they may learn to cope with the stressors they face.

#### **3.2.4.5 Socio-economic situation and LMVs**

Ever since Western countries imposed illegal economic sanctions on Zimbabwe in 2000, the country's socio-economic environment has worsened (Chinyoka, 2013; GoZ, 2018; ZIMASSET, 2013). The hyperinflationary atmosphere was experienced that led to the shortage of goods and services (GoZ, 2018). School dropouts increased, and low pass rates were evident in both primary and secondary sectors (Nyoni, Nyoni & Bonga, 2017). Not only education was affected, but social and health sectors deteriorated too (Chinyoka, 2013). Thus, Zimbabweans, inclusive of learners experienced multiple vulnerabilities as a result of the economic meltdown, especially in rural areas. To mitigate the impact of the economic meltdown on learners and women, the government, in partnership with other stakeholders (NGOs), implemented humanitarian and development programmes (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). I realised that existing literature on assisting learners facing multiple vulnerabilities did put focus on needs rather than on addressing the causes that leave learners facing LMVs not fully assisted.

As a result, this gave me the motivation to endeavour into the study which to address the problem for learners to achieve high-quality education, the ABA.

Zimbabwe's socio-economic political situation has affected unfavourably on the ability of learners at risk to access their basic needs (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; ZIMASSET, 2013). Lack of resources, as a result of political and economic instability, has resulted in assistance given to learners facing LMVs seriously eroded to levels where we can describe as non-existent (Chinyoka, 2013; Ganga & Maphalala, 2013). In this instance, learners who depend on government assistance would suffer more. Such learners would end up facing more vulnerabilities as little or no assistance is given. Furthermore, findings by Chireshe (2010) show that attention to a particular population or problems depend heavily on the political affiliation of group or individuals. With such a political situation in Zimbabwe, I felt impelled to carry out a study by first conducting a situational analysis of the present state of the services being provided to learners facing LMVs. It was important to establish if there really was bias in the selection of learners in need of assistance is politically motivated or not.

Furthermore, Zimbabwe experienced severe drought in 2017/2018 season due to marginal rainfall received leading to food insecurity and malnutrition in an unfavourable geopolitical atmosphere. As a result, the drop out level increased as the few funds available were channelled into food procurement (ZIMVAC, 2019). Since most people in rural areas survive through subsistence farming, most learners from subsistence farming families were affected by this drought. There was a high rate of drought in rural schools, resulting in increased exposure to LMVs. Responding to the drought, UNICEF Zimbabwe utilised current development programmes to assist the humanitarian affected. About 15,083 learners with multiple vulnerabilities received proper care and services (ZIMVAC, 2017; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). In trying to address the problem, the government, through UN aid, did not focus on addressing the cause but

rather focused on the need. I was motivated to undertake this study to propose for ABA, which addresses the cause of LMVs, not the need.

### **3.2.5 Current processes in addressing LMVs in Zimbabwe**

Having discussed the causes and effects of LMVs, the following section discuss measures currently in place internationally, regionally, and locally to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwe.

#### **3.2.5.1 Global interventions**

*Internationally*, Zimbabwe is a signatory on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the greatest comprehensive global document relating to the human rights of learners (Justice for Children, 2013; Taylor & Chisvo, 2010; UNICEF Zimbabwe & ZNSA, 2015). The CRC describes the variety of rights for learners below the age of 18. The CRC highlights that children, throughout their children, need to be provided with care and protection from any harm. It emphasises that caring for learners is a special responsibility of the family. The CRC also indicated that it is the family's obligation to provide guidance and path to the learner, and that of state should assist rather than leaving the family alone (UNESCO, 2017a). For this to happen, a change in the way families provide responsibilities to learners in rural ecologies would be realised through the utilisation of the ABA. Of interest to this study are the following Articles: i) Article seven — survival and development; ii) Article eighteen — parental responsibilities; iii) Article twenty — protection of a child without family; and iv) Article twenty-eight — education. Thus, UNICEF Zimbabwe supports the above articles through monitoring and implementation. Zimbabwe has already included these rights in the National Action Plan III (ZIMVAC, 2017). This means that, the country is also committed to the full implementation of children's rights (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). Education, thus, is the ultimate right of all learners, regardless of geographical location, and/or the LMVs

they face. Without help from UNICEF, learners would find it difficult to aspire to ascend in life through the educational system. Although literature proved Zimbabwe's commitment towards providing care to learners through legal rights, I felt that there was a gap between the documented rights and the proper care of learners in rural ecologies. In this study, the application of the ABA would make the learner, the community, and all stakeholders realise the rights of learners to education and life.

Furthermore, the CRC was revised to reinforce the safety of learners, which resulted in the drafting of a Learner's Bill that is expected to be implemented soon (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). Additionally, the GoZ implemented the Child Justice Act that protects learners' rights as related to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the administration of Juvenile Justice (Chinyoka, 2013; Justice for Children, 2013). This is because the GoZ saw the need to protect all learners, irrespective of geographical location. This path proved that the GoZ is committed to the full implementation of principles established at the Dakar World Educational Forum of 2000, and the principles of SDGs to be achieved by 2030 (UN, 2019; UNESCO, 2017b). However, the GoZ encountered, and still encounters, many challenges in implementing such programmes. All these were not fully implemented due to the socio-economic and political situations in the country, thus, creating a gap between what is planned and what has to be done. I was touched and realised ABA's need to address the LMVs faced by rural learners due to the partial implementation of enacts by the government.

Literature states that, the International Labour Organisation Convention 182 regarding the "Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour", was approved by UN members in June 1999 (UNICEF Zimbabwe & ZNSA, 2015). Following Convention 182, Zimbabwe revised the law regarding Learners' Protection and Adoption Act and developed the existing Learners' Act (Chapter 5:06) to uphold children's rights (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). The act protected school-going

learners from being exploited and abused through child labour. As such, acts are there to protect the learners; I understood that some parents/guardians still remove their learners from school due to various reasons. After dropping out of school, some learners work to support themselves or their younger siblings. I felt that due to the geographical location of the rural communities, these laws are often not completely adhered to during times of crisis and no one seems concerned if they are followed or implemented. Drawing from the above observation, I argue that trying the ABA to inform the learner of their rights and lessen the LMVs that cause them to be caught in an abyss.

### **3.2.5.2 Regional interventions**

*Regionally*, in sub-Saharan Africa, Zimbabwe is a signatory to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the initial regional child rights treaty, which came into effect in 1999 (ZIMVAC, 2017). Like the CRC, this charter protects the rights of children. Furthermore, the Charter stresses how children should be protected socially and culturally by their parents and the community at large. Like the CRC, the charter emphasises the responsibility of the parents in nurturing the child and stresses the importance of family roles in the life of a learner (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; Justice for Children, 2013). The above literature does not dispute Zimbabwe's attitude towards addressing and protecting learners' rights. Although the charter managed to bring about some recommendations that could improve the role of family in nurturing the learner, it did not yield positive and effective results in stressing the importance of family in the education of a learner. In my life as a professional, I observed that parents/guardians still neglect their learners, which leads to high dropouts in rural ecologies. Although the charter is in place to protect the rights of the children (ZIMVAC, 2017; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017), learners in rural ecologies are still not protected by the charter. I was driven to propose for assets in the community for learners to realise what is needed to be done in order to survive.

### **3.2.5.3 National interventions**

*Locally*, Zimbabwe continues to play part in protecting the rights of the learners facing LMVs (Matsika et al., 2013). Moving with the theme that made sure that they provide exceptional services for learners” (UNICEF 2015), Zimbabwe has shown support to protect children’s rights through involvement of other stakeholders. With this theme, the governments in collaboration with the other stakeholders embarked on programmes to protect learners’ rights through active participation an empowerment of people in the community (Sammon, Godwin, Rumble, Nolan, Matsika & Mayanga, 2014).

Furthermore, the government in 2016 introduced the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) 2016 to 2018. The IPRSP aims to improve the GDP and thus reduce the poverty levels (GoZ, 2018). However, IPRSP’s social agenda to protect the rights of children was hindered due to the current socio-economic crisis in the country. Furthermore, the GoZ also introduced the National Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Learners from 2005 to 2010. The second and the third phases from 2011 to 2015 and 2016 to 2020 respectively, with the national strategic plan aimed at protecting children and restoring their rights or welfare (GoZ, 2018; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; ZIMVAC, 2019). In support of the above policies, the Department of Social Welfare (DoSW) and other various NGOs came together to protect the rights and welfare of learners facing LMVs. They made sure that all the needs of learners living in multiple vulnerabilities areas are met by involving the community in income generating programmes, thereby empowering them. Child-friendly courts that assist ill-treated children were opened, thus caring for all learners (Gomba, 2018; Masuka, Banda, Mabvurira & Frank, 2012). It is acknowledged that government strategies, policies, and child protection laws on their own are not adequate; there is need for an approach that is innovative and sensitive to the socio-economic changes taking place in society. The application of the ABA with its emancipation, transformational, and empowerment

principals would be critical in mitigating the multiple vulnerabilities experienced by rural learners.

Additionally, GoZ engaged the NGOs and worked on programmes aiming to promote social equity for children in multiple vulnerable communities (GoZ, 2018; Katunga & Lombard, 2016). These are local, district, provincial and national level programmes run by the Child Protection Committees (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). To empower the local communities, community-based organisations (CBOs), faith-based, organisations (FBOs), and NGOs were involved in the running of such programmes. Although these programmes had been initiatives by the GoZ, however, they were not successful due to the economic meltdown of the country (UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; ZIMVAC, 2019). In the Chiredzi district, I observed that the government banned some NGOs and CBO and actively prevented some programmes from working. NGO's and government in Zimbabwe have a long and difficult relationship due to systematic mistrust of these organisations. I realised that rural communities need to be informed their potential in the fight against LMVs rests against principles of active participation embed in ABA, leaving them empowered, emancipated and transformed.

#### **3.2.5.4 Other current government interventions**

As a key part of the strategy for achieving the Education for All EFA goal of universal and equitable right of entry to high-quality primary education, Second Chance Education (SCE) were introduced in Zimbabwe, particularly in rural areas where a high number of learners deal with LMVs (GoZ, 2018). The programmes introduced were based on the present non-formal education curriculum and the Zimbabwe Adult Basic Education Course (ZABEC), and target adults who wanted to sit for Grade 7 national exams. SCE provides an education opportunity to learners and young people who have inadequate levels of literacy, life skills, technical, and vocational education (UNICEF Annual Report,

2017; UNICEF Zimbabwe & ZNSA, 2015). The programme benefits all disadvantaged learners including: orphans and vulnerable learners; learners with special needs; learners who are talented but disadvantaged; out of school youths; and illiterate adults. The SCE focused on four areas: policy and sector analysis; returning school-aged learners to the mainstream education system through an Accelerated Learning Programme; fit for all; and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET). Of interest to this study, the MoPSE, with support from UNICEF, World Education Inc, Mavambo, and/or Zenzele, developed the Zimbabwe Accelerated Learning Programme (ZALP) as a fast-track learning initiative to re-integrate more than 32,000 out-of-school learners into the formal primary school system (GoZ, 2018; UNICEF Zimbabwe & ZNSA, 2015; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). Therefore, the SCE was developed to strengthen the capability of MoPSE to sufficiently address the needs of out-of-school learners and young people. In 2015, Zimbabwe launched its first Non-Formal Education (NFE) policy in both the primary and secondary education systems (GoZ, 2018; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). All these were aimed at promoting equality, thereby giving learners access to education regardless of their social status. The learner was positioned at the centre to all these developments in order to equip them with life skills needed to survive the harsh environment they live in. However, the little these learners could give to their education was seen as a waste of time and opportunity when compared to business prospects. The programmes were crippled due to the political and socio-economic meltdown in Zimbabwe. There have been a few recent efforts by stakeholders to ensure these programmes are implemented to their fullest (GoZ, 2018). The resources and systems have been overwhelmed by numerous LMVs in rural ecologies and other unknown factors. Therefore, I argue that in such a situation, there is need to sustainably empower and transform learners through the application of ABA to understand the need for high-quality education obtained through the SCE programmes.

Since the acceptance of the CRC in many countries, educators have searched for ways to realise this convention. One of the best attempts is the child-friendly school action,

which adopts a rights-based education approach. The GoZ also campaigned for the promotion of Child-Friendly Schools in trying to provide favourable learning conditions so that learners would love and enjoy schooling (CFSs) (GoZ, 2018). CFSs focus on grooming and deportment of learners through the culture of the school and the content of the curriculum (Çobanoğlu, Ayvaz-Tuncel & Ordu, 2018). They help learners to be independent and capable of problem-solving. The CFSs frameworks promote health approaches in dealing with problems faced by learners (Çobanoğlu et al., 2018; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). By focusing on the universal needs of the learner in every aspect, I argue that this instils, in learners, the importance of education. If this is not created at school, there might be high dropout rates, especially in rural ecologies where learning environments are not conducive for learning to take place. Trying the ABA may be helpful in promoting high-quality education rural learning ecologies.

The government has implemented numerous approaches to assist learners at risk, through the efforts of Child Protection Committees at all levels. Thus, no tuition fees were charged at primary schools, only levies were charged. For disadvantaged learners, their levies were paid through Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). However, BEAM did not cater for all disadvantaged learners, thereby not completely solving the problem. Moreover, the girl learner, who is luck, would get assistance from Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), a donor that caters for the need of those with multiple vulnerabilities. CAMFED, a charitable poverty-based organisation, aims at assisting girl-children to succeed in their education (UNICEF Zimbabwe & ZNSA, 2015). I am aware that not all girls benefit from this programme, those who do not benefit from it would continue to suffer. The inception of the ABA would be encouraged to cater to the remaining girl learners to achieve high-quality education, just like the other girl child under help by BEAM and/or CAMFED. I suggest trying the ABA to alleviate LMVs faced by rural learners.

### **3.3 MAPPING ASSETS IN MITIGATING LMVs IN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

This theme discusses asset mapping, identification and mobilisation to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies. It went on to discuss methods used for mapping, identifying and mobilising assets in public. The theme lastly discusses assets the communities possess that may be utilised to mitigate LMVs.

#### **3.3.1 Asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation**

Community maps are usually used in the mapping and mobilisation of assets because they help us to identify accessible assets (Evans & Winson, 2014). The processes show which assets are easy to access and how they are interrelated. Asset mapping, asset identification, and asset mobilisation are interconnected and are important when planning the execution of the ABA. The study allowed participants to actively participate in asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation. Below I discuss what asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation is all about.

To be able to identify the accessible assets, asset mapping must be done. According to Kretzmann and Mcknight (1993), asset mapping is described as a procedure of identifying what assets the community have and the contribution these can offer. Myende (2014) adds that asset mapping is a way of ascertaining capabilities that a community possesses. Asset mapping makes known, to the public, the assets the community have and show how these assets are connected and can be accessed (Foot & Hopkins, 2010; McLean, 2012; Spencer & Williams, 2017). In this study, I viewed asset mapping as a method of recognising and providing community resources, and creating and displaying resources that make up community-by-community members. The process enables people to actively participate by identifying advantages and disadvantages of selected assets as they have first-hand information of the problems they face (McLean, 2012). Asset mapping was the first step in the study that enables

participants to be aware of assets they can utilise from their community. All participants had an opportunity to identify and list possible working assets that could be useful to mitigate the LMVs in the learning ecologies. This was possible since the participants were local and had knowledge of the resources found in their community.

Furthermore, asset mapping involves writing down the tangible and intangible assets of a community, and stating how they can be utilised (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Foot & Hopkins, 2010). Beyond making a list of resources, McLean (2012) says this 'mapping' creates new networks and associations among all stakeholders involved. The study made resources held by the community or individuals noticeable by the community members within the same ecology. I support asset mapping because the procedure makes encourages critical thinking, creates networks and make known all the assets available (Foot & Hopkins, 2010; McLean, 2012; Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Spencer & Williams, 2017). In the current study, it also helped to highlight what is working well and how it can work in the community. Looking at how important asset mapping is done, it encourages active participation of community members (Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Spencer & Williams, 2017). The reasoning behind this was that the nature of the study used PAR, which allows participants to participate for action. I perceive asset mapping as a positive procedure to emancipate, transform, and empower local residents (Rippon & South, 2017; Whelan & Timpson, 2014), and is in line with what the study aims to achieve.

Myende (2014) recommends the following for participative community-led asset mapping:

- There is need to build relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers.

- The research team creates new networks with other important stakeholders within and outside the school.
- The researcher and the co-researchers identify the capabilities the community possesses.
- Finding ways the research team can bring the capabilities of the community together.
- The research team identify how the capabilities can be useful in relation to the problems they have.

Myende (2014) further proposes that asset mapping be done by looking at community capacity inventory. Involving the above may help to identify capabilities that can be mobilised and identify institutions that can be recognised to contribute resources in terms of tangible and intangible services (Spencer & Williams, 2017). I argue for asset mapping as it is participative in nature and allows participants to be skilled in decision-making as it involves critical thinking. The aforementioned also creates relationships between the participants, the researcher, and the human capital mapped. Having identified and explained the need and importance of asset mapping, and how it is done, we then moved to asset identification and mobilisation.

There is a need to use assets in alleviating the LMVs in rural learning ecologies. This involves engaging local people as participants in asset mobilisation. Through this process, the research team can identify other underutilised resources (Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993; Myende, 2014) since the process provides a continuous assessment of within reach resources. Evans and Winson (2014) state that asset mobilisation is identifying the available resources and allocating its specific use in the ABA system. I support asset mobilisation in the mitigation of LMVs for various reasons identified in the previous researches done worldwide. Studies show that asset mobilisation helps local residents to be actively involved in sharing of facts, resources, and knowledge on how to mitigate LMVs (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2014). Asset mobilisation

involves empowerment and emancipation of local residents through working together in order to provide a better future supported by actions to achieve it (Kretzmann & Mcknight, 2005; McLean, 2012). By active participation, this creates self-confidence in local residents to depend on resources they have (Foot & Hopkins, 2010; McLean, 2012; Spencer & Williams, 2017). Participants learned not to be recipients, rather to use assets available in the environment to solve their own problems.

### **3.3.2 Methods for mapping, identifying, and mobilising assets**

ABA is not a dogmatic process, but there are steps to be followed that can help to engage, create new relations, and utilise all available capabilities (McLean, 2012). This means that asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation are not just haphazard; there is a need for planning and proper implementation of assets. To support mapping, identification, and mobilisation of assets, the study utilised two procedures and methodologies available. These are **participatory appraisal (PA)** and **appreciative inquiry (AI)** (Foot, 2012; Foot & Hopkins, 2010; McLean, 2012). The techniques and methodologies map, identify, and mobilise assets which enable a focus on available capabilities. These are discussed below.

#### **3.3.2.1 Participatory appraisal**

There is a need to engage individuals and/organisations who are knowledgeable of the community under study and those who can create wide networks (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2014). This is known as participatory appraisal (PA). McLean (2012) points out that PA describes an approach that in-cooperates local residents to create resolutions to their problems and categorise how they can mitigate them. This study included significant individuals facing the problem, allowing local individuals to input their expertise into proposing assets that mitigate LMVs they face. Again, PA objects for the engagement of local residents that they decide on the solution to their problems,

thus ensuring active participation. Applied to this study, all capabilities came from within the community as drawn from the philosophies of ABA. The method, when carried out effectively, can be tremendously comprehensive, investing in the participants taking part (Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993; McLean, 2012). Research conducted by Foot and Hopkins (2010) discovered that involving local residents creates knowledge that is reliable and leaves residents with self-confidence that they have something to offer in life. In addition, PA permits better interactions among research team and other local residents. I argue that involving them in their problems solving, capacitates them to be able to solve future similar problems. In this study, through PA, local residents are actively involved in providing reliable local knowledge in understanding issues affecting learners and making informed decisions in tackling these multiples vulnerabilities. Calling for a discussion meeting was important in collecting information needed here. It is important to note that the PA experts argue for a procedure based on the wishes of the participants, utilising methods that involve them at the forefront.

### **3.3.2.2 Appreciative inquiry**

According to McLean (2012), an appreciative inquiry (AI) is a procedure for treasuring and illustrating how effective a procedure can be. Simply put, it is a method of accessing and approving the pro and cons of an approach. AI centres on the practices and achievements of the past. The AI starts with appreciating the best of what is, thinking about what might be and should be, and ends with a shared commitment to a vision and how to achieve it (Foot & Hopkins, 2010). In this study, the purpose of AI was to bring people together to work on an area of mutual interest in alleviating LMVs faced in rural learning ecologies, in order to build a vision for future learners, and to work with other organisations to improve their lives. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2002) described AI as having five key stages, namely: discovering and valuing positive aspects in a community; envisioning a possible future; engaging in dialogue; discussing and sharing discoveries and possibilities; and creating the future through innovation and action. In

the current study, this was done through PAR methodologies and CER as a paradigm in order to create a positive mind-set in participants by focusing on success rather than past failures.

### **3.3.3 Community assets: Community Capital Frameworks**

Developed by Flora, Flora, and Fey (2004), Community Capitals Framework (CCF) is a method to of analysing how societies work. Communities of place and of interest, whether rural, isolated, or poor, have resources within them they can utilise to develop themselves. These resources can be used to mitigate any vulnerability communities of interest face. The CCF is sub-divided into the tangible and intangible. The six aspects of CCF (tangible and intangible) are: (i) natural; (ii) cultural; (iii) human; (iv) social; (v) political; and (vi) financial. The six aspects are built from tangible/material and intangible/human. The subsequent subsection deliberates on the human/intangible assets available in the communities.

#### **3.3.3.1 Human/Intangible assets**

***Social capital*** is one example of an intangible asset that is not physical and can be used to mitigate the problems society faces (Carnegie Commission, 2007; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Myende, 2014). According to Emery and Flora (2006), social capitals are the links individuals and/organisations have in societies that impact on their way of living. Social capital is a basis for building relations among the local residents and the stakeholders to mitigate LMVs (Foot, 2012; Foot & Hopkins, 2010; GCPH, 2012). It constitutes the building of social trust through active participation of both parties (Myende, 2014). Because of its effect, Emery and Flora (2006) argue that social capital creates and maintains connections between societies and other important stakeholders. In the Chiredzi South District, I observed that social capital is underutilised making it potentially worthwhile to investigate the impact it could have on

mitigating LMVs. Research done in Alaskan Native Villages indicated that when communities invested their social capital, by offering students an elder to mentor to assist with learning how to apply their new skills and knowledge, this facilitated skills development and knowledge development in the students (Flora & Fey, 2004). The involvement of social capital also created relationships and cooperation between the students and elder mentors. Further research in Williston, North Dakota, where the specialist coach of the college team involved an association in team coaching, the asset fuelled positive social relationships between local individuals and associations as well as the formal and the informal networks (Emery, Fey & Flora, 2006; Ennis & West, 2010). In my study, I argue the utilisation of social capital in rural communities for the mitigation of LMVs may result in skill and knowledge development, relationships, and cooperation facilitation, which will emancipate, transform, and empower participants' lives. The effects of social capital would be utilised by focusing on healthy behaviour and improvements in education.

Another crucial resource that rural communities possesses is **political capital** which reflects the society's chances to become connected with powerful individuals, associations, and connections to local tribal or government official (Emery & Flora, 2006; Myende, 2014). Research by Mbokazi and Bhengu (2008) and Myende (2014) proved that traditional leadership and school management staff, in most rural contexts in South Africa, might have an impact on how things are run in most rural schools. Political capital has the capacity to inspire what schools should offer and how it is offered (Wilding, 2011). Findings by the Carnegie Commission (2007) show that political capital has to influence the community in the distribution and use of resources available. I argue that the study, through this influence by local leaders (local authorities, headmen, chiefs), may affect the identification and mobilisation of potential resources that are significant towards mitigation of LMVs.

**Cultural capital** is the way societies ‘know the world’ and how to act within it, whether positive or negative. Cultural capital is the way individuals live and how these norms affect how they live and behave (Emery et al., 2006; Emery & Flora, 2006). College research conducted in Roswell, New Mexico, invested in the cultural assets of their bilingual staff to create a successful mentoring system for at risk middle school students due to their low reading scores (Emery et al., 2006). From the above findings, cultural capital, thus, influences the way they are going to interact, behave and socialise at the end (Myende, 2014). The current study was conducted in Chiredzi South district where people practice initiation ceremonies; the community’s cultural capital has influence especially on the girl learner after the initiation ceremonies. I argue that if properly utilised, cultural capital can have a positive effect on the mitigation of LMVs in the same community.

**Human capital** is understood as capabilities individuals have to assist someone with problem (Emery et al., 2006; Myende, 2014). These include how one leads others, the level of understanding of individuals, and how skilful members are, which can be utilised to solve problems the community faces (Khanare, 2009; Myende, 2014). The study carried by Chikoko & Khanare (2012) in South Africa found out those assisting HIV/AIDS vulnerable learners to cope up effective through the utilisation of human capital (learners, teachers, parents). In support of the above, I realise that the community under study has a lot of human capital if effectively utilised to mitigate the LMVs they face. The succeeding subsection reflects the material/tangible assets available in the communities.

### **3.3.3.2 Material/Tangible assets**

**Natural capital** refers to those natural resources found within the society. These include parks, farmland, and other natural resources (Emery et al., 2006; Emery &

Flora, 2006; Hlalele, 2012a; Wilding, 2011). The utilisations of such natural resources can go a long way to mitigate LMVs in rural ecologies if correctly used. In this study, the region has vast lands and farmers there specialise in agriculture (gardening and subsistence farming) and livestock. A study conducted in rural communities of South Africa by Myende (2014) show that these gardens provided a source of living among rural people. From Chapter One, (see 1.4), we see that people in the community keep cattle for prestige despite claiming they are poor. They also have donor syndrome in that they feel it is the duty of the government to support the education of their children. The utilisation of gardens presents a strong potential for parents' participation in the mitigation of LMVs in their local ecologies through the ABA if they are better educated about the natural assets they have.

**Financial capital** refers to the financial resources/abilities available for community members to utilise and support themselves (Emery et al., 2006; Emery & Flora, 2006). Many rural societies have opportunities to be involved in social entrepreneurship and self-develop themselves (Wilding, 2011). However, in this regard, Myende (2014) discovered that one concern could be that rural communities are mostly characterised by poverty and thus lack access to effective financial capital. With the deteriorating economic situation in Zimbabwe, lack of effective capital may prevail in the area of study and may pose some challenges in mitigating LMVs. I argue that since a lot of people practice gardening and farming and some own and rent some shops, bringing together such parents in the mitigation process can bear a positive outcome in the mitigation of LMVs as they have financial potentials. Thus, as assets, farmer parents can use their skills to generate ideas on how financial capital can be used to mitigate LMVs.

Lastly, **built capital** refers to the infrastructures that supports the community and often focuses on community development efforts (Flora, Flora & Fey, 2004; Emery & Flora,

2006; Stofferahn, 2009; Carnegie Commission, 2007; Chikoko & Khanare, 2012). In this study, I observed that the school has school projects (poultry, tuckshop) they run but learners do not take them seriously. The school does offer Agriculture but only as a practical subject. The introduction of an updated curriculum promotes the teaching of practical subjects to develop learners' skills as well as promoting critical thinking. Depending on how they are used, built capital can be form assets to mitigate multiple vulnerabilities faced.

### **3.4 CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH ASSETS MAY BE USED TO MITIGATE LMVs IN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

This theme discusses circumstances under which the assets can be used to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

#### **3.4.1 Conditions conducive for ABA application**

This study was conducted out at a rural school in the remote areas of the Chiredzi South District in the Masvingo province in Zimbabwe. The school needs to create a favourable environment where community trust and human capital are built so that they are able to gain all available resources (Carnegie Commission, 2007; Khanare, 2009; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Myende, 2014). This means that good interrelations between the community and the school need to be facilitated for effective and efficient allocation and utilisation of available resources, thereby ensuring the full involvement of the communities in any development (Maddalena, Bavington & Donovan, 2012; Myende, 2014). Hyman (2002) highlights procedures to that need to be undertaken by schools in order to build good relations with the community. He describes the groups of community capacity building as: school community engagement; agenda building; appreciative leadership; and favourable environment for action. These are considered below in detail.

### **3.4.1.1 Agenda building**

According to Myende (2014), agenda building is the process by which one attempts to transfer their interest so that it becomes the interest of the public. Agenda building means clarifying the aim for accepting ABA. It helps promote coordination within segments and run-through. It is inclusive of resource management, distribution and appraisal (Kretzmann & Green, 1998; Mattiesen, Froggatt, Owen & Ashton, 2014; McLean & McNeice, 2012; Rippon & South, 2017). For agenda building, the researcher must ensure that opportunities for sharing and ranking of concerns and ambitions of the school are always available (Hyman, 2002; Myende, 2014). I argue that when determining the action plan for agenda building, it should not be founded on predetermined ideas and plans but rather, by the participants. Interested local people should do this through active participation and they may be empowered and transformed through the process. When applied to this study, this provides the chance to set out the reasons of asset-based activity. More so, I argue that community capital mobilisation is enabled, and school community interests and ambitions are appreciated. Knowing what needs to be done helps participants to clearly state the advantages and disadvantages (Rippon & South, 2017) of ABA to mitigating LMVs. Thus, I argue, it might be concluded that agenda building is key to the mitigation of LMVs regardless of how poor and marginalised the community is. The following subsection discusses community engagement as a circumstance under which the ABA can take place.

### **3.4.1.2 Community engagement**

For school community engagement, there is need for good relations between the school and the community to enable the exchange of information between and among them (Hyman, 2002; Myende, 2014; Vines, 2018). Butcher, Egan and Ken (2008) view community engagement as partnership and mutuality between the communities involved. In this study, it is argued that partnership was the key factor of any successful community engagement initiative. The study uses PAR as design and through it,

participants are partnered and actively involved in finding solutions to their problems. The characteristic of PAR encompasses collective decision-making and action, building constructive external relations, and nurturing community independence and confidence based on trust (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2016; Mthiyane, 2015). Partnerships set sincere community involvement efforts and it offer the basis for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of the ABA. Research carried out by Australia Catholic University revealed that community engagement is transformative (Howard, Cooke & Butcher, 2007). They further argue that within the university context, community engagement transforms the lives of community members, university students, and staff. I argue that community engagement influence is transformative in two ways, and the benefits of this process are shared between both parties. Firstly, the benefit of community engagement is partnership and secondly is extensive collaboration between the community members and the school. Thus, both parties involved acquire knowledge and are both transformed by the engagement (HM Government, 2015; Myende, 2014). Thus, I argue, school engagement with other tiers helps in constructing a strong human and social resource, which is an important tool for building community-centred solutions.

Furthermore, findings by Rippon and South (2017) show that to a school, community engagement encourages the expansion of relationships originated on interdependence, rather than dependence. Through community engagement, the resolution is to empower disadvantaged people by giving them opportunities to actively contribute to solutions that mitigate LMVs in their community. When provided with chances to contribute to and engage with society, people from rural ecologies are able to feel more self-confident of their capability to find solutions to their problems, thereby creating for themselves empowerment and transformation (Baker, 2014; Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1996; Morales, 2019). Thus, I argue, ABA gives equitable opportunities to all stakeholders. The relationships are based on trust and understanding. Facilitators in practice and project expansion need to be considerate, taking note of the priorities and desires of the community (Rippon & South, 2017) in order to create good relationships through

engagement. Thus, I argue, it is possible to conclude that community engagement can result in the mitigation of LMVs regardless of how poor and marginalised the community is. The subsequent subsection deliberates on appreciative leadership for ABA to take place.

#### **3.4.1.3 Appreciative leadership**

For community to appreciate development programmes, the organising person/department/school/researcher need to engage the leadership of the institution to arrange activities/programmes to be done (Hyman, 2002; Myende, 2014). Chikoko & Khanare (2012) assert that the leadership role of school managers is of utmost importance in the process of identification and mobilisation of assets. According to Nel (2018), the approaches that match community growth values and practices involve independent, transformational, helpful, involved, collective, and indebted leadership. I argue that an appreciative leadership embraces all the aforementioned fashionable leadership traits. Findings by Myende (2014) show that school heads are likely to be the most significant resources in the procedure of representation from other existing resources, inside and outside of the school community. The role of leadership influences innovations within the organisations. I agree that the members of the community will cooperatively renovate and change their communities if the leaders use the participatory approach.

Furthermore, as a leader of the school, the headmaster must agree to organise and undertake an assessment/appraisal of all the assets that will increase acceptance of a determined ABA. Martiskainen (2017) asserts that active leaders generate a wave's outcome that encourages transformation in them, transmit it to the community, and ensure that other citizens are now active in finding solutions to their problems. To agree at what level of the ABA is being adopted and introduced, the headmaster, as the leader

of the school, must initiate the change. This is supported by Nel (2018) who states that leadership is relationship driven, optimistic, and can create influence. Leadership can create waves of self-confidence, liveliness, passion, and concert in stakeholders involved in programmes that promote growth in communities. Thus, for school activities, school community stakeholders must pool their assets into an action strategy and build bridges to other resources that they wish to be successful (Hyman, 2002; Myende, 2014). The tactic to leadership is, therefore, crucial to ensuring that members of the community are empowered, active, and push for who they want to become (Eliasov & Peters, 2013). Thus, I argue that in the school framework, a leadership tactic can result in a mitigation of LMVs regardless of the level of poverty and the marginalisation of the learning ecology. The following subsection will discuss favourable environments for ABA.

#### **3.4.1.4 Favourable environment for action**

Finally, for the ABA to be a success, Myende (2014) argues that the school should ensure that there is a favourable environment for all members to participate in; spaces for them to show their capabilities in order to ensure effective application of ABA. He further argues that clear expectations should be established between the school community and the participant members/stakeholders who drive and aid the process. Thus, the favourable environment should guide participants towards active discovery of hidden, untapped talents and gifts, and enable them to use these talents and gifts to mitigate problems they face for themselves (Nel, 2018). I argue that, for the ABA to be successful, it should encourage a favourable environment into mapping, identification and mobilisation of assets within the local community through active participation. If done through PAR methodologies, this promotes harmony, creates cooperation and confidence, and captures the interest of participants (Chinyoka, 2013). Mahoso and Kuyayama-Tambure (2014) add that PAR methodologies results in emancipation, transformation, and empowerment of rural learners. Within this study, I believe PAR

methodologies create a favourable environment for the ABA to be applied as they allow active participation of members. Findings by McLean, et al. (2017) in Scotland show that the ability of participants to implement asset-based culture change was due to a favourable environment. An environment, which is welcoming, unites societies and provides strength and power among community members to have control over their lives (Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Spencer & Williams, 2017). With these links, the standards of living of societies are more likely to be better off than before (Myende, 2014). If a favourable environment for the ABA to mitigate LMVs is created, I believe that the rural community may lessen their vulnerabilities. Findings by Myende (2014) show that favourable environments serve as a driver in building long-lasting links between diverse resources. The social web generates 'social capital', support, and mutual benefit by offering connections and links resulting in access to knowledge and other benefits (Spencer & Williams, 2017). Thus, I argue, it may be possible to conclude that the favourable environment for action can result in mitigation of LMVs despite how poor and marginalised the learning ecology is. The successive theme deliberates on mitigating against LMVs through the ABA in rural learning ecologies.

### **3.5 THREATS (IF ANY) THAT MAY HINDER THE ABA TO MITIGATING LMVs**

Threats refer to factors that have the potential to harm an organisation. This theme discusses threats that may prevent the ABA from mitigating LMVs. It discusses three anticipated threats namely: (i) inaccessibility to human capital; (ii) marginality; and (iii) geographical location of the rural learning ecologies. These are discussed in detail below.

#### **3.5.1 Inaccessibility to human capital in rural learning ecologies**

It is through the absence of human capital that rural sufferings can be facilitated (Myende, 2014). What is crucial in the ABA is that the availability of human capital

marks the beginning of all initiatives aimed at mitigating LMVs. I am of the opinion that drawing from the primary tier may result in justifiable initiatives that will then support emancipation, transformation, and empowerment of rural learning ecologies. I argue that secondary and tertiary tiers are significant, thus the need for human capital in the form of social workers and educational psychologists is vital. These individual members are important assets of any society. Without these sectors, there is no society. Rippon and South (2017) argue that rural communities have low specialised individuals (social workers, educational psychologist) due to achieve their mitigation goals. Some poor communities experience low skilled individual capital when compared to other communities (Emery & Flora, 2006; Emery et al., 2006; Myende, 2014). This is the case with Zimbabwe as one social worker may manage one district. In such situations, it should be noted that human capital has little or no contact with rural communities. Findings by Chikoko and Khanare (2012) and Myende (2014) in South Africa prove that the human capital barrier denies self-help when low individual capital communities rely on external technical assistance as it increases dependency on external sources for funding and assistance. They add that despite recognition that they have capabilities; some rural communities are still underdeveloped and cannot address their challenges using human capitals. If research proved that rural communities needs human capital, such as social workers and educational psychologists, one may argue that this may be a significant barrier to the implementation of ABA in rural or marginalised communities. Since human capital contributes positively towards transformation and empowerment of rural members (Flora et al., 2004), it is important to let them know to the rural communities through the application of ABA. The human capital needed by the rural community may provide emotional and psychological help to traumatised learners in rural areas and build self-esteem and confidence resulting in empowerment and transformation in learners facing LMVs. Zimbabwe has reduced the number of workers employed since 2012 due to its socio-economic status (Chidarikire, 2017), thus, this has affected the availability of human capital (social workers and educational psychologists) in rural areas. I argue that the shortage of human capital may be a barrier to the implementation of the ABA in rural or marginalised communities. Through ABA, rural

communities would realise, that although human capital is not readily available, they can depend on other local assets.

### **3.5.2 Marginality of rural learning ecologies**

Marginality highlights how isolated the community is geographically. It is defined in terms of how needy the community is, socially, culturally, economically and politically (Hlalele, 2012a; Myende, 2014). The argument is that, even though rural communities possess assets that can offer certain benefits, they need focused backing to be able to utilise what they have in order to achieve what they want. Additionally, their marginality affects the type of human capital they receive or have for assistance (Emery & Flora, 2006). Expert knowledge is also central for networking or organisational reasons (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003, 2005) and makes them able to release what they. Research shows that rural communities when neglected are unlikely to gain access or important services from important assets (Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). However, if blessed with such expert knowledge, these same negative attributes may bloom and carry the seeds of long-term survival skills. Therefore, I argue that ABA signals an ability to empower, to transform, and to emancipate rural people.

In addition to the above, marginalised and poor communities are characterised by low citizen participation in community-based developments (Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). Hlalele (2012a, p.113) states, "Poverty, economic failure, low levels of informal learning, and low levels of learner attainment are common in rural areas". From a rural perspective, community people have a low level of education and understanding. The fear of the unknown is found in most of the human capital who reside in rural, poor, and marginalised places. Also, they are isolated from, or they are hesitant to, participate in developmental debates (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012). The resident participants do not usually have connection with authorities at all levels of government or even the ability to

participate in community-based developments (Redding & Walberg, 2012). Their attitude is also 'socially constructed' in that they act, think, and react like 'laypersons' to events as they occur. 'Rurality' to them is permanent (Myende & Hlalele, 2018), meaning they can never achieve anything. Researches show that changing this attitude and perception requires programmatic capacity and talents, (Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018), hence the application of the ABA in rural areas. With such a dogmatic attitude and perception, I argue that this may be a barrier to the implementation of the ABA in rural or marginalised communities. Obviously, the capability of the approach depends on the willingness of the members to utilise the available assets at the community's disposal. If the place is marginal, usually their experts are not available to assist the community with the problems they face. However, ABA would help them realise that they do not need to depend on external experts for assistance, but rather should focus their energy on local assets.

### **3.5.3 Geographical location of rural learning ecologies**

The dwellings of the underprivileged are usually located in vulnerable locations. Schools in poverty-stricken areas are usually affected by the unavailability of resources (Munyati, 2006). Additionally, due to their geographical location of rural learning ecologies, many unlawful activities often take place in these schools. The distance from service providers affects how issues are resolved (Chinyoka, 2013); long-distance travel discourages service providers from frequently visiting the schools if there are issues to be attended to (Robertson, 2013). I found this was frequently the case with schools in the Chiredzi South district. I realised that nothing was being done to address the challenges learners face. As a result, the increase in LMVs motivated me to undertake the study which addressed the needs of rural learners through the ABA. Furthermore, the long-distance travel to schools is common among the families from a poor background. A study by Chinyoka (2013) found out that it could affect the motivation of learners since they arrive at schools tired and/or late. The researcher observed that the

geographical location of the community under study has a great impact on the learner performance. In an effort to reduce these problems, the researcher proposed for the ABA to suggest ways to mitigate LMVs caused by the geographical location of rural communities, and their homes in relation to the school.

### **3.6 MITIGATING AGAINST LMVs THROUGH THE ABA IN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

This theme discusses mitigation of LMVs through the utilisation of ABA. It discusses features of asset-based activities namely: (i) identifying assets: Transformation is from within; (ii) mobilising assets: Prioritising and scheduling of work; (iii) measuring assets: From dependency syndrome to independency; and (iv) evaluation of asset-based approaches: measuring and reflecting on the ABA available. The stages are examined below in detail.

#### **3.6.1 Features of ABA activities**

ABA approaches are recognised as central components of local outreach involvement (McLean, 2012). They support cooperative working to attain constructive transformation by utilising local community capabilities to find solutions to the problems around them (Spencer & Williams, 2017). This cooperative working to mitigate LMVs requires community engagement. ABA respects that sustained constructive social outcomes only happen when community people are at the centre, facilitating and able to control their lives (Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018; Rippon & South, 2017). I do not dispute that communities have capacity, skills, and knowledge to find solutions to their own problems. Thus, the ABA offers practical and innovative ways for rural communities to find solutions to their own problems (Foot, 2012). This is because ABA activities are emancipatory, transformative, and empowering in nature. The activities cooperatively engage participants and relationships are therefore created which result in people

having the capabilities to take care of their life problems (McLean, 2012; Spencer & Williams, 2017). Thus, engaging in ABA to mitigate against LMVs needs to follow steps. The features of ABA activities as summarised by McLean (2012):

- Identifying assets: Transformation is from within.
- Mobilising assets: Prioritising and scheduling of work.
- Measuring assets: From dependency syndrome to independency.
- Evaluation of asset-based approaches: Measuring and reflecting on the ABA available

### **3.6.1.1 Identifying assets: Transformation is from within**

When doing asset identification, there is need to define your community's borders using the geographic boundaries of the community in which the study would be carried (Evans & Winson, 2014; Whelan & Timpson, 2014). As earlier indicated, the study was conducted in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. The school is located in Masvingo Province, under Chiredzi Rural District Council (CRDC), in Chiredzi South. The study area would be where the assets used are mapped. The participants involved in ABA need to come from the community where the ABA is implemented (Myende, 2014). At this stage, the number and type of assets available to include would be determined. Applied to this study, a discussion of assets to be utilised (Rippon & South, 2017; Rippon & Hopkins, 2015), would be done and this involves the active participation of participants. By actively including local participants, this encourages local community members that may be producers rather than receivers, thus building self-confidence. The study aims to propose ways and means in which the ABA can be used to mitigate LMVs. It is of best interest to map an inventory of all assets available because it helps local people realise what assets they own, therefore the information can be utilised to make them understand of assets they have to initiate the plan (Evans & Winson, 2014; Whelan & Timpson, 2014).

### **3.6.1.2 Mobilising assets: Building a comprehensive plan**

Mobilising assets involves bringing together the capabilities the local community has (Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993), and informing them of how to utilise these capabilities for the situations they are in (McLean, 2012; Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Rippon & South, 2017). Mobilisation begins by arguing for the capabilities at hand, prioritising, and scheduling work. It results in comprehensive planning on how to utilise assets in the defined situation (Mattiesen et al., 2014; McLean, 2012; McLean & McNeice, 2012). I argue that in ABA activities, there is involvement of participants in prioritising and planning of approach activities. Possible activities are listed and discussed, and the right activities are selected through mutual understanding during prioritising and scheduling of ABA. Cooperative planning and scheduling of work is necessary in order to reflect their priorities in the ABA activities to mitigate LMVs using available assets (Evans & Winson, 2014; Myende, 2014; Whelan & Timpson, 2014).

Having made the priorities and schedules of the proposed ABA project, there is need to focus on distinctive responsibility on how to make use of available assets (Mattiesen et al., 2014; Rippon & South, 2017). The process ensures that the activities are on the focus of study. Evans and Winson (2014) proposes that the participants' planners should make sure that this builds on the capacities available to mitigate LMVs. The reasons planning are to outline the tasks, budget for the activities and see if there are opportunities for training is needed for the programme to be a success (McLean, 2012; Mattiesen et al., 2014). Thus, building a comprehensive plan gives participants the opportunity to assess the other options or assets thought best by weighing up the benefits and drawbacks of all the other different opportunities. Since the current study uses PAR by design, I believe questions about who, what, and how would be presented and answered by participants. Each participant would have the chance to discuss the organisational procedure with other members in their natural setting so that it is as transparent and participatory as possible (Chinyoka, 2013; Mattiesen et al., 2014). The

opportunity to review relevant facts, like meeting time, meeting place, and all ethical concerns, is to be considered. For this to be successful, Rippon and Hopkins (2015), and Rippon and South (2017) explain that participants should be directed to build a comprehensive plan by following the guidelines below:

- i. What is to be done?
- ii. How is it done?
- iii. Who is doing it?
- iv. Who is responsible for it?
- v. What is required?

By inspiring active participation, participants' self-confidence is created as producers not receivers. Self-confidence is built through collective relations with different stakeholders (Foot & Hopkins, 2010). Participation in ABA has revealed a number of benefits, including enhanced self-confidence in resolving societal problems, improved life skills, and cooperative working from diverse experiences (McLean, 2012; McLean & McNeice, 2012). There is social capital gained for societal groups to meet and collectively make choices.

### **3.6.1.3 Measuring assets: From dependency syndrome to independency**

Myende and Hlalele (2018) argue that irrespective the situation, every community has the capabilities (assets) to address the societal problems they face. Every community has capabilities (assets) they can utilise; they only need to be informed of how to use these capabilities (Khanare, 2009; Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993). As earlier on stated in chapter two, these capabilities are important to re-name them. The *primary tiers* are those found within the school. These are outside the school but within the community. The *secondary tier* assets are located within the school community. These are faith-based organisations, charity organisations, local businesses, and parents and guardians who form an important component of the school. The *tertiary tier* assets are

those outside the community, which they cannot control. These are private businesses, NGOs, and all public and private companies and institutions (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). By using the aforementioned assets effectively, I believe the mitigation of LMVs would be a success. I feel that if learners in rural ecologies are given the opportunity, they can transform their lives and become empowered.

ABA attempts to redress the problems created by the needs-based approach (Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018), which promoted recipients rather than producers utilising the available assets (Myende, 2014; Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993). Thus, needs-based approaches promoted dependency syndrome instead of promoting independence by utilising capabilities the community have. I argue that a needs-based approach creates community with dependent citizens (those who receive with one hand and use with another hand) and ABA creates a community, which is independent (those who have abilities to use what they have to produce more). I regard a shift or a change from the needs-based approach to the ABA for a better transformation of the lives of learners in rural ecologies. This is supported by Myende (2015) who argues for the ABA, which brings in local residents to take an active role in finding solution to their problems. In this study, learners facing LMVs, if engaged in ABA activities may solve their problem as ABA advocates for change and transformation. I argue that ABA suits the existing situation in rural learning ecologies in terms of how personal problems should be solved, specifically it advocates for active participation to ensure emancipation, transformation, and empowerment. In deficit approaches (needs-based approach), the government assumes the role of the producers while the community residents become the receivers in response to LMVs (Kretzmann & Mcknight, 2005; Myende, 2014). This model does not recognise that local communities have capabilities to find solution to their own problems (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2010). This is why I argue for ABA in mitigating LMVs; rural learners can possibly and sustainably commit to investing in themselves and their resources for a better transformation.

Moreover, ABA empowers local residents (Coetzee, 2006; Myende, 2015). When engaging in community-exploration or self-exploration in proposing ways that can be used to mitigate LMVs, one should recognise community capabilities (Myende, 2015; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). Thus, I argue that the interest in using the ABA lies in empowering the participants. Therefore, ABA develops independence within individuals utilising the assets available rather than depending on service providers. This is supported by Kretzmann and Mcknight (1993), that the ABA is a bottom-up approach to community transformation and country growth. Change begins from within an individual. In summary, Coetzee (2006) and Rippon and Hopkins (2015) argue that the ABA illustrates the willingness of individuals as important in the utilisation of the capabilities available for transformation to take place. What is crucial is aligning the ABA principles to the LMVs situation in order to mitigate those challenges.

#### **3.6.1.4 Evaluation of ABA: Measuring and reflecting on the approach**

Any project undertaken must be measured by its successes and failures through monitoring and evaluation processes. Monitoring and evaluation refers to the process of supervising and assessing the effectiveness of an implementation approach (McLean, 2012; Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Rippon & South, 2017). Evaluation helps to measure, reflect, and analyse the implementation approach (MacDonald, 2005a, 2005b). In the ABA, through active participation, every participant's contribution is important to achieving the aim of the study. Everyone is actively involved in assessment procedures through total member participation in the participant's natural setting (Chinyoka, 2013; Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Rippon & South, 2017). In the current study, I argue for process uniformity in order to determine whether change and transformation is achieved within and by participants. Thus, measuring and reflecting should involve all participants to ensure that generated information is correct for analysis and for use in future (McLean, 2012).

Furthermore, the needs-based approach exposes members to other vulnerabilities (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003, 2005), while ABA promotes emancipation, transformation, and empowerment (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). In proposing for ABA, three phases (Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993) arise that facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of the approach. These are: (i) **self-help** (or self-sufficiency), (ii) **technical assistance**, and (iii) **conflict resolution**.

For participants to excel through **self-help**, they should be driven by the willingness to survive using available community resources (Mattiesen et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2011). In this study, self-help enables rural ecologies learners to identify their problems and find capabilities they can use, from the community, to militate against them. I argue that self-sufficiency is core to the mitigation of vulnerabilities in rural learning ecologies. What is needed is self-drive, the inner drive, to self-help within the learner to mitigate LMVs that rural communities face.

**For technical assistance**, service providers should assist people to find solutions to their problems (GCPH, 2012; Nelson et al., 2011), rather than provide for their needs. On the needs-based approach, people were recipients; however, with ABA people become active participants in finding solutions to their problems. The role of government and NGOs, through ABA, is to provide technical advice and assistance to people as suited to their needs. Although technical assistance in the form of material or monetary support may promote dependence syndrome, I argue that items such as buildings, consulting, and loans and credit for business start-up (Rippon & South, 2017) may assist rural learners to effectively address the social problems they face. By doing such, this could boost self-confidence in marginalised communities and contribute to improving decision-making and business skills resulting in emancipation, transformation, and empowerment. There is a need for local and expert knowledge to achieve this. If the above is properly done, the community under study could be left

technically empowered. The rural community under study, as earlier discussed, is lucky to have NGOs that assist with food, projects, and financial assistance. For the aforementioned help to be effective, this raises the concept of self-sufficiency with the assisted. As indicated in this study, bottom-up empowerment is sufficient to turn rural learners into skilled people. The role of the government, in collaboration with NGOs, should be to equip people in the community with all the necessary assistance in order to mitigate the vulnerabilities they face (ZIMVAC, 2017; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017). For that, I argue for the ABA in such ecologies to mitigate LMVs by providing technical support.

Myende (2014) identifies conflict as a significant problem during the implementation of ABA in rural communities. In his experience with **conflict resolution**, he suggests that participants involved in the study should be willing to participate, be open-minded, and be willing to experience some degree of sacrifice (Mattiesen et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2011). Therefore, there is a need for mutual learning, participation, and a proper organisation and planning of what is to be done in the ABA process (Rippon & South, 2017). To avoid conflict resolution, I argue for a need to include those who are willing to participant.

### **3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided a critical literature review on the analysis of current LMVs in Zimbabwe. The underlying issues resulting in the emergence of LMVs in the rural ecologies were discussed. Furthermore, I gave a glimpse of the impact of LMVs to learners and also highlighted what the GoZ is doing internationally, regionally and nationally to mitigate them. I further discussed the mapping, identification, and mobilisation of assets to use in the mitigation of LMVs. Circumstances under which the assets can be used to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies were explained. Under

this main theme, I discussed favourable conditions for ABA application and how ABA can be integrated into the existing rural learning ecology. In relation to previously conducted research, I highlighted threats that may hinder ABA. At the end of the chapter, I discussed the mitigation process and deliberated on the basic elements of the ABA by linking the assets and opportunities for learners facing LMVs. The subsequent chapter presents the research design and approach used in exploring ABA as a method to mitigate learners' multiple vulnerabilities in rural learning ecologies.

## CHAPTER FOUR

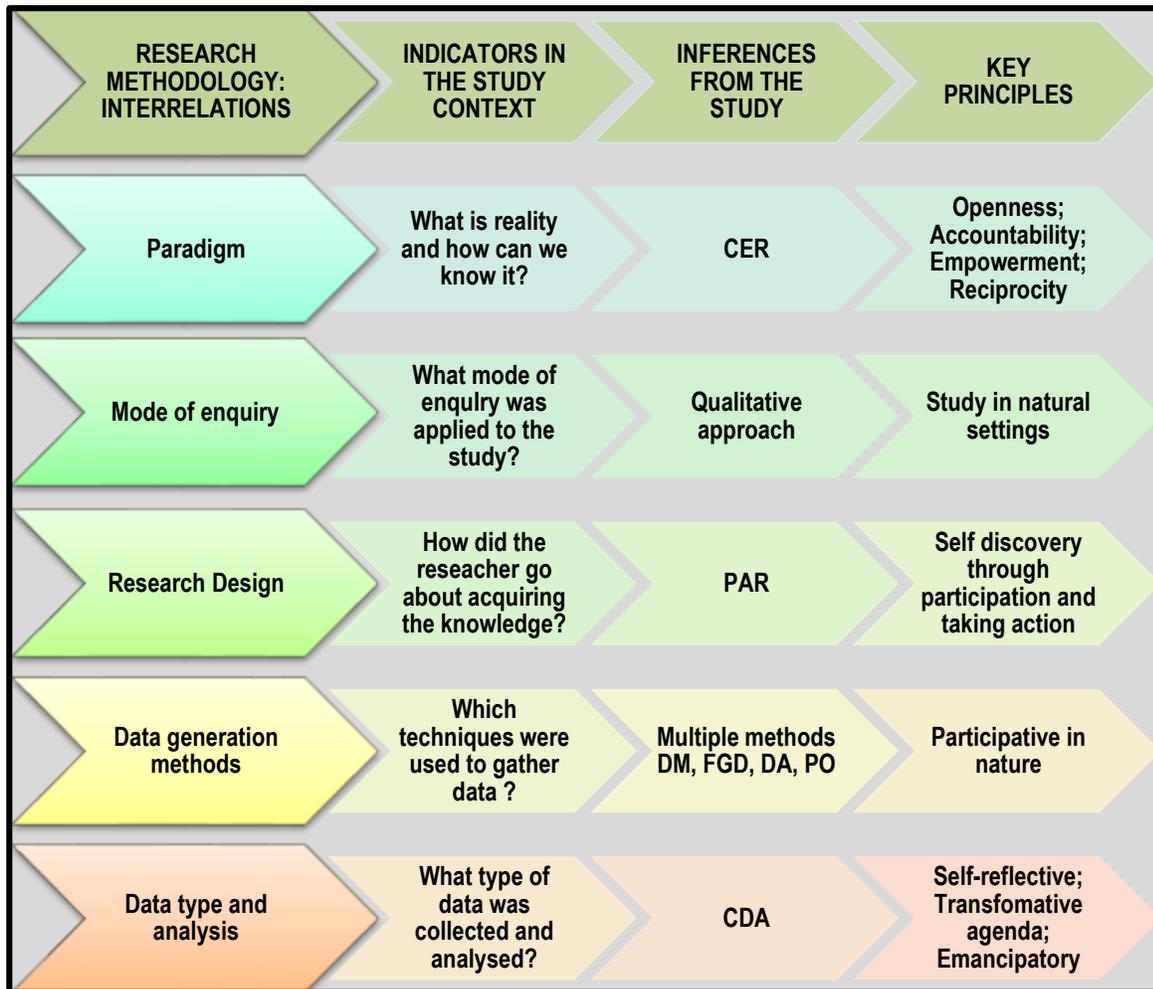
### THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY FOR THE ABA TO MITIGATE LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided detailed critical reviewed literature in relation to the asset-based approach to mitigating LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. This chapter details the research methodology employed and justifies the methodology chosen in this research. It focused on CER as a research paradigm, qualitative methodology as the mode of enquiry, PAR as research design, and DM, FGD, DA, and PA and data generation methods utilised. It also discussed the participant selection procedures. Data transcription and how data was analysed was also presented. The researcher adhered to all ethical considerations during the course of the study.

#### 4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodologies are summarised diagrammatically in **Figure 4.1**:



**Figure 4.1: Research methodologies**

#### 4.2.1 Research paradigm

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) view a paradigm as a pattern or model of how something is structured and the functions of the parts. Mertens (2015) adds that a paradigm is an outline of assumptions to be followed by researchers in a research study. In this study, I viewed a research paradigm as a structure that guards how we conduct research and how we view it. Guided by the research questions and theoretical framework of the study, I decided to utilise the Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) in proposing for the

ABA to mitigating LMVs. According to Fuchs (2015), CER is an approach that critically studies society in a dialectical way by analysing all its societal dimensions. Ramirez, Quintana, Sanhueza and Valenzuela (2013) argue that CER proposes change within the society, thereby focusing on transforming the society itself. Mertens (2015) adds that key principles of CER are openness, participation, accountability, empowerment, and reciprocity. By using CER, I argue that the learner facing LMVs would be socially, physically, and mentally changed and that they can live a life without dependence syndrome. Rather, they will be equipped with life skills for independent survival and empowerment. The study focused on proposing ways to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean context through the application of the ABA. The collaboration of ABA and CT as a conceptual and theoretical framework, together with PAR as methodologies, left the rural learning ecologies learners transformed, emancipated, and empowered. In this study, the participants were open-minded and accountable through active participation (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2016; Mertens, 2015; Mthiyane, 2015) in identifying and proposing assets locally available to mitigate the multiple complex vulnerabilities they faced. The study understood that participants became empowered for life and were then ready to act in such a way that they themselves would later become assets for other learners in LMVs contexts.

**Ontological** assumptions of CER focus on what reality really are, asking; *what is it?* (Callaghan, 2016). Freshwater and Cahill (2013) observed that ontologically, CER has many interests with a holistic look at the participants of the research with the aim of understanding the group to appeal to for a logical change hence renewing the practice and structure through creating strong relationships and promoting critical thinking. Keywords on their observations are empowerment and critical thinking when trying to help learners facing LMVs. Learners, in participation, need skills for survival in a complex situation in order to achieve high-quality education like fellow. Learners need to move from the dependence syndrome of receiving assistance to being independently able to solve their own problems. I opted for CER, which speaks to transformation and

empowerment, leading to critical thinking, which through the participative approach, leads to life skills. The *reality* is that people should be able to solve their problems and make meaning from the environment they live in (Morrison, 2010; Tuner & Baker, 2019) by reconfiguring themselves in order to survive/self-organise using the locally available assets. In this study, the CER paradigm involves the use of critical theories and methodologies: ABA, and CT, and PAR (Mthiyane, 2015; Scotland, 2012; Freshwater & Cahill, 2013; Mertens, 2015). I argue that the collaboration of ABA, CT, and PAR was critical and created reality for it involved active participation of participants and the researcher in proposing for assets to mitigate LMVs, leading to empowerment, critical thinking, and life skills among participants.

**Methodologically**, I entered the participants' natural settings to understand the LMVs and proposed solutions through active participation. CER methods of generating data are participatory in nature (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2016; Mthiyane, 2015). I therefore employed the discussion meetings (DM), participative observation (PO), focus group discussion (FGD), and the document analysis (DA) to generate data and propose ways that mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. All participants actively constructed their own meanings and understandings relative to their prior and existing knowledge and practices. CT and ABA theoretical and conceptual frameworks are also participative in nature; hence, the CER paradigm was a supporting pillar in this research. I agree for the collaboration of the paradigm and the theories that have a purpose to improve the living standards of those burdened was important (Mertens, 2015; Mthiyane, 2015; Scotland, 2012). I chose this paradigm as it works well in qualitative research (Myende, 2015) and has a strong connection with PAR (Macdonald, 2012). This helped participants to suggest the best assets needed to diminish LMVs in Zimbabwean rural ecologies thereby leaving learners transformed and empowered in their problem solving.

**Epistemologically**, CER researcher argues that knowledge arises as dialectic (transformative), consensual, and normative in nature through its methodological way of gathering data (Macdonald, 2012; Ramirez et al., 2013). Thus, the intermediate method of conveying knowledge between the researcher and the participants becomes communication. The utilisation of DM, FGD and PO as methodologically tools made it possible for participants to communicate and share knowledge. Participants of this study made sense of their existence through creation and re-creation, adoption and adaptation, and engagement in activities that gave their lives meaning. I encouraged participants to communicate using the languages they understand and did not hinder their expression. Hlamulo learner participants and Humelelo adult participants mainly communicated using Xangani/Shona, while Hlautelo adult participants used English. This created a natural setting free dialectic expression by all the participants through active participation and did not limit their expression. This created harmony, cooperation, and confidence among participants (Chinyoka, 2013; Mahoso & Kuyayama-Tambure, 2014) and promoted reciprocal relationships (Myende, 2014). I viewed CER as important in creating good relationships between the participants and the researcher, thereby dissolving power relations and emancipating knowledge through critical questioning on the way things have historically been done. The subsequent section discusses the mode of enquiry used in the study.

#### **4.2.2 Mode of enquiry**

The qualitative approach mode of enquiry informed this study. Chinyoka (2013) and Macdonald (2012) argue that some scholars employing qualitative enquiry seek to interpret and understand things in their normal situations. For Crossman (2017), qualitative enquiry is a mode of enquiry that gathers non-numerical data and gets meanings from of it. I argue that qualitative research approach makes researchers understand situations and deduces meaning from the understandings and opinions of the actual participants. Qualitative research design was found to be the best-fit and was

used to understand the past and present experiences of learners in rural learning ecologies in order to propose the assets to mitigate LMVs. The research was done in participants' natural settings, involving the directly affected participants in actively identifying and finding solutions to problems that surrounds them. The rationale for using qualitative design in this study was that it provided the opportunity to generate in-depth analysis of the experiences of a relatively small numbers of participants. As such, the researcher, together with participants, was able to address the problem in a meaningful and non-reductionist way (Chidarikire, 2017; Mertens, 2015; Mthiyane, 2015). I have to know and understand what learners experience in their daily struggles through the use of a qualitative research approach combined with PAR methodologies. We generated data in a natural setting, and this gave us real outcomes or results since the participants were directly involved in the research, as advocated by ABA proponents (Myende, 2014). In this study, I gathered data '*in situ*' and the researcher observed the participants actively discussing and talking to each other in a real-world setting. Simultaneously, the researcher could ask them questions in order to understand '*why*' they did what they did (Chidarikire, 2017; Kimathi, 2017; Mthiyane, 2015). Their suggestions and contributions were highly honoured within the community of study.

However, I was aware of the critiques of the qualitative approach as highlighted in various literatures (Boeije, 2010; Chinyoka, 2013). Crossman (2017) and Nachmias and Nachmias (2006) contend that the qualitative approach starts with a general problem without specific questions to guide the research. This implies that with the onset of a qualitative enquiry, one starts with a general perspective of the phenomenon, which can lead to the employment of unstructured instruments. Qualitative research presents the results mainly in words without reckoning the results. Therefore, in order to counter these critiques, I was guided by well-structured research, which strengthened the study and directed methodological choices. I also used multiple PAR methods (DM, FGD, DA and PO) which became superior in this study as they produced data in its natural state, hence ensuring the conclusions be reliable and thus protecting research

trustworthiness. The following section deliberates on the mode of research design utilised in this study.

### **4.2.3 Research design**

Mcmillan and Schumacher (2010) define research design as an idea designed and followed when conducting an investigation. Crossman (2017) concurs that a research design is a research proposal designed to respond to particular enquiries. In this research, planning was done during the research on LMVs in rural learning ecologies. The researcher designed the statement of the problem, the data gathering technique, the participant selection procedures, and the data analysis methodologies. In this study, good planning was able to provide answers on the following; what the study intended; data type required; study purpose and data sources; the study area; what data collection methods and data analysis would be appropriate; and the specific nature of the study (Crossman, 2017; Trochim, Donnelly, & Arora, 2015; Singh & Sahu, 2015). For these reasons, I concluded that selecting a proper research design was important because it represents advanced preparation of what has to be done.

In this study, I made use of PAR as it allowed me to gain ideas and knowledge from the people affected and to generate solutions to the LMVs they face. PAR was used in this research to actively involve the rural learning ecologies in the research process. I observed and described what participants found upon applying ABA to mitigating the current problems they faced through PAR (Trochim et al., 2015; Singh & Sahu, 2015). Myende (2014) argues that research design should begin by stating the main research question backed with the primary research questions, which assist in justifying why the research should be conducted. For this reason, I had to restate the following major research question leading the research.

#### **4.2.3.1 Primary research question restated**

How can we mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through the ABA?

#### **4.2.3.2 Secondary objectives restated**

The purpose of this research was to propose ways that could mitigate LMVs in the Zimbabwean context through the ABA. This study first conducted a situational analysis with a view to understanding current situation in rural ecologies. This was done through the mapping of assets that could be used to mitigate LMVs. The study forestalls identified and discussed circumstances under which the identified assets could be used to mitigate identified multiple vulnerabilities. The last two objectives of this study focused on suggesting how we could mitigate against LMVs and anticipating threats that may hinder the ABA to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in rural learning ecologies. The research question and these objectives largely influenced the research design followed to conduct this study. Given the above, PAR became the design to realise the effectiveness of ABA as a way to mitigate LMVs. Below is an explanation of PAR and why it was suitable for this research.

#### **4.2.3.3 Participatory Action Research**

PAR originated from the work of Lewin (1946), who believed that when individuals are actively involved in decision-making they become motivated and own the outcome. Freire (1982) assumed that if residents actively participate in what they do, they become emancipated and socially transformed. Furthermore, Lewin and Freire emphasise the importance of *participant-orientated* activities in finding solutions to personal problems resulting in the transformation and empowerment of the participants (Chevalier, 2015). This study focused on proposing ways to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean context by using the ABA through participant-orientated attempts to solve their social problems. Goodall and Barnard (2015) define PAR as an organised investigation that

encompasses a partnership of the individual affected with the problem in order to actively find solutions to the problem. Dube (2016) defines PAR as a philosophical method, which attempts to transform the individual from their permanent problematic state through actively involving them. Goodall and Barnard's (2015) definition state that PAR as an approach involves participants making decisions and acting to end the challenging situations, they face. When applied to this study, the purpose of PAR was to socially emancipate, transform, and empower learners. PAR tries to improve learners in rural learning ecologies to enable them to live as others do through active participation. Through PAR, participants experience self-reflective enquiry that help them to understand and improve their situations for themselves (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2016; Mthiyane, 2015). The PAR process involves active participation, linked to the experiences participants to develop better solutions to their difficult situations (Macdonald, 2012; Chevalier, 2015; Goodall & Barnard, 2015). Utilising PAR in this study, I argue that learners attempted to find solutions to the LMVs they faced through active participation. PAR leaves participants emancipated, transformed, and empowered, and have improves the control they have over their lives. Based on the above, PAR was found to be the "best fit" research design in this study. I clarified below why PAR was considered central to this study.

#### **4.2.3.4 Why PAR for this study?**

**Ontologically**, Macdonald (2012) states that, the major objective of PAR is to gather people together to find solutions to their problems and bring about change. When applied to this study, I involved local people as participants as active participate to propose assets to mitigate LMVs in their community. I motivated participants through DM that being actively involved in decisions would be transformative and empowering, improve survival, and help others with similar problems. Through PAR, learners facing LMVs would move from dependence syndrome to being independent through active participation in finding solutions to the problems they faced. The application of PAR,

using ABA and CT developed life skills of affected learners. The reality is that people should be able to solve their problems, change, and live better lives. I chose PAR because it resulted in a report *and* an action, and the process itself resulted in community dialogues and the organisation and mobilisation of available assets (Chidarikire, 2017). Moreover, public awareness was raised with participants support (Goodall & Barnard, 2015; Lewin, 1946; Freire, 1982). The action was realised when participants actively collected and analysed data, and from there determined the action to take. Through PAR, participants became co-researchers in this study because they actively participated in all the cycles of PAR.

***Epistemologically***, PAR creates and emancipate through critically questioning the way things have always been done through active participation (Boyle, 2012; Chidarikire, 2017; Macdonald, 2012). Understanding is a result of repetition and repetition is learned through active participation. I preferred PAR as it enabled participants to collaborate and share their knowledge, ideas, and points-of-view. For this reason, Macdonald (2012) states that sharing ideas and striving for improvement creates synergy among participants and thereby positively affects their performance. In this study, synergy also contributed to building a harmonious social atmosphere among participants as they worked together in FGDs to propose the assets they could use to mitigate LMVs. Acquiring new knowledge and understanding was achieved through participants active participation and resulted in social change and overall improvement while trying to solve the LMVs they face. The study participants were provided with an opportunity to voice their opinions through discursive practice, sharing ideas, and creating cooperation (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2016). Thus, the study was flexible in allowing participants to interact and be part of the study.

***Methodologically***, PAR data generation methods allow all participants to actively participate throughout the entire research process (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2016;

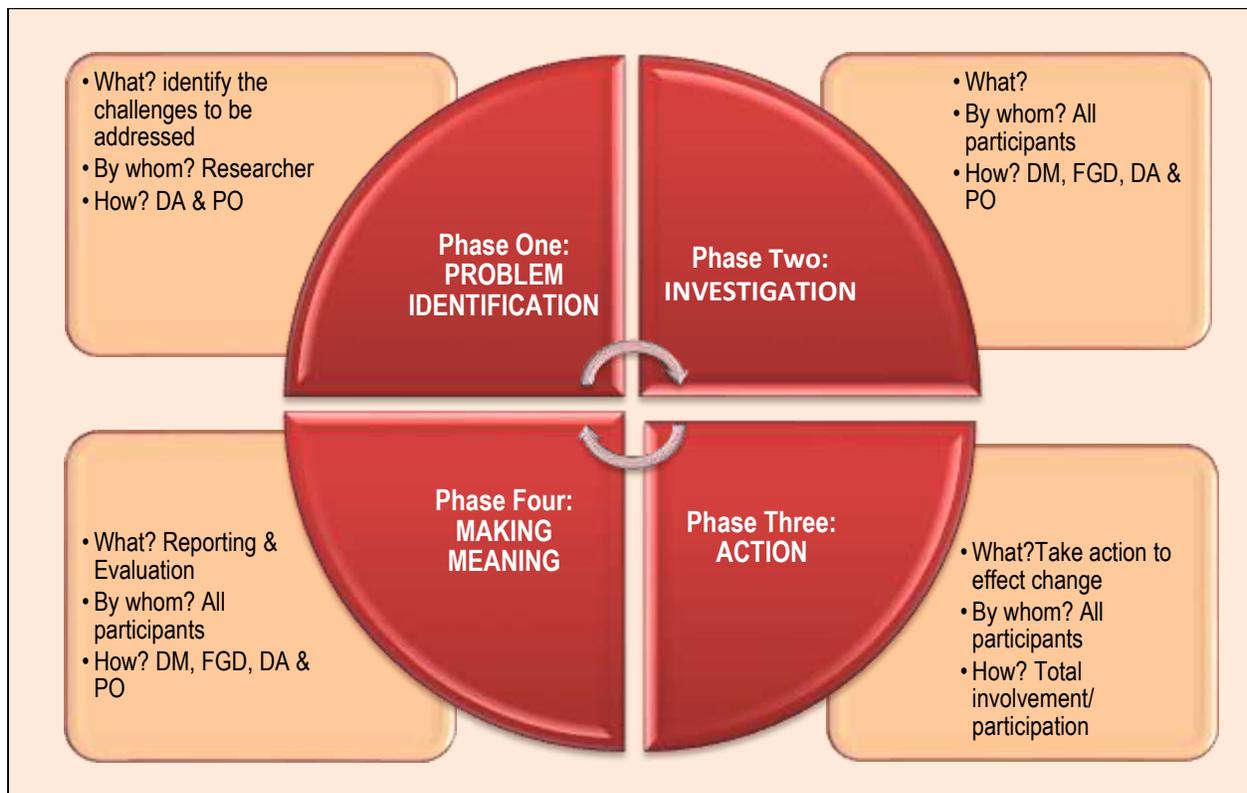
Mthiyane, 2015) and they foster individual emancipation and empowerment resulting in social change by defining their problems and finding solutions to those problems (Macdonald, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In this study, DM and FGD were utilised to generate data that proposes ways to mitigate LMVs. I selected these data-generating methods because they involve active participation participants who find solutions to the problems they face in their learning. Accordingly, active participation by participants was considered co-participation throughout the entire PAR process (Macdonald, 2012; Mertens, 2015). My role as a researcher was to give guidance by taking the role of active participant observer in the study. As PAR supports active participation (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2016), the proposition of ABA changed rural learning ecologies participants from dependence syndrome to being independent because they appreciated the process and developed life skills in the process.

Overall, PAR's purpose is to transform and empower the involved participants. What is important about PAR is active **participation** of the **affected participants** and the potential for them to be involved in finding solutions to the issues they are facing with an **action**. When applied to this study, PAR fostered capacity and public emancipation, empowerment, and transformation with action at the end (Chevalier, 2015; Goodall & Barnard, 2015). The study confirmed that utilising PAR in working with the affected participants ensured that the exercise was participative and promoted empowerment and transformation, thereby lessening the impact of LMVs in rural ecologies. The following subsection will deliberate on the phases of PAR and their application in this study.

#### **4.2.3.5 Phases of PAR and their application in this study**

Goodall and Barnard (2015) suggest that PAR methodologies are reflexive, flexible, and interactive and explore local knowledge and perceptions. Thus, Chevalier and Buckles

(2013) recommend four different modes of PAR that promotes reflexive, flexibility, and interaction. These are; **contractual** model which emphasises engaging local people to contribute to gathering data required by the researcher. The second, **consultative** mode, stresses encouraging considering people's views before effecting change. The third mode is **collaborative** which entails the engagement of researcher in the first two modes, as people need to work cooperatively. Teamwork inspires the researchers and public to work collectively to identify, propose, and emulate projects accomplished by the study. The final mode is **collegiate** which encourages local community individuals and researchers to collectively work together as co-researchers with various capabilities to present the progression of learning. In this mode, the local community individuals have control over the whole procedure; this is why I chose it as the main research design. The study drew Chevalier (2015) four cyclic steps to conducting PAR, namely: *problem identification, investigation, action, evaluation, and making meaning* out of the research. This is diagrammatically represented in **Figure 4.2** and explained in more detail below.



**Figure 4.2: Phases of participatory action research**

#### **4.2.3.5.1 Phase One: Problem identification**

Forming a collaborative inquiry group was very important at this stage. Goodall and Barnard (2015) and Hendricks (2013) observe that during this phase of the study, participants begin to identify the challenges or problems that the group want to address. When applied to this study, it was the duty of all participants to identify the problems that they need to solve and anticipate the consequences of the problems. I first shaped the assumptive problem, that is, *LMVs* as a challenge, which needed some attention in rural learning ecologies and shared these participants at the beginning. I engaged the local members of the rural learning ecologies through a DM. We agreed that multiple problems existed in their community and needed to be mitigated. We later established collective leadership and reflected on group processes in the implementation of the

asset-based approach employed through FGD following Chevalier and Buckles' (2013) suggestive modes.

#### **4.2.3.5.2 Phase Two: Investigation**

Under this phase, the research team needs to closely examine the identified problematic situation. The participants should give themselves time to collect data on a particular problem (Chevalier, 2015; Goodall & Barnard, 2015; Hendricks, 2013). Through DM, FGD, PO, and DA, this was made possible as this phase delved into the issues of LMVs and this was done in participants natural settings. Meetings were set for FGD to investigate the causes of problems they face. In this study, this phase was utilised as there was need for participants to recognise problems and its need, methods that should be considered to help discover more about the problem, and to evaluate risks associated with it (Chevalier, 2015; Goodall & Barnard, 2015). This also helped in the identification of assets to mitigate problems. We also agreed on the plan to collaborate and repeat phases of activities and reflection in order to propose solutions to LMVs through asset-based approach learning.

#### **4.2.3.5.3 Phase Three: Action**

This was the most important phase of PAR as action was to be taken. Goodall and Barnard (2015) argue that participants decide on the action to take and affect change in the last phase of PAR. Irrespective the consequences of the action, the participants should intelligently reflect on the entire progression (Chevalier, 2015; Goodall & Barnard, 2015; Hendricks, 2013). When applied to this study, participants were given the opportunity to prove the effective use of assets proposed from their rural learning ecologies. This was done by putting actions into exercise, record keeping, and valuing ownership of ideas. An environment was created that allowed for respecting other participants' views and questioning if there were disagreements. After every session or

meeting, the participants would review and reflect on the pros and cons ABA activities to make the study a success. Every member was given the opportunity to what they felt in a supportive manner.

#### **4.2.3.5.4 Making meaning**

At this phase, the researcher and the participants report and evaluate on positive and negative issues, and communicate to the public arena the empowering experience they received from the study (Chevalier, 2015; Goodall & Barnard, 2015). This was done through proper capturing, interpreting, and understanding of the group experiences. The participants generated from their personal experiences in rural learning ecologies. The generated data were analysed using CDA. By selecting and recognising the use of local expertise from the local community (NGO representative, faith-based representative, and social worker) the study realised the importance of these local assets in the mitigation process. We kept in mind that Myende's (2014) inside-out concept would provide a basis for finding solutions to problems faced in rural learning ecologies. We later shared our achievement through open communication, commitment, and the interactive process of ABA. The following subsection considers the principles and character of PAR as a central design to the study.

#### **4.2.3.6 Principles and characteristics of PAR**

Below I summarise different authors' views on the basic tenants of PAR. I started by discussing McTaggart's (1989) sixteen principles of PAR. McTaggart explains that PAR requires that participants repetitively test the design of the approach/strategy. He adds that PAR allows participants to take an active role in improving the social life of participants and empowers them to find solutions to their problems (Macdonald, 2012; McTaggart, 1989). From McTaggart's explanations, I liked the fact that PAR activities test and justify the approach, as they are actively involved in every aspect. Based on

McTaggart's (1989) ideas, Stringer (1996) adds that PAR enables participation of participants, recognising and emancipating them to become people with the potential to create solutions to the problems they face. In addition to the above, Selenger (1997) acknowledged the other seven philosophies of the PAR process: the origins of the problem and who to solves it; defining the purpose of the activities in relation to what the participants benefit from it; involving active participants in the practice; encompassing the discouraged; creating an alertness of the assets they have; and facilitating how to utilise them by sharing what has been achieved to the entire community (Stringer, Traill & Culhane, 2010; Selenger, 1997; McDonald, 2012). Looking at the above principles and characteristics, PAR was the best-fit research design since the study aimed to mitigate LMVs through application of ABA. The ABA lens improved the lives of the marginalised rural learners from the effects of LMVs through empowerment and transformation. I then summarise the principles and features of PAR as described below in the context of this research study.

#### **4.2.3.6.1 PAR is *participatory***

As earlier alluded to by different authors, the community owns and controls PAR (Macdonald, 2012; McTaggart, 1989; Selenger, 1997). It is in the hands of the community to appoint an external evaluator and control them (Macdonald, 2012). In this study, learners facing LMVs from an identified school, parents/guardians from the school community, the headmaster (principal) of the selected school, teachers from the school, an NGO representative, a faith-based representative, and a social worker were selected as participants. All the participants were actively involved in all stages, from problem identification to making meaning of the ABA project (Chevalier, 2015; Goodall & Barnard, 2015; Hendricks, 2013). This was important because, through active participation, PAR fosters individual empowerment resulting in social change within individuals by defining their problems and finding solutions to those problems

(Macdonald, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I found it interesting for participants to find out for themselves how mitigation of LMVs can be done using the ABA.

#### **4.2.3.6.2 PAR is *emancipatory***

According to Chidarikire (2017), PAR emancipates those involved in the process. He further explains that PAR, through frequent dialogues and deliberations, has the potential to form public places for participants and scholars, and to reform their understanding on how to address issues that influence daily life. Dube (2016) who argues that PAR liberates participants from all problems they face through active participation supported this. When applied to this study, the involvement of all the stakeholders helped learners to improve the LMVs they face. PAR collaborated well with the CER lens gives the researcher and participants power to control the research (Dube, 2016). In this study, I accommodated participants and made them co-researchers, enabling them to actively make decisions. The creation of different FGDs, according to their understandings and experiences, facilitated the active participation by the co-researchers in proposing for the ABA to mitigate the LMVs they face. I argue that the collaboration of PAR and CER in proposing for ABA to mitigate LMVs through the active participation of rural residents results in emancipation.

#### **4.2.3.6.3 PAR is *transformative***

PAR's objectives are to be clear and improve the abilities of those involved so they may become critical thinkers in both the theory and practice of solving problem (Goodall & Barnard, 2015; Selenger, 1997). Chidarikire (2017) and Dube (2016) support that PAR activities transform the participants in the way they reason and decide, and shape their way of socialisation in the society. The study applied CT and ABA as a theoretical and conceptual framework in proposing assets that mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies. The study theory and conceptual framework included practical situations

where actions were taken for transforming the lives of learners facing LMVs in rural learning ecologies. However, PAR, participants understood practical situations they faced and explored ways they can utilise assets to mitigate the problems faced. Different perspectives from theories, experiences, and discussion helped to highlight specific actions and real situations became foundations for proposing assets to mitigate the problems they face (Goodall & Barnard, 2015), leaving them transformed and changing in their lives. In this study, PAR assisted participants to be critical thinkers and improve their decision-making. It also improved the network of learners as they got to know the local stakeholders thereby leaving them connected and potentially transformed.

#### **4.2.3.6.4 PAR is *flexible and iterative***

Through PAR, the research preceded through way that are flexible and iterative in nature (Chevalier, 2015; Macdonald, 2012; Myende, 2014). The process itself prepared for thoughts that were flexible. As we progressed, different inquiries, understandings, and guiding principle arose and reshaped the progression of our activities. I used those questions to research more on the arising subject. Although PAR is flexible and iterative, the study was guided using the main aims and objectives in order not to lose focus. As the research progresses, the research team questioned their own activities regularly to prevent losing the aim of the study (Chevalier, 2015; Macdonald, 2012). This was avoided by always reflecting on the aims and objective of the study, which proposed ways to mitigate LMVs through application of ABA. The participants always knew and remembered the purpose of the study in order not to lose the focus of the study and to create meaning through it. The aim, objectives, and purpose ensured they knew why this research was being carried out and who the beneficiaries were (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Macdonald, 2012; Myende, 2014).

#### **4.2.3.6.5 PAR is defined by a *need for action***

The success of the study is based on the extent to which the approach helps the community to mitigate multiple vulnerabilities (McTaggart, 1989; Selenger, 1997). This study should, in the best situations, suggest the action the community should take. As earlier mentioned in section (4.2.3.6.1), all members actively contributed to the research and every participant was given a duty or role to perform which were interchangeable. In addition to that, an environment was created that allowed respect for other participants' views and proper questioning if there was a disagreement. After every session or meeting, the participants would review and reflect on the pros and cons of the ABA activities to make the study a success. Members were given the opportunity to express what they felt in a welcoming manner. The following section deliberates on the data generation approaches and procedures used in the study.

#### **4.2.4 Data generation methods and procedure**

Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2014) define data generation as approaches utilised by scholars to produce data from a particular information source in qualitative and quantitative research. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) add that data generation methods are a technique utilised by the scholar in generating data used in the study. I view data gathering as ways of collecting information from the participants to make meaning out of gathered data. In this study, I used discussion meetings (DM), Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Document Analysis (DA), and Participant Observation (PO) to generate data. The triangulation of the gathering instrumentations ensured the legitimacy and dependability of the generated data (Chinyoka, 2013). I made a simplified data matrix plan below, **Table 4.3**:

<b>Broad research questions</b>	<b>Data required</b>	<b>Data generating method(s)</b>
What is the current situation of learners with multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?	An analysis of the current LMVs in rural learning ecologies	Discussion Meeting Document Analysis Participant Observation Focus Group Discussion
How can we map the identified assets to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?	Basic elements and features of the asset-based approach in mitigating LMVs	Discussion Meeting Participant Observation Focus Group Discussion
How can the identified assets be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?	Conducive ways in which the identified assets be used to mitigate LMVs	Discussion Meeting Participant Observation Focus Group Discussion
What threats (if any) may hinder an asset-based approach to mitigating LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?	Negative and neutral perceptions towards the implementation of an asset-based approach	Discussion Meeting Participant Observation Focus Group Discussion
How can we mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach?	Probable resolutions to mitigate the impact of LMVs	Discussion Meeting Participant Observation Focus Group Discussion

**Table 4.3: Data gathering methods and procedures**

#### **4.2.4.1 Discussion Meeting**

Sandra (2014) defines a discussion meeting (DM) as a meeting by two or more individuals to discuss an important agenda. In agreement with this, Rebori (2011) denotes that discussion meetings are essential in bringing different ideas together

through giving each participant opportunities to express their views. This reflects that a discussion meeting should be well planned with participants knowing, in advance, the agenda of the meeting. This is done to build trust, to have mutual respect, to have reliable and observable backing, and to have a straightforward message (Rebori, 2011; Sandra, 2014).

In this study, I called for a DM for all the participants where they were knowledgeable of the purpose and expectations of the study since the letters had invited them to constitute the research team. The participants were informed of the purpose and the objectives of the study and questions were clarified since the letters had invited them to constitute the research team. They also suggested the other participants they wish to work with in the study so as to achieve the objectives of the study. To build trust and to bring together participants, all selected participants read the consent forms and signed that they voluntarily consented to participate in the study.

Due to the diversity of the nature of participants in the current study, the participants were grouped into three groups (FGDs) where, I was part of all these groups. All groups exhausted the points of discussions in FGDs as guided by the schedule and would assemble together as the whole team group discussions after the FGDs. What was discussed in separate groups would be engaged in by all members in a DM. The reason for allowing this to take place was to allow the learners comfortable and freely participate in the mist of elders, parents and teachers, that they gain confidence to get assistance from them when need arises. I realised that the DMs were very useful in suggesting the strategy that empowered participants to solve their own challenges and they assisted the participants to attend to the problems in a collaborative way. It also allowed all the participants to have a face-to-face interaction where a record of voice notes, facial expression and suggestive actions were taken.

#### 4.2.4.2 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion (FGD) is a data generation technique that involves a group of people meeting to share ideas and opinions on a specific topic known to all participants (Bernard, 2012; Bell, 2012; Crossman, 2017; Krueger & Casey, 2012). Bell (2012) and Chinyoka (2013) agree that FGD is an interview between group members that generates data leading to a communicable decision that is agreed upon. In this study, an FGD was a carefully planned series of deliberations intended to gather opinions from participants. The study employed the FGD to gather different views from learners, parents or guardians, headmaster/principal, teachers, faith-based, and the NGO representative and social worker, in identifying the root cause of the LMVs being faced by learners in their learning ecologies.

To reach the objectives of the study, I felt that participants should be separated into three groups that they named themselves: *Hlamulo learner participant* — learner participants; *Humelelo adult participant* — adult participants group 1 (the parents and the faith-based representative — local pastor); and *Hlautelo adult participant* — for the adult participants group 2 (the headmaster, the teachers, and the NGO representative and the social worker). I had observed there were differences between the leading researcher, the learners, and adult participants, thus different group placement. Working together within their levels would allow openness, accountability, and reciprocity between participants, especially learner participants. Voluntary group secretaries were (not their real names): Shalati — Hlamulo learner participant 1; Hasani — Humelelo adult participant 4; and Mhlava — Hlautelo adult participant 1. They all willingly requested to be the group secretaries. I was excited to have a team willingly to act and because they were going to capture information, they would understand much more about the approach to alleviate LMVs. Our overall team secretary for discussion meetings was Mhlava, from Hlautelo adult participant. She wrote our minutes noted resolutions and provided reports on our discussions.

Through FGDs, participants helped each other to solve problems. FGDs were used with all participants exploring their perceptions, experiences, and understanding of assets to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies. FGD conversations were captured using both a voice recorder and handwritten transcripts. The right atmosphere was established as participants sat in a circle discussing issues in order to have direct eye contact and observe facial expressions. I held two FGD per month per group. The session lasted for less than an hour, as long as the discussion lasted, or as agreed with by the FGD members. Differences among the members were utilised to clarify a point on all emerging issues. The idea behind the FGD was to help participants to identify and shed light on their understandings on the problems and how they can be mitigated through an asset-based approach. More to the above, FGDs were appropriate since I had a number of unrestricted queries and allowed members to express their views in their own language (Chinyoka, 2013; Crossman, 2017; Krueger & Casey, 2012). I opted for FGD as they allowed flexibility in questioning, the encouragement of dialogue, the exchange of ideas, the generation of hypothesis, and the production of findings that inform and ensure that most participants fully understand the topic (Chinyoka, 2013). In addition, Blanche et al., (2014) argue that during the discussion, participants can support or disagree with one another on the question and other crucial/pertinent issues that may arise during the discussion session. However, I used arguments and misunderstandings to further probe more questions and gain more information for the study. I also took note of the participants' voices, facial expressions, or hesitations to further gain more information.

#### **4.2.4.3 Document Analysis**

Document analysis (DA) is a prearranged examination of instrumental documents to recognise the necessities and problems of an individual or organisation (Best & Kahn, 2010; Blanche et al., 2014). Bowen (2009) adds that when examining documents, the

written and electronic official papers are examined. This helps to find the way forward by looking at the extent of the LMVs effects. Best and Kahn (2010) clusters the documents that can be used as data-generating instruments into 3 types; public records, personal official papers, and available evidence. The study analysed public records. The official public document analysed were OVCs record books (school documents with lists of vulnerable learners). These official documents were purposively selected and used as backing to the data generated from FGDs and DMs, thus improving the trustworthiness of the findings. The OVCs record books revealed some of the issues that were not found in the later meetings. Extensive notes were taken on matters relating to learner multiple vulnerabilities. The documents analysed were those that were not older than two years. The rationale for analysing these documents were that, they were easily accessible at any time I needed them at school. School level DA provided me with the social background of the participants under study (Akiwa, 2013). Revisiting the documents in place was an important starting point as it enabled the research to evaluate what had already been done and what needs to be done in future. This laid out a foundation to decide on the asset to use in the rural ecology under study.

#### **4.2.4.4 Participant Observation**

Marshall and Rossman (2011) define observation as an organised way of describing actions, performances, and proceedings, and how the events unfold at the end. Chinyoka (2013) argues that observation is the method that enables the researcher to discover more about the participant in their regular way of living. The study adopted the participant observation (PO) method of generating data. I joined in the daily group discussion activities while observing and interpreting events as they unfolded from the point of view of the participants. I also observed if there was meaningful collaboration of ABA and CT concepts, proving legitimacy by bearing in mind multiple perceptions and approaches used in the implementation process (Myende, 2014; Crossman, 2017). In other words, there was data capturing and interpretation of participants' experiences. I

observed participants in their suggested in FGD activities within the school settings. The PO was utilised as it produces spot-on representation of actions by participants. I was able to observe and record the findings of the use of the ABA and as a result have first-hand information. Morgan (2010) notes that the rationale of using PO is that it helps to produce an all-inclusive understanding of the problem under study as objective and as detailed as possible. Having discussed the data generation method, the resulting section reflects on how the selection of participants was conducted.

#### **4.2.4.5 Selection of participants**

Involving learners is unbearable because it is overwhelming, costly, and might causes some extreme emotional behaviours (Simon, 2011). It has a psychological effect on the participants, especially the learners facing LMVs. Firstly, I called for a discussion meeting (DM) with all stakeholders at the school to clarify the importance of the research in the community. I then purposively selected participants due to their understanding, relationships, and know-how regarding the roles of a research subject (Chidarikire, 2017; Suri, 2011). I was able to select participants facing LMVs because of their own personal experience (Simon, 2011). The generated data was very informative for the research. From the identified school, 10 learners, 4 parents/guardians, the headmaster (principal), and 2 teachers were selected. A Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) representative, a faith-based representative, and a social worker were also included as participants. A total of 20 participants were selected from the community. The choice was from those who were identified as informative and were available and willing to participate. Selecting participants who are from different groups helped in generating data that was replicable, solid and relevant to the researched issue as it provides a diverse range of cases. Crossman (2019) support the heterogeneous purposive selection saying it is designed to provide as much insight as possible in the phenomenon under examination. In the current study, having different kinds of participants helped to construct data with a robust view regarding to LMVs in rural

learning ecologies. Thus, all the participants were recruited because of the contribution they were likely to bring in this study and their in-depth knowledge and interest in education in a rural learning ecologies. Some of the participants were individually approached. Others like learners, parents and teachers were talked to as groups. However in the end all possible team members were brought together in a DM. The how and why of the selection process is discussed below.

#### **4.2.4.6 Profiling of participants**

The following subsection includes the profiling of participants in the study as well as how and why they were selected.

##### **4.2.4.6.1 Learners**

Ten Form Three learner participants were selected in the study. To be gender-equitable, I selected 5 boys and 5 girls from learners. To select these participants, I was given permission by the school head (principal) and the teacher(s) responsible for Orphans and Vulnerable Learners (OVCs). The responsible teacher then identified many learners at risk and who had interest in this research. Form Three learners were selected because they were mature enough to be assets to other learners the following year. In addition, learners in Form Three drop out of school due to various reasons. I called for a DM with these learners and I informed them about the research objectives. I opened the invitation to all learners facing at risk, even though the study only requires ten learners. Addressing a larger group ensured that my sample size wouldn't be affected if some learners decided to quit. Although I incorporated a few learners not facing LMVs, choosing those facing LMVs was important because they had detailed experiences of what they go through. These learners would actively participate to address issues affecting them. The letters of request to their parents or guardians were

written and they were asked to sign consent forms agreeing to their participation in this study.

#### **4.2.4.6.2 Parents/guardians**

I also selected the parents/guardians who participated in this study. This comprised of 4 parents/guardians; 2 females and 2 males. To recruit these parents, I approached some of the parents personally and some telephonically. I did not limit my number to four when we first met in a discussion meeting and this approach ensured that my sample size would not be affected if some parents or guardians decide to quit. I also explained the importance of their participation in this study, as well as the aims and purpose of the research. I then distributed consent forms for signing so that they would be participants in the study.

#### **4.2.4.6.3 Teachers**

Two teachers were selected in this study. To select the teachers, I consulted the headmaster of the school and he directed me, upon request, to those from teacher(s) responsible for Orphans and Vulnerable Learners (OVCs). I nominated a male and a female teacher, so as to be gender balanced. The teachers are also responsible for guiding and counselling learners on a daily basis at the school. They remained important in counselling the learners facing LMVs. A discussion on the intention to work with them as participants in the study was done. Letters of request were then offered to them so that they may consent to participate in the study. I then offered them consent forms to sign so that they would be participants in the study.

#### **4.2.4.6.4 Headmaster (principal)**

Since the headmaster has ultimate authority over the school and is accountable for the daily activities, I approached him first with letters to conduct a study from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the Provincial Education, and the District Education Offices of Zimbabwe. I clarified my drive for undertaking this research and explained who would participate, after which he agreed. I presented him with a letter requesting his participation in the study and asked permission to involve some a few teachers as participants. The headmaster was important because he would be an advisor in every process of the ABA. Upon agreeing, I then offered him a consent form to sign so that he could participate in the study.

#### **4.2.4.6.5 Faith-based representative**

For the faith-based representative, I telephonically contacted the person, explaining the reasons for undertaking the study and the participants to be included. I requested he be part of the process and he agreed. I presented him with letter requesting his permission to be a participant in the research study. I then offered him a consent form to sign so that he would be a participant in the study. The faith-based representative was included as a participant so that he would assist with spiritual guidance, counselling, and financial assistance (from church members). He would also take a leading role during the FGD sessions.

#### **4.2.4.6.6 Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) representative**

As for the NGO representative, I visited the NGO's office and extended an invitation, through letter, to have an NGO representative participate and work with other participants. I approached the NGO representative to be one of the participants. The NGO representative would provide advisory services in the planning and execution of the ABA. The NGO representative would liaise with their office about what they can do

to assist learners facing LMVs. In addition to that, they would take leading roles in the FGD meetings and data analysis. I then offered a consent form to sign so that the representative could participate in the study.

#### **4.2.4.6.7 Social worker**

To recruit the social worker, I approached the Department of Social Welfare office and extended the invitation, through letter, to have a social worker participant and work with other participants. I approached the social worker personally to be one of the participants. The social worker provided emotional and psychosocial support to co-researchers. I was concerned about the wellbeing of the participants. The social worker would liaise with the government offices about what they can do to assist the learners facing LMVs. In addition, they would take lead in FGD meetings and data analysis. I then offered a consent form to sign so that the representative could participate in the study. The following section addresses the research site context of the study.

#### **4.2.4.7 Research site context**

I confine these findings to the public school under study and the 20 participants involved in this research. This research study was conducted in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. The public school is found in Masvingo Province, under Chiredzi Rural District Council (CRDC). The public school is located in a marginalised area of Chiredzi South District, near Gonarezhou national park, which makes it a rural school. Most people are subsistence farmers (rely on farming for their survival) and others are businesspeople. Three-quarters of the people are poor, and they survive on farming despite it being a drought-prone region. The people in the area rely on gardening and some are dependent on their family members who work in Mozambique and South Africa. A lot of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), like PLAN International, World Vision, and Care International, come to help people in this area with food and to

sponsor projects. There are vast tracts of land lying idle and people in the region often own cattle, which are culturally considered prestigious. Developmentally, the public school is underdeveloped which is evident from the poor roads; and teaching and learning infrastructure. The public school is quite small with an enrolment of 310 learners whose ages range from 13 to 18 years old. All learners in the public school are black. The public school's pass rate has been very low over the last five years. Most of the learners drop out of school, especially girls, and get married when they are 14 years old because they claim they do not have money for school fees, or that no one can pay for their fees (Chinyoka, 2020). Some school going girls are found working as house girls and boys as herd boys and some are become involved in high-risk sexual behaviours after dropping out of school. These facts motivated me to select a public school surrounded similar situations to implement the ABA to mitigate LMVs. There are 1 teachers at the school. The public school has 6 classroom blocks consisting of two 2 classrooms each and one block under construction. The learners speak Xichangana (XiTsonga in South Africa) as their main language, Shona, and the official language of instruction at school — English. There are no feeding schemes at this secondary school. The attendance of learners is not quite impressive due to (LMVs). Thus, there has been dropping and a decrease of enrolment every year. The following section deliberates on the data analysis and procedure employed in the research study.

#### **4.2.5 Data analysis approach and procedure**

Data analyses are methods of critical assess generate information in order to gain meaning (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2014). Additionally, data analysis can be defined as a procedure to examine and categorise facts gathered from participants (Creswell, 2014). I defined data analysis as the examination of gathered information to make sense out of it. In this study, I constructed and analysed the generated information in order for others to understand (Chidarikire, 2017; Mthiyane, 2015). I coded and analysed the gathered data into themes following the objectives of the study

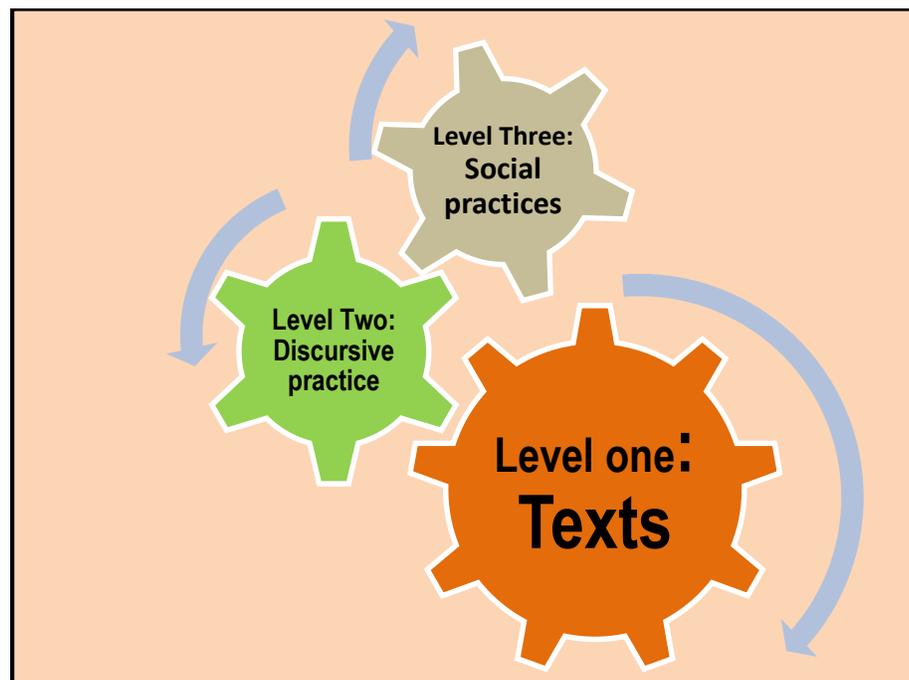
in order to gain meaning. I made captured complex data, through DM, FGD, DA, and PO, simpler in order to enhance understanding and the effectiveness of an ABA by utilising Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Fairclough (1992).

#### **4.2.6 Critical Discourse Analysis**

The data gathered was made simpler for one to understand the effectiveness of an ABA using Fairclough (1992) critical discourse analysis (CDA) ideas. CDA helps by theorising generated data with an awareness of the past, the present, and future (Fairclough, 1992, 2012; Fairclough & Wodak, 2010). Fairclough (1992) argues the importance of understanding language in changing societies. Furthermore, through PAR, Fairclough (1992) adds that language has an impact on understanding how and why things are done in societies. Through the power of language, societies may be emancipated or oppressed. Additionally, Fairclough (1992) argues that societies have expectations and these expectations can be understood through their impact on the behaviour of people living in them (Fairclough, 1992, 2012; Fairclough & Wodak, 2010; Wodak & Meyers, 2015). I conclude that using CDA means analysing, understanding, and explaining, "with a critical eye", social phenomenon that are necessarily complex and taking action based on the results. The study aimed at empowering the learners with recent and contemporary processes of social transformation and skill development. This agrees with this study's theoretical frameworks (ABA and CT and PAR methodologies), in that they all seek to empower and transform marginalised people and create awareness (Chidarikire, 2017) of issues of LMVs. The study aims to propose assets we can use to mitigate LMVs and ensure social change through empowering Zimbabwean rural learners.

In this discourse, the participants and the researcher analysed the generated data of the research at three levels of analysis: text, discursive, and social Office of Zimbabwe

(Fairclough, 1992, 2012). The first goal of the analyst is to describe the relationships among certain texts, interactions, and social practices; the second goal is to interpret the configuration of discourse practices; and the third goal is to use the description and interpretation to explain why and how social practices are constituted, changed, and transformed in the ways that they are (Chidarikire, 2017; Mthiyane, 2015; Myende, 2014). The three levels presented below were not treated as separate entities, rather as wholesome, interlocking, and continuous in order to find meaning. These are explained below in **Figure 4.4**



**Figure 4.4: The interlocking system of data analysis using CDA**

#### **4.2.6.1 Level one: Texts**

Text analysis involves investigation of vocabulary/words to find meaning of what has been said (Fairclough, 1992, 2012; Mogashoa, 2014). According to Fairclough (2012), every word said, is said for a reason, and as such carries meaning. For Fairclough

(1992), these texts or vocabularies have to be deeply scrutinised to find what they signify in relation to the situation under study. On this note, there are descriptions of links between words and social experiences (Myende, 2014). These texts may be spoken, written, text that readers may understand them. Halperin and Heath (2012) argue that analysing texts with CDA helps the researcher to comprehend how individuals understand certain phenomenon. To be able to analyse words expressed by participants, the team secretaries documented the conversation on paper and I then analysed data at the text level. I also listened to voice recordings to complement what was documented. The text analysis in this research study assisted me to identify power struggles and this allowed me to use philosophies of CER as a paradigm, such as empowerment of those in need, and ideologies of PAR, such as inclusion. Alternatively, during data generation, text analysis helped me to collectively address issues of discrimination and other social injustices personified in oral and written words. This shows that the text level of CDA resonates with my paradigm and methodologies. For the purposes of improving understanding about learners facing LMVs in rural learning ecologies, an analysis of data at a textual level was descriptive, interpretative, and analytic. I felt that by analysing data using CDA I seek to create awareness in learners facing LMVs of their own needs and interests of life (Mogashoa, 2014; Myende, 2014).

#### **4.2.6.2 Level two: Interactions/discursive practice**

Another CDA level of analysis focused on language as discursive practice. For Fairclough (1992), discursive practice explains what the vocabulary means when it goes beyond society and culture (how the society and culture understands text production resulting in change). The main goal at this level was to comprehend how text was understood, copied, stated, and deduced by participants (Chidarikire, 2017; Myende, 2014; Mogashoa, 2014). Fairclough (1992, 2012) argues that the discursive level of analysis has a great conceptual impact when discussing issues of power and social classes within societies. In this research study, I diffused issues of power inequalities by

creating a conducive environment for active participation and equal participation of all study participants. I separated them according to groups determined by their level of understanding and the language they speak. The active participation of learners facing LMVs in proposing for assets to mitigate these problems was emancipatory to them. The analysis was focused on the process itself (Myende, 2014), thus I critically combined information from texts with that from interactions with the purpose of finding meaning and to take action.

#### **4.2.6.3 Level three: Social practices/context**

The final CDA level of analysis deliberates on discourse at social practice and the goal was to explain the social practices and their impact (Myende, 2014; Mogashoa, 2014). Myende (2014) further explains that at this level there is much exploration of what happens at the socio-cultural framework. For Fairclough (1992), analysis at this level emphasises the economic, political, and cultural impact in the society. I saw it worthy to analyse the economic, political, and cultural magnitudes of data affecting learners at risk. The reason behind this was to identify and provide detailed understandings of the societal issues and their impact on society. At this level, I interpretatively and descriptively analysed data from PO, combining it from that of DA and FGD to have meaning. Data from these instruments helped to critically analyse the meaning of facial expressions expressed in ABA identification, mapping implementation, and evaluation. The analysis of data, through the social practice lens, gave us access to understanding the perceived thinking of rural ecologies members having capabilities to solve their issues utilising the ABA concept. This was our basis to propose ways to mitigate LMVs. As earlier stated, the three levels presented were not treated as detached entities, rather as a wholesome, intertwining, and constantly seeking meaning. In conclusion, I used CDA as it addresses power disparities, which in relation to CER as a paradigm and as advocated by PAR, allow active participation of rural ecologies members as assets. The following section addresses trustworthiness issues in this study.

### 4.3 TRUSTWORTHINESS ISSUES

Guba's (1981) components of high-quality criteria for realistic investigation were used to measure the credibility of qualitative research. These are: reliability — **dependability**; internal validity — **credibility**; objectivity — **conformability**; external validity and generalisability — **transferability** (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2016). These are explained in more detail below.

**Dependability** describes the intention for results to be consistent if research is repeated with similar participants in a similar situation (Guba, 1981). Moon et al., (2016) adds that one should be able to audit and find the same results from the same research process. Thus, dependability, in this study, refers to firmness of information over a spell, under diverse circumstances. I detailed all the methodologies employed in the study (paradigm — CER; mode of enquiry — qualitative; research design — PAR; data generation methods — DM, FGD, DA, PO; data analysis — CDA) which permits someone reading the finding to evaluate the degree to which suitable enquiry practices have to be done. We made sure that the purpose of the study did not change throughout the study by constantly reviewing and reflecting on research methodologies utilised in the study.

**Credibility** describes the process of finding confidence in the discoveries of a specific research study in a specific situation (Guba, 1981). Moon et al., (2016) adds that credibility is the *truth-value* the research represents. The findings from this study are reliable as they are authentic, which is supported by the research methodologies used to gather, interpret, and conclude the findings. The study used a triangulation of theoretical/conceptual frameworks. I utilised CT and ABA as a theoretical/conceptual framework. The study also utilised methodological triangulation where DM, FGD, DA, and PO were used to generated data. The aim of the research was to propose ways we

can use to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. We made sure that the purpose of the study did not change throughout the study by constantly reviewing and reflecting on research aims, objectives, and questions. The participants were satisfied with the findings as they were actively involved in the whole processes, from the research design (PAR), paradigm (CER), mode of enquiry (qualitative), and data analysis used (CDA). The collaboration of all these resulted in emancipation, transformation, and empowerment of the participants of this study.

**Conformability** describes the extent to which findings are not biased towards the expectations of the respondents and the researcher (Guba, 1981). Moon et al., (2016) argues that to achieve confirmability, one must not replicate the anticipations of the participants but should link objectives with responses in a way that can be traceable by a reader. This study defined conformability as researcher's understandings and assumptions grounded in authentic data related to theoretical/conceptual frameworks and reviewed literature that can be verified by any inquirer. The study provided specific implications for rural learning ecology under study and other studies that provide policy recommendations. I reported on the process of ABA application and, where necessary, I ensured the findings were based on the true reflections of the co-researchers not of the researcher. I enabled the reader to decide confirmability, presenting how the information, concepts, and theories developing from it by developing a comprehensive procedure during the study. This was done through PAR methodologies.

**Transferability** refers to the ways in which current study findings can be applied to other similar situations using other participants (Guba, 1981). Moon et al., (2016) contends that transferability refers to the extent to which the discoveries defined in this study are helpful to other forthcoming studies. I view transferability as the degree to which the study findings can be generalised to other settings and situations. Thus, it is critical that I clearly state the level to which conclusions may or may not be applicable to

other situations. The methodologies and data analysis of data methods utilised show why the study can be transferred to a unique system. Thus, this study employed the CT and ABA as theoretical/conceptual framework appropriate for rural ecologies, the geographical limitations cited evidently justified how the theoretical/conceptual frameworks were used, and the triangulation of data-generating methods significantly reinforced the transferability of the present study. The next section deliberates on the ethical considerations followed in the study.

#### **4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Dube (2016), ethical considerations protect participants from possible harm during the data generation process. Burles and Bally (2018) and Mugweni (2012) add that ethical considerations assist to define the limits of desirable and undesirable activities during the research. In this study, I demonstrated desirable activities to safeguard the participants and the research. To reduce the possibility of harm, all participants were told the major aim and purpose of the study, that is, to propose ways that can be used to mitigate LMVs through the ABA I had to abide by principles of confidentiality, anonymity, non-maleficence, and beneficiary to the study.

Firstly, I secured the ethical clearance approval letter from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Ethical Research Committee by submitting a full proposal of my study (see *appendix A*), protocol reference number: HSS/1659/018D, to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) in Zimbabwe, Provincial Education Director, PED, Masvingo Province (see *appendix C*); and the Chiredzi District Education Office (District School Inspector, DSI) (see *appendix D*). I also sought approval from the headmaster of the school, the teachers who will participate in this study (see *appendix E*), as well as from the learners facing LMVs and the parents or guardians of the selected school. Invitation letters accompanied by ethical clearance letters were sent to

the headmaster/principal, teachers, NGO representative (see *appendix K*), social worker, faith-based representative (see *appendix L*), parents or guardians, and learners. To reduce the possibility of fear, harm and autonomy, all participants were informed that these were pure academic activity by showing them all the approval letters to conduct the research. Therefore it continued to be ethically right to disclose the full procedures of the study, in trying to safeguard the participants.

As a researcher, I followed the principles of ***informed consent***. Best and Kahn (2010) argue that the participant have to understand the dangers involved in taking part as participant in any research study. Thus, participants have to decide to be part of the study after knowing all the procedures involved (Burles & Bally, 2018). Through written consent, learners facing, parents/guardians, teachers and a headmaster, NGOs and faith-based representatives, and the social worker were able to read about the study and, through signed consent, signify their understanding and voluntary consent and participation participants in this study. I also sought approval from parents of selected learners facing learner vulnerabilities to take part in the study by writing invitation letters and let those parents sign consent forms too (see *appendix I*). The participants understood that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time if they wished.

I also ensured that ***anonymity***, as an ethical principle, was maintained by not disclosing the names of the participants and schools during the analysis and discussion of the research findings as well as in the final report; instead pseudonyms were used (Bryman, 2016 & Bell; Kufakunesu, 2015; Roberts, 2015). I ensured that pseudo names were used in this research to protect all participants, thereby maintaining their right to anonymity and privacy of any confidential or sensitive information that was given by the research participants. Participants were informed verbally and in writing, that their right to remain anonymous would be fully respected (Best & Kahn, 2010; Burles & Bally, 2018). This was done to avoid labelling, discrimination, or persecution.

All participants were assured **confidentiality**. This ethical principle requires that the participants not divulge confidential information (Best & Kahn, 2010; Kufakunesu, 2015). This entails that the researcher is responsible for what is publicly released from the research. I ensured that any confidential or sensitive information given by the research participants was not released to third parties unless permission to do so had been sought and granted by the initial source. Participants were informed verbally and in writing that their right to remain confidential would be fully respected (Burles & Bally, 2018; Roberts, 2015). Furthermore, research participants' dignity and identity were protected by making sure that all research materials would be safely stored (Creswell, 2014). The researcher, the supervisor, and/or the participants could only access recordings.

All research participants were informed at **least benefits** (beneficence) from the research findings (Bryman & Bell, 2016; Burles & Bally, 2018; Roberts, 2015) through skills and empowerment. Beneficence means doing good for others and preventing harm. Since the research was done in rural areas where most poor and learners are found, I updated all participants of the benefits to the research, that is: transformation, emancipation, and empowerment as survival skills in future (Chidarikire, 2017; Mthiyane, 2015).

In any research, participants should not be put in danger of emotional and physical harm; this is known as **non-maleficence** (Burles & Bally, 2018; Kufakunesu, 2015; Roberts, 2015). Throughout the study, I was concerned with the wellbeing of the participants. In addition, the social worker provided emotional and psychosocial support to co-researchers whenever they encountered emotional and psychological stress during the study. I was aware that participation in this study should be voluntary among

participants and participants could withdraw if any harm befell them. The following section deliberates on the limits of this research.

#### **4.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

When researchers engage in research there are a number of potential threats posed to the research. Simon (2011) states that when carrying out a study, there are possible impeding factors, beyond the researcher's control, that can affect any research. I defined limitations as the flaws that place restrictions on practice and the decisions during the study. Financial resources had some impact on the researchers' hard work to produce quality results. To counter this limitation, I only studied one secondary school in Chiredzi South District of Zimbabwe, Masvingo Province. The selection of the school was proximity to where I work and of teachers, learners and different organisations purposely done to validate the results of the study. I made sure that I used the locally available resources as assets to cut the costs of the study.

Unfortunately, the uncooperative behaviour of some participants impacted the results. Most of the people in the context of the study do not value education; therefore, they can have a negative attitude towards academic work. I, however, tried to persuade the participants to actively participate by explaining the benefits, which includes emancipation, transformation, and empowerment of community members, and participants by finding solutions to their problems. In addition, participants were assured that the study was educationally oriented and that findings were to be kept confidential; therefore, I remained aware of ethical considerations.

Time constraints are bound to militate against all activities. The research aims at proposing ways that can be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning

ecologies through an asset-based approach. This needs time to conclude. I committed myself to holding meetings with participants after-hours and during weekends. More so, I made sure I was brief to generate the required information in a short period of time.

#### **4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter detailed the methodologies utilised and explains why they were used in the study. It focused on the research paradigm, mode of enquiry, research design, and data generation methods. It also looked at how the participants were selected, what this procedure was, and the data generation methods. An outline of how data was analysed by CDA was also given. It was crucial to abide by the ethical considerations throughout the study. The next chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data on LMVs, and the reality of using asset-based approaches.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA ON LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES AND USING ASSET-BASED APPROACHES

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter deliberated on methodologies utilised in this study and justified why they were selected. This chapter addressed the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data. This was discussed following the three critical levels of the CDA by Fairclough namely; (i) text, (ii) discursive, and (iii) social practice. The data presented from three focus groups and discussion meeting was a collective voice of these participants. This was also complemented with data from document analysis and participant observant discoveries until we arrived in the interpretative conclusions. In order to arrange the presentation of the data analysis in this chapter, the five objectives informing this study, as outlined in Chapter One (see section 1.6), served as the organising principles.

#### 5.2 PREPARING DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

It is significant to clarify that three focus group discussions (FGD) (**Hlamulo, Humelelo, and Hlautelo**) were used to refer to groups of learners; parents/guardians and faith-based representative; and the headmaster, teachers, social worker, and NGO representatives. At times, the three groups would meet in discussion meetings (DM) and reflect on topics that arose from different FGDs. The empirical gathered followed are line up to the five primary objectives of the research study. The following **Table 5.1** contains the outline of objectives and how the data was gathered during the research processes.

**1. To conduct a situational analysis with a view to understanding current LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**

**Discussion Meeting**

- Understanding the meaning of LMVs

**Focus Group Discussion**

- Discussed LMVs and their causes
- The key challenges of LMVs on learners
- Intervention methods at school, community, and nation level

**Participant observation**

- Observed how participants react.
- Participants are asked about LMVs in DM and FGDs.
- Key challenges of LMVs are discussed within FGDs.

**Document analysis**

- Looked at documents to check if LMVs have an effect on learners.
- Looked at the documents on previous intervention methods, to alleviate LMVs.

**2. To map assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**

**Focus Group Discussion**

- Mapped **resources/assets** within the community to mitigate LMVs.

- Discussed asset identification and mobilisation.
- Discussed critical assets to mitigate LMVs.

#### **Participant Observation**

- Observed reactions after asset mapping and critical asset identification to mitigating LMVs.

### **3. To identify circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.**

#### **Focus Group Discussion**

- Discussed situations that may hinder the ABA to mitigate LMVs. By discussing this, we realised favourable and unfavourable environments conducive to the ABA.

#### **Participant Observation**

- Observed if the environment was really conducive for the application of the ABA

### **4. To find ways of lessening threats (if any) that hinders the ABA application to mitigating LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**

#### **Focus Group Discussion**

- Discussed how best we can set out courses of action conducive for identified assets not to feel forced through preconceived ideas and plans. Participants had to identify how best we mobilise and utilise the identified assets with lessened threats to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

#### **Participant Observation**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observed if participants feel ownership, empowered, and transformed during and after their participation in the study</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. To demonstrate how we can mitigate against LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through the ABA.</b></p> <p><b>Focus Group Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed establishment of the team as part of the approach</li> <li>• Discussed setting out our team’s precedence to the approach</li> <li>• Discussed the SWOC analysis of the research team</li> </ul> <p><b>Participant Observation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observed their feelings after discovering the potential benefits of the ABA the identified to multiple vulnerabilities faced in learners’ lives</li> </ul>

**Table 5.1: The outline of objectives, and how the data was gathered**

The following section unpacks the above-mentioned objectives through the identified themes.

### **5.3 EMERGING THEMES UNDER THE ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT LMVs SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE**

This segment presents analyses and interprets empirical data from participants on the current LMVs situation in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

### 5.3.1 LMVs from a rural perspective

Theoretically, complex systems exist within the environment, thus a deeper understanding of these complex systems was needed to determine solutions to them. The participants from all the FGD highlighted that LMVs ‘exist’ in rural learning ecologies as they said, “...*complex situations and/or many problems faced*” by learners in their life and/or education.

Humelelo adult participant 2 commented the following, “...*LMVs*” *swiphiqo swotala swi hlanganaka na vadyondzi, (...LMVs as many problems learners meet in life,)*. In addition, the textual extract below shows that the absence of needs in a learner’s life’ results in learners facing one problem after the other, resulting in ‘many problems. Hlamulo learner participant 7 said, “...*nekuda kwekushaiwa kana vasikana vanopedzisira vava kuita zvisina basa seku “jola”, pedzisire nhumbu/kuwanikwa, kurwara nezvirwere zvepabonde or kutofa chaiko, zvekuti unochirega chikoro chacho (girls end up doing promiscuous behaviour leading to early marriages/pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections or death if they get sick, then eventually dropping out of school)*. Humelelo adult participant 2’s definition was generally that LMVs are life problems that affect learners. He was not precise about how LMVs would affect the learner. However, from learner participants, it is clear that LMVs affect their education and are, as a result of an ‘absence of basic need’ in their lives, causing them to be in other vulnerable situations. Based on the discursive level of analysis by CDA, it was evident that one vulnerability (single entity) led to other vulnerabilities (multiple entities). From the texts, “*girls end up doing promiscuous behaviour*”, it sounds as if girls are the ones mainly affected by LMVs. Nevertheless, boys are included since girls cannot just land in promiscuous behaviour alone and cannot impregnate themselves. Thus, we were led to believe that some of the situations learners are in today was because of a situation they are in or absence of basic needs in.

As the FGD progressed, the participants identified the common vulnerabilities faced and I presented them as “one collective voice” from the entire group as follows:

*[Ku hlupheka ngopfu (poverty), ku pfumala vuleteri na vulayi evuton'wini (lacking guidance and counselling in life), kugara tiri vana tega vabereke vakarambana kana kuenda joni (staying alone as children — child-headed family due to parents/guardians separation or migration to South Africa, ku pfumala swa ku tirhisa xikolweni (lack of stationery/fees to use at school), ku ya xikolweni va nga dyangi (coming to school of empty bellies), ku famba-mpfhuka wo leha kusuka kaya (walking long distance from home, ku tsandzeka exikolweni (to perform poorly at school), ku kondleteriwa leswaku va cineriwa vona va nga swi lavi (culturally forced to go through initiation programmes), ku tirhisiwa ka vana (child labour) na ku hlundzukisiwa swin'we na vanhu lava tsamaka na vona (emotional and psychological abuse by other peers, teachers, parents and other relatives)]*

All participants in the reflective DM agreed that these were the common LMVs faced, specifically in this rural context. As a participant observant, I observed some dropping some tears from learners. I realised that tears was a sign of pain and truly reflected that learners were the ‘most affected’ that LMVs were causing difficulties in learner lives. One of the Hlautelo adult participants remarked, “*I think there is a need to find ways to reduce these LMVs together*”. This shows that LMVs were detrimental to learners’ lives.

The responses by the participants in this subsection indicates that facing ‘a single vulnerability’ leads to facing ‘multiple vulnerabilities’ and this is because of the ‘absence of learner needs in their education life’. It was also evident from participants in different groups that they viewed LMVs as ‘multiple entities’ and not as a ‘single entity’ as highlighted by their utterances ‘complex situations/many problems learners face’. We agreed that since LMVs existed in rural ecologies as ‘many problems affecting their education’, there was the need to find solutions within the community to ease such

'*complex issues*' that prevent them from achieving a high-quality education. The next subsection reveals key issues causing LMVs and their effects in rural ecologies.

### **5.3.2 Key issues causing LMVs and their effects on rural ecologies**

This section discusses the key issues causing LMVs and their effects in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. These issues are going to be discussed under the theme of poverty, socio-economic situation, death/separation/divorce of parents/guardian, and cultural factor indicators to LMVs.

#### **5.3.2.1 Poverty and its effects in rural ecologies**

As such, participants from the FGDs revealed that poverty was the 'root cause' of the LMVs they faced. However, empirical data showed that the rural community is not poor as they have resources to utilise in the mitigation process. Instead, however, they 'self-construct' themselves as poor.

As we engaged into FGD to identify the causes of LMVs, Humelelo adult participant 3 reminded me of what I reiterated earlier on (see 1.3), "*Mr Chidakwa do you still remember gore ramaidzidzisa (the year you taught) Grade 7 paya nekuda kwehurombo nekushaya, mwana uya akasiya chikoro akaroorwa ari Grade 7 ane 12 years? (because of poverty, the girl child was married at the age of twelve.*" The story touched many participants who regarded poverty as causing LMVs, emotional and psychological damage to the learner, leaving the learner with no option other than to *drop out of school and get married*. The empirical data concurred with the entries from analysed documents (class daily registers and learner progressive reports), which showed a number of learners had dropped out of school due to early marriages and others due to various other reasons such as a lack of fees and a need to work. Humelelo adult

participants 5 added, “... *hurombo hwatiinahwo huri kukonzeresa kuva nematambudziko akawanda...*” (*poverty we have is causing LMVs*) show that they agree that poverty is the ‘root cause’ to LMVs. I, however, noted that as he further explained, Hlamulo learner participants 2 reflect that this poverty and that of other learners may have been inherited from their parents, “*Saka kana ivo vachishaya, nesuwo vana vavo tozwiwanepi hedu?, ...tinopedzisira takuita zvisina basa senzira yekuzvibatsirawo*” (*if they are poor, we are also poor... we end up in promiscuous behaviour as a way to get what they cannot provide*). It did not surprise me when Humelelo adult participants 5 admitted to the above sentiments as he uttered, “...*hurombo hwatiinahwo hunoita tishaiwe...*” (*...poverty we are facing is causing LMVs...*). With the analysis of the above data, using the CDA under the discursive level, I realised that no one wants to take blame of causing LMVs, but poverty is causing them to be at risk. In his admittance, “*hurombo hwatiinahwo*” (*poverty we have*), the parent was admitting and personalising that most parents in the community are poor as if they own poverty. By the utterance “we” from a social practice/context analysis level, it shows that he meant that many parents in the community are poor. I probed further to understand this personalised poverty, Hlautelo adult participant 4 opposed and said, “...*but I am surprised why these parents are saying they are poor, yet they have a lot of cattle, why can't they use them? I just feel humwe hurombo hwekuzvipa! (poverty is being personalised here!)*”. Clearly, the arguments were that these rural people have many resources, yet they did not want to use them. This made me to believe that there was the need for proposing for the ABA to educate these rural learning ecologies how to alleviate this ‘socially personalised poverty’ causing LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

Based on their expressions, I realised that poverty causes one to be vulnerable resulting in one facing ‘LMVs’. These LMVs have detrimental effects on the education of learners, forcing them to drop out of school or get married. The following sub-section reveals the socio-economic situation and its effects in rural ecologies.

### 5.3.2.2 The socio-economic situation and its effects on learners in rural ecologies

According to all the participants, the poverty and/or socio-economic situation have caused many parents to migrate to other local countries such as Mozambique and South Africa in exploration of better living conditions leaving learners vulnerable. This leaves the learner with no one to guide and counsel them, therefore, exposing them to further LMVs.

On this matter, the participants from FGD expressed that, “...*hi mhaka ya xiyimo xa tiko, vatswari va hina va famba eJoni/eMoza, va siya vana hi ri hava munhu wa ku tshama na vona*” (...*due to the economic status, our parents migrate to South Africa/Mozambique and usually leave us with no caretakers*) [Hlamulo learner participants 8]. We agreed that leaving children without a caretaker exposes them to a number of vulnerabilities due to the lack of guidance and counselling. Our understanding was that children, if they lack guidance from elders, make uninformed decisions that leave them in agony. In addition to the above, Hlamulo learner participant 2 added, “...*loko vatswari va nga rhumeli swakudya, ha kota ku endla swin’wani swilo leswaku hi kota ku kuma mali ya ku tirhisa makaya*” (*If they don’t send money/food, we usually end up engaging in promiscuous behaviours*). This suggests that the learner has the potential to misbehave if they lack the basic needs they need in life. The above extract, at texts level of analysis by CDA, indicate that when left along and given little support from parents, learners end up surviving by using their bodies in order to get what they need to survive. Here one vulnerability leads to many vulnerabilities. While admitting they use their bodies, I noted that they really know the consequences, as Hlamulo learner participant 8 freely stated “*switele swi landzelelaka munhu ndzhaku ka yena, tinyimba, ku hatla ku nghenelela timhaka ta vukati, ku vabya na swivavo, ku n’wa swo tlula mpimo hikuva ku hava vuleteri na vulayi ematikoxikaya ka!*” (*The end result is promiscuous behaviour, early pregnancy, early marriages, getting STIs and drug abuses due to lack of guidance and counselling*). The feelings portrayed by Hlamulo

learner participants are that, due to the socio-economic situation, learners end up facing LMVs, however, this can be prevented 'if' they receive some 'guidance and counselling' in life.

I noted that learners blamed the socio-economic situation that led parents/guardians migrating to neighbouring countries in exploration of better living conditions for leaving them exposed to LMVs. As a team, we felt there was a need to lessen the number or intensity of LMVs due to socio-economic reasons by engaging in guidance and counselling approaches through the ABA. The following sub-section discloses death/separation/divorce of parents/guardians and its effects in rural ecologies.

### **5.3.2.3 Death/ separation/divorce of parents/guardians and its effects on learners in rural ecologies**

The empirical data shows that the death of parents/guardians kills hope for the learners. Participants from their FGD articulated that due to the death/separation of parents/guardian, learners are psychologically and emotionally affected, and this may cause behavioural problems, which affect their education.

From the FGD, Hlamulo learner participants 6 in this study stated that "...se vana loko mutsvari wa hina a tshuka a lova swa hi vava ngopfu" (death of a parent/guardian pains us a lot), "u vona onge u hehelwe hi vutomi" (it kills hope in us) naswona "loko mutsvari a ri yena a hi hlayisaka loko a fa tavuya" (it's so painful to be in that situation). In addition, Humelelo adult participants 2 revealed that "swa fana xiyimo xa swa timali na ku loveriwa hi mutswari, hikuva u xaniseka swo fana."(It's the same economic situation and death of parent because you suffer the same consequences due to separation). The textual analysis level was clear that the death/separation/divorce of parents/guardians

leads one to face LMVs if not addressed because *it kills hope* for the learners. If hope is killed, even concentration with schoolwork is limited. This means the learner needs some assistance to be able to cope with life. At the social level of analysis by CDA, children depend on their parents/guardians for their lives. Separation from them has many detrimental effects, such as learners leaving school at early ages. For the above reason, Hlautelo adult participants 1 added that “...*due to death, for example, orphans at school show low self-esteem, self-reproach, helplessness, hopelessness, social withdrawal, moody behaviour, bullying, and frustrations....*” Analysing the above at discursive level, this shows that death/separation of parent/guardians *kills hope for the young ones* and *psychologically* affects their way of thinking and behaviour leading to behavioural problem within the society they live in, thereby affecting their academic performance. The interpretation is that if one fails academically, they can experience social problems due to behavioural problems brought about by the death of the parent/guardian. One can become a social misfit.

As a team, we felt that there was a need to explore ways we can use to educate and support learners on how to deal with LMVs due to death/ separation/divorce of their parents/guardians using the ABA. The following sub-section relates cultural beliefs and its effects in rural ecologies.

#### **5.3.2.4 Cultural belief and its effects on learners in rural ecologies**

From the FGDs, the general feeling was that cultural beliefs/practices have significant negative and positive influences on the lives of the learner as discussed above. However, they argued that, when attending initiation ceremonies, age must be considered as they felt this affects decision-making in learners after the ceremony.

During the FGD, Hlamulo learner participants 1 revealed that she had no problem with the cultural practices in the Xangani community but was worried about the “age” at

which the learners go for the initiation ceremonies. In textual analysis by CDA, Hlamulo learner participant 1's words, "*Mina ni vona leswiya swa ku cineriwa swi ri kahle, kambe a swi lavi munhu a nga so kula*" (*In my view, cultural initiations are not bad but it needs to be done by the grown-ups*) are ambiguous in the sense that she first acknowledges that its good and her use of the words "*mara*" (*but*) on discursive level means what she has said in the beginning is not true and she says later is true. Hlautelo adult participants 2 also supported the later part on the "*age*" issue as he blames the Xangani community for allowing learners below the age of 12 to go for these initiation ceremonies. On the discursive analysis by CDA, the feeling from the above participant was that these young girls cannot make decisions on their own, and if they do make decisions, they are "immature" decisions. The sentiments from Hlamulo learner participant 1 that, "*Vanh'wanyana votala (most girls) almost 90% get married soon after va cineliwe (initiated). Maybe it's because of peer pressure I think mainly from the boys*") carries the meaning that they do whatever they do due to pressure from external force, thus immature decision-making. Commenting on the above issue, Hlautelo adult participants 2 doubted Humelelo adult participant's 4 utterances and said, "*...through culture they are taught how to manage life problems in a meaningful way, that's what exactly they are taught*". This is because, Humelelo adult participant 4 sees no problem in cultural practices and did not agree that it causes an increase in the number of LMVs. Rather, he believed that individuals have their own decisions to make not based on culture. The argument above encouraged me to probe further for an explanation of what exactly is being taught in the initiation ceremonies. The participants were unable or unwilling to divulge the information. Some said "*maybe*", some used "*I think*", and other said, "*In my view*", meaning they all had no knowledge about it, or were not ready to say it out, but good and bad behaviours resulted after cultural initiations.

The general feeling was that cultural beliefs/practices have significant, negative and positive influence on the lives of the learner, as discussed above. We felt that there was a need to explore ways we can reduce the negative aspect discussed above in order to

expose societal injustices and inequalities for liberating the marginalised learners. The following sub-section relates current processes in addressing LMVs.

### **5.3.3 Current processes in addressing LMVs**

In an effort to mitigate learner the participants as efforts to help those in need, numerous ways identified multiple vulnerabilities. However, all the participants revealed that there are biases in the selection of learners to be assisted and it promoted dependence syndrome.

Hlamulo learner participant 6 identified, *“CAMFED, BEAM, Plan International, Chilijo Club, Mhlanguleni Old Student Association ti kona ti pfunaka van’wana va hluphekaka ne mali ya xikolo (all named organisations help learners facing multiple vulnerabilities by paying their fees). (Interrupting), uuumm CAMFED neBEAM...vanoita favour...” (CAMFED and BEAM ...the selection is biased...)* [Hlamulo learner participant 3]. Their verbatim and facial expressions indicated that bias existed among the selection committee. I wanted to find out more so I probe from the one responsible for learners and the response was, *“I am not really sure since I have been recently been appointed as teacher mentor”* (Hlautelo adult participant 1). Upon doing document analysis (school documents with a list of the learners in CAMFED and BEAM), I discovered that the learners' sentiments were true because some learners did not deserve to be CAMFED or BEAM sponsored. I was then made to believe that the selection system did not do justice, hence learners in need were left out directing the funds to the wrong recipients thus depriving the intended beneficiaries. Hlautelo adult participant 4 raised an important point, *“...but, this donor issue has resulted in self-construct’ promoting laziness in our parents”*. As earlier discussed (see 5.3.2.1), the participant above realised current processes promoted donor syndrome and did not assist the learner and the community to gain skills that alleviated the problems they face. This means that if

the learner or community face a similar problem in future, they would still look for assistance in the form of donors. One needs to be emancipated, transformed, and empowered in order to best be able to tackle the problems one encounters in life.

Drawing from the participants' verbatim statements (see 5.3.3), we believe a number of local organisations and government departments have made effort to assist learners facing LMVs. However, they revealed that there was bias in the selection of beneficiaries. We also realised that current processes promoted donor syndrome and did not assist the learner to gain skills on how to alleviate problems they face in future.

#### **5.3.4 Synthesis of the theme outcomes**

The above sections discussed a situational analysis with a view to understand current LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies as identified by the participants. From the discussions. It was evident that LMVs existed as multiple entities. The participants further revealed four key indicators that cause LMVs. The participants admitted that there was bias in the selection of learners being assisted in the current processes. The participants felt strongly that there was a need for assets to be identified to address these encounters, leaving them emancipated and empowered with life skills. The subsequent section will deliberate on mapping the assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

#### **5.4 EMERGING THEMES UNDER THE MAPPING OF ASSETS THAT MAY BE USED TO MITIGATE LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

The section discusses the mapping, identification, and mobilisation of assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

#### **5.4.1 Asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation presented critical assets to mitigate LMVs in rural ecologies**

The participants identified, grouped, and discussed the three tiers (primary tier, secondary tier and the tertiary tier) of assets as proposed by Chikoko and Khanare (2012). The primary tiers are those assets within the school boundary; secondary tiers are assets outside the school boundary but within the community; and the tertiary tier are assets beyond the school surroundings and its community. All assets were mapped, identified, and mobilised through asset participatory appraisal (PA), appreciative inquiry (AI), and the general ABA implementation processes. The agreement was that we prioritise using the inside out concept, that is, beginning with the local both human/intangible assets, moving to the material/tangible assets. The section below only discusses why the mapped, identified, and mobilised assets were critical in the mitigation of LMVs. I discussed them according to the conception of three tiers.

##### **5.4.1.1 Primary tier assets and their contributions**

From the community, all FGD groups commonly identified a number of assets. Within the *primary tier assets*, the participants jointly identified the *teachers, the headmaster, and school projects, garden and vacant rooms* at school. In this study, it emerged that the *teachers* at school possessed important ideas, capacities, and knowledge on how to guide and counsel learners in their traumatic situations. Their role is to assist vulnerable learners to improve their education and create good relations that feel safe; they are capable of changing their reactions properly through guidance and counselling.

Hlamulo learner participants 5 reiterated, “*Ke ma tichara, hakuma vuleteri na vulayi nkarhi wa kuhlupeka ka hi hleketa tihlupho to tala hi nganatona (from teachers, we get guidance and counselling every time we face LMVs)*”. On the other hand, Humelelo adult participants 4 resonated, “*Ma teacher ndivo vabereki vevana vedu kana vari kuchikoro*”

*(teachers are loco-parentis for our children at school)*. From the above discourse at the social practice level, the two participants resonate that teachers are the guiders and the counsellors at the school level. The society views them as loco-parents (parents for their children during school hours) and they expected them to have control over their children. Teachers themselves who were present confirmed that indeed they are trained and were ready to help these learners in every problem they face using the technique they learned from colleges and universities. One teacher from Hlautelo, adult participant FGD group said, *“We are also a bridge between the learner-teacher-parents on all educational needs.”* The participant used “we”, which I interpreted, using the discursive level of analysis, as referring to all teachers, and as “collective” rather than an “individual” struggle.

Furthermore, the “**headmaster**” was confirmed as an important person in safeguarding the needs of all stakeholders at the school level. Participants agreed that they depend on the schools’ leaders of good care and believe that as parents, they put their children under their guidance. Most importantly, the headmaster was entrusted to build relationships with learners, the community and the government.

Hlamulo learner participant 5 uttered, *“Murhangeli wa xikolo hiyena hi tshembaka ke vanhu hikwavo xikolweni”* (*we have trust in the headmaster most at school*). *Takasununguka kutaura zvose zvatoda kwavari asi kune vaye vanonyara kutaura ngavatiisire chi ‘suggestion box’ tinodurura zvese zvinotinetsa kumba kana kuchikoro”,* (*We are free to air our views to the headmaster but for those who are shy, we request for a ‘suggestion box’ that they can report abuses we face at school or home*). Using the texts and then the social practice analysis perspective, the headmaster is a trusted person that they can share their problems with. When society entrust someone, they must do what is expected of them because they have been given power. From their statements, it was clear that the learners expected the headmasters to act accordingly

to matters that affect them at school. I was also pleased that participants needed a 'suggestion box' for the 'shy ones' express their views. Analysing the utterance of "*suggestion box*" using the discursive analysis approach, the learners did not want to leave any stone unturned, they wanted to air out their grievances that one could not divulge face-to-face due to fear or unknown reasons. The interpretation was that there was a need for a suggestion box at school and the headmaster should make it available.

In addition, Humelelo adult participants 1 said the headmaster "*anoita kuti nyaya dzaparwa nevana kana vadzidzisi dzikwidziwe kumusoro kuhurumende vapari vemhosva varangwe*" (*reports cases of child abuse to the government by teachers or learners*). From a textual analysis, the headmaster, as the leader is not supposed to ignore issues pertaining to abuses by learners, teachers, and parents. They are entrusted to report the perpetrators to the appropriate authorities. The participants from Hlautelo adult participant group who said, "*The headmaster links the community and the school... he is important in building good relations with learners and teachers, and all stakeholders, supported the idea above...*" As a team, we felt that the role played by the headmaster is crucial in the mitigation of LMVs, they become a critical asset at the school level. The headmaster was regarded as one of the primary tier assets in building relationships with learners, the community, and the government in trying to mitigate LMVs during school hours.

**"School projects"** (farming, gardening, poultry keeping, and piggery) were named by the participants as assets that can be used to empower the learner through skill development. According to participants from FGD, school projects prepare learners for the workforce; prepares products for feeding programmes and problem-solving skills. They improve self-direction, organisational, problem-solving, collaborative skills, and develops a constant state of learning.

Hlautelo adult participant 4 voiced, “...*the schools should capitalise on the projects they do at school, to equip with future life skills to learners facing LMVs...*” The above submission is clear that participants feel schools should offer skills to learners through these projects. By commissioning these projects, I argue that learners would be equipped with some life skills (self-direction, organisational, problem-solving, collaborative skills, and a constant state of learning) such as *farming, gardening, and poultry* in real-life situations. More so, these skills help learners to develop analytical and problem-solving skills in dealing with LMVs. The analysis shows that participants want these projects to develop survival skills. If they develop those skills, they will be able to address their financial and social vulnerabilities because they access more opportunities in life.

Through the school projects, the participants said, “*Chikoro chinowana zvakare chikafu choita feeding programme vana vachidya pachikoro*” (*With the produce from projects, the school can run a feeding programme at school*). Regarding the above matter, the textual level of understanding is that schools can produce food to feed learners through the practice of agricultural activities. In as much as learner participants appreciated the skills they gain, they also need food during school hours. It was evident that school projects had an advantage in the process of mitigating LMVs. The subsequent section will deliberate on secondary tier assets and how they may be used to mitigate LMVs in current rural learning ecologies.

#### **5.4.1.2 Secondary tier assets and their contributions**

A number of assets were commonly identified by all the FGD groups from the local community. The participants collectively mentioned *faith-based representatives, local businesspersons, old student associations, social workers, educational psychologists, and local organisations* as ‘*secondary tiers assets*’ from the community. Faith-based

representatives were identified as important by all participants in FGD groups. According to participants, they develop knowledge and important skills that are crucial in addressing problems, provide peer guidance, provide counselling, and comfort for learners who deal with anxiety, losses, or disappointments.

Through FGD, Hlamulo learner participant 9 commented, “*Varangeli va tikereke vahipfuna naku hivuletera naku hilaya ka vahi kongelela xikolweni ka tihlupheko tahini hinganatona*” (*local pastors guide and counsel us in our emotional and psychological stress situations.*) From the participants above, using the textual level of analysis by CDA, this indicates that local pastors are crucial in providing spiritual and emotional counselling to learners facing LMVs in rural ecologies. Notably, pastoral care is viewed as effective in academic learning as it assist learners to physically, socially, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually develop within the school context. As Hlautelo adult participant 4 argues, faith-based representatives were crucial and I appreciated how important it can be to involve the local pastors. As he indicated, “*school can capitalise on that to get some donations from churches to pay fees for the financially and the socially multiple vulnerable learners*”. An analysis through the social practice level is that support allows faith-based representatives to offer scripture union, and supporters from the churches where those pastors come from can assist learners. Remarkably, pastoral care enables early interventions in identifying and dealing with LMVs that need material things through engaging well-wishers. Based on this, the participants acknowledged the involvement of faith-based representatives as important assets to mitigate LMVs.

One of the important assets cited as critical by the participants was the involvement of the ‘*local businesspersons*’, registered or unregistered, to mitigate LMVs. From FGDs, participants argued that local businesspersons build strong relationships,

provides loans and business skills to start a business, and can provide working opportunities for learners facing LMVs.

In support of their argument, Hlamulo learner participant 6 states, “*Togona kukwereta mari kuma businessperson edu, tototanga ku runner business reduwo*” (we can get a small loan to run a business). Another Hlamulo learner participant 2 mentioned that “*...hakota ku lava ntirho during the weekends hi tirhela mali yakushava stationery na school fees nakutishavela svimwani svaku tirhisa (...we can ask for some piece work during the weekend for stationery and tuition fees and for other things we want)*”. An interesting idea came again from the same group of learners, “*...we can get ideas on how to run a business effectively*”, Hlamulo learner participant 8 said. From their texts, it shows that the businesspersons can assist them with a loan to run a business. They can also be hired, during the weekend or holidays to work and they can get some skills on how to run a business. By analysing their responses using the CDA discursive level, it was clear that learner participants were willing to act in the fight against the LMVs they face especially when they had help from businesspersons. As highlighted, the businesspersons may empower learners with business skills, help them to identify and approach potential business types and partners, thus creating partnerships. I argued that partnership could enhance business experiences and empower those involved. It was crucial that they highlighted why they feel that these businesspersons are equally important in their fight against the LMVs. As explained above, the involvement of businesspersons is such a critical asset to mitigate LMVs and was validated by the research team.

In addition, all FGD group participants during the mapping of assets identified several working and jobless “**former learners/old students**” as experienced people to back in the mitigation of LMVs in rural schools. They argued that, the former learners’ support

maybe human, material or other resources. These resources may be directed to learners within the school and be assisted.

Humelelo adult participant 4, who happened to be a parent and old student residing in the community, acknowledged that he was an old student ready to be involved in the mitigation process. This participant stated, “As ‘former students’, *takazvipira chaiko kubatsira... (we are committed to plough back) ... we are willing to take an extra mile tichakubatsirai mukubatsira (...we will assist you). A lot is waiting for you guys if we cooperate*”. From a discursive level of analysis by saying, the old students were ready to assist learners from their community financially and materially. To assist/support means adding something to what is already, or not, there such as provision of extra money, extra equipment, or additional staff to improve teaching and learning of learners facing LMVs. From his texts “*ti*” meaning “we”, the participant represented all old students who, in his opinion, agreed that they have positive influence on mitigation of LMVs. The words, uttered by Humelelo adult participant 4, “*ticha kubetserai*” (*we will help you*), are pregnant with meaning, and I will unpack it using social discourse analysis. The word “*ticha*” (*we will*) means that the old student is speaking on behalf of others and speaking from collectiveness. I understand that togetherness in Zimbabwean rural regions is a way for people to assist each other. In this context, the old student used the word “we” and not the word “I”, meaning himself and another old student were assets, they can draw from each other in the mitigation of LMVs. As explained, the involvement of old students as a critical asset to mitigate LMVs was validated by the research team.

More so, the inclusion of a ‘**social worker**’ as a participant in this research made other participants validate him as a critical asset to mitigate LMVs. Participants made it clear that if the social worker could manage the situation during the research process, he can be an asset to rural ecologies. The participants from all FGDs appreciated that social

workers and psychologists can help mobilise learners, family, schools, and community resources to enable learners to learn as effectively as possible. Through cooperative working, they help reduce difficulties to social and academic success and give learners the skills they need to excel in school through reactive and proactive reactive activities.

Hlamulo learner participant 4 expressed, “...*makatibatsira panguva yekushungurudzika tichidzidza pamusoro pematambudziko atosangana nawo.*” (...*you helped us to get through our emotions*). At text level analysis, the participants appreciated the presence of the social worker when he counselled them during the research process. It meant they valued him as a critical asset; had he been absent, they would have suffered emotional vulnerabilities. Humelelo adult participant 3 commented, “...*vana votala vatsikiswa xikolo vatirhela makaya... community ilava ku pfuniwa*” (*there is rampant child labour in this community, and we need your assistance*). As we deliberated on the matter, Hlautelo adult participant 4, the social worker, could not resist and responded, “As **social workers** and **educational psychologists**, we are ready, and we are committed to assist everyone as long as the community is cooperative.” From a textual analysis of the social worker’s words, it is clear that “they” are willing to work with the community if the community is cooperative. They are ready to help clear impediments to social and academic success and give learners the skills they need to excel in the school and in society. The verbatim “we” I understand as togetherness and with that, he included the educational psychologist. A discursive approach to analysis is that he knows the need and the effectiveness of an educational psychologist in the mitigation of LMVs. It was clear that “*let’s work together*”, refers to social workers, educational psychologists, and the community because of the nature of vulnerabilities in the community. Social workers and educational psychologists are critical assets in the mitigation of LMVs through helping to develop positive behavioural intervention strategies, conflict resolution, and anger management and to identify and report cases of child abuse and neglect within community.

In their groups of discussion of asset mapping, some “**local organisations**” (Chilojo club, CAMPFIRE, Red Cross, and Centre for Cultural Development Initiatives-Gaza Trust) were identified by participants from all groups. Participants, especially learners, commented that these local organisations provide sponsorship opportunities to develop business and management skills to learners facing LMVs.

From the texts level of analysis, Hlamulo learner participant 2 stated, “*Chilojo club, CAMPFIRE na Centre for Cultural Development Initiatives-Gaza Trust ya hinyiketa ma scholarship*” (the named local organisations give us some sponsorship). The analysis from their texts by CDA showed that local organisations can be critical assets in giving financial assistance in the form of scholarships to learners facing multiple vulnerabilities in rural ecologies. In support of the good work done by these organisations, Hlautelo adult participant 3 highlighted “...it is good to create a good relationship with local organisations... take for example Red Cross with its piggery and hen projects in schools... we should work together with them”. Using the text level of analysis, it is clear that there is a need for good associations between the community and the school that such projects may be used as an opportunity to develop business and management skills from learners. These skills help learners to develop analytical and problem-solving skills in dealing with current and future LMVs. The words “we”, can be discursively analysed to mean there is need for co-operation with one common vision in order to realise the set goal. I, however, discovered that local organisations provide financial assistance and life skills to learner in rural learning ecologies. The following section will deliberate on tertiary tier assets and how they may be used to mitigate LMVs in current rural learning ecologies.

#### **5.4.1.3 Tertiary tier assets and their contributions**

Only Hlautelo and Humelelo adult participants identified NGOs, specifically PLAN International as assets that can assist learners at risk in rural areas. In arguing that NGOs are critical assets, the participants were concerned that PLAN International should avail funds and projects at school to empower with business and life skills.

Humelelo adult participant 4 expressed that NGOs should conduct workshops for the learners facing LMVs to equip them with survival skills. Hlamulo learner participant 3 was further quoted as saying, “...kana zvaiita, vaidana vePLAN kuzotidzidzisa (*if possible PLAN should be invited to teach us survival skills*) ma surviving skills, through workshops.” From the above sentiments using discursive lens of analysis, it is clear that learners solely see the NGO as an opportunity to gain financial assistance as well as survival skills. It is clear that they are ready to engage other stakeholders and work together to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies, leaving them empowered and transformed.

#### **5.4.2 Synthesis of the theme outcomes**

This theme has validated the important assets acknowledged by participants as essential towards mitigating LMVs in rural learning ecologies. The discussion focused on the important assets and validated their contribution towards alleviating LMVs. To validate the effectiveness of the critical assets acknowledged, I present a section that will identify and discuss circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigate LMVs.

## **5.5 EMERGING THEMES UNDER WHICH THE IDENTIFIED ASSETS MAY BE USED TO MITIGATE LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

This section explains, in detail, some of the circumstances that were essential for the success of the ABA to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

### **5.5.1 Conditions for the ABA**

Sharing of information concerning information regarding LMVs requires ethical considerations to be observed to guard against possible ethical dilemmas. In this research study, we collectively agreed on the importance of adhering to ethical considerations. We also agreed on the active participation of all participants in FGD groups through the expression of ideas, opinions, and experiences in the language they understand.

In response to the ethical considerations, Hlamulo learner participant 5 said, “*Loko mavito a hina anga laveki hatshemba kamwina, hi ta valavula svilo svikuka mbilwini yahina*” (*If names are not going to be published, we trust you and we are going to say out all our grievances without fear*). From the discussions, “hatshemba kamwina” (we trust you), I believe that the participants would freely participate and speak without fear because no name would be attached to the utterances. By sharing our ethical considerations, we created a supportive environment for the application of the ABA. Not promising the right to privacy and anonymity would create a tough environment in the implementation of the ABA. For this and other reasons, it was essential that participants sign consent forms and were assured of protection from any harm they may face during the research process. We believe that the successful application of the approach depends on creating a comprehensive agenda that builds on support of the ABA application.

Throughout the programme, participants actively supported and participated in their FGD. Active participation by expressing ideas, experiences, and opinions are part of the processes that affect the ABA application. In this study, the research team actively provided ideas by expressing them the language they understand most. Hlamulo learner participant 3 was delighted to be allowed to use the language of choice and said, “...*hi tsakile ngopfu, va n’wami a hita nuwa non’weni, chilungu a chi humi kambe hi to hina svona sva kuvalavula [laughed and others nodding and clapping hands] (...we are happy for allowing us to use language of choice, some of us were not going to say anything because of language barrier)*. Analysis from a text level, participants were happy to use the language of their choice and they promised that they were going to freely state all that they understood, and what they wanted to contribute. By expressing ideas, opinions, and experiences in their language, I observed that many participants did that, especially from Hlamulo learner and adult groups. Participants from Hlamulo and Humelelo mainly used Xangani and/or Shona with a mix of English because the group was mainly composed of learners and parents. All the participants from the Hlautelo group preferred using English, mainly because the group was composed of professionals. My understanding was that all participants actively participated because language was not a barrier to them. The following subsection will deliberate on the mobilisation of resources through community engagement to mitigate LMVs in current rural learning ecologies.

### **5.5.2 Mapping, identification, and mobilisation of resources through entire community engagement**

The participants mentioned that engagement of participants directly affected the knowledge of the local communities, which promoted emancipation, transformation, and empowerment within participants. This can be achieved through skill development and knowledge sharing by those with knowledge.

Firstly, the selection of the research participants was also influenced by the availability of them within the local community where the school is located. The research team was composed of Zimbabwean learners, parents, teachers, headmaster, faith-based representative, NGO representative, and a social worker. Most of the participants reside in the community the school is located, and they know of the trend in which LMVs occur. Only the social worker was from town (about seventy-seven (77) kilometres from town). A social perspective analysis of the research team composition, it shows that the research would be successful when one engages the local community, who know their problems, to propose solutions to those problems. Hlamulo learner participant 8 stated *“tinofara chaizvo kupiwa mukana, unotisiya tiri pari nani”* (we are so happy to be part of the research team, it leaves us changed and transformed); text analysis, shows they were happy to be part of the decision-makers on problems that affect them. I perceive that involving people who are affected would make programmes a success as they really know their problems and how they can solve it. I would say that using people from another community would render problems during application of the ABA. Engaging local people to identify the LMVs they face and find the solution to the identified LMVs using the ABA was viewed as a better circumstance to promote emancipation, transformation, and empowerment within participants.

Secondly, the research team proposed that assets needed to be mobilised through the entire engagement of the community in the context. The participants (especially Hlautelo adult participants) stated *“...the involvement of knowledgeable rural ecologies members such as social worker, faith-based representative, NGO representative in asset-based informative programmes is important in sharing of information...”* The extract above explains the need to involve the community in order to have informative success of the ABA programmes. Their text surely indicates the named critical assets within the community engaged in mitigating LMVs because they are knowledgeable. Using the social practice level of analysis, participants demonstrated that finding a solution to problems the community faces needs people from the community. Hlautelo

adult participant 2 added that *“even teachers and the headmaster are critical assets because we realise how valuable are they to provide tangible and intangible assistance to learners”*. It was evident that participants believed that community engagement of knowledgeable personnel was the solution to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. The next subsection will discuss favourable environments for the ABA to mitigating LMVs in current rural learning ecologies.

### **5.5.3 Favourable environment for the ABA**

The school communities within which people are found are likely to make instrumental supports in the mitigation of LMVs through ABA applications. The data gathered from participants validated that leaders, who are willing to engage with the community, are those with the vision to see the community and school transformed and empowered. They reasoned that the favourable environment is created by building relationships with local communities' stakeholders.

From their FGD group, Hlautelo adult participant 2 observed, *“we want to thank the head of this school for allowing us to have it done here. We need such leadership in communities. We hope this is going to bring behaviour change with the community.”* Analysing the extract above explains the position of Hlautelo adult participant 2; they were grateful for his leadership in that he allowed such an important programme to take place at the school. In his words, *“there is need to engage the elders of the communities with indigenous knowledge and cultural know-how in fight against LMVs,”*; the headmaster should engage local people in sensitive matters causing LMVs. This may reduce conflicts between cultural beliefs and ABA programmes. I realised that it requires a visionary leader for this to happen. At a social practice level of analysis, the community expects school leaders who have learners at heart, to allow a favourable environment for the ABA as they anticipate a behaviour change with the community.

One participant, Hlamulo learner participant, 10 said, “*Tokumbirawo maprogrammes akaita seawa anotibatsira isu sevana*” (*We ask for the headmaster to call for more programmes like this one, they help us as learners*). From her texts, “*adane ma programmes*” (*call for more programmes*) the learner feels that the headmaster should create a relationship with people or organisations who can provide such important programmes they benefit from. From the above discourse, I concluded that the success of the ABA is based on the quality of leadership and the favourable environment for such a programme to take place.

#### **5.5.4 Synthesis of the theme outcomes**

This theme discusses circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. Generated empirical data show that three circumstances made the approach a success, through the active participation, which resulted in emancipation of marginalised rural members. The study drew together the circumstances that made the approach work. The next section reflects on the anticipated threats and the steps taken to counter them.

### **5.6 EMERGING THEMES UNDER THE THREATS THAT MAY HINDER THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO MITIGATING LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

This section explained some threats (if any) that may hinder the ABA to mitigating LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

#### **5.6.1 Limited understanding of the ABA**

In the initial stages of the research, I conducted telephonic conversations with most of the participants, door-to-door visits, and informed them about my research. The first

anticipated threat to the study was participants showing limited information on the application of the ABA. The empirical data revealed that many rural community members have donor syndrome and do not see themselves capable of finding a solution to their problems.

Most of the adult participants I visited or telephoned would ask, “*We do not understand your research topic, what are we going to discuss?*” I would respond, “*It’s simple, it’s about using what we have to solve our problems.*” I could feel that those I spoke to had a limited understanding of the ABA I wanted to propose using to mitigate LMVs they faced in their community. From the above discourse, at the textual level of analysis of CDA, most of the participants I wanted to engage in the discussion had a limited understanding of what ABA entails. With some community members having a limited understanding of ABA, an analysis using the discursive level of CDA might contribute to the failure of participants to formulate and implement the ABA. However, participants were informed of the approach through a discussion meeting and they were engaged with the know-how of the approach.

Conversely, most of the participants from Hlamulo learner participants and Humelelo adult participants thought that attending the research group could be an opportunity to receive scholarships and donations because of the involvement of the NGO representative and social worker from the DoSW. One participant revealed that, “*Ni kesile kuta hlangan’weni hi maka yaku ani hleketa eku NGOs na Social Welfare I lana ku pfuna vana vahluphekako*” (*I accepted to come for these meetings because I thought the NGOs, or the Social Welfare want to help the vulnerable one*). Another added, “*Nkarhi hi ngatwa swa hlangano lowu wama ‘assets’, a hi ku nyiketwa sva ku tirhisa hina*” (*When we heard about this meeting, we thought there are assets we were going to be given*). Using the social practice perspective, the participants anticipated that they were to receive something from the NGO or government. One can interpret that the

people in Zimbabwean rural ecologies have *donor syndrome*; wherever they hear of a meeting they only think of being given something. For me, it was going to be a challenge to implement this ABA concept due to limited knowledge. However, participants were informed of the approach and understood the approach through a discussion meeting. Through this approach participants could apply the skills they learned from discussion meetings to the implementation of it in rural ecologies. The following subsection will discuss the absence of proficiency in the promotion and monitoring of ABA in current rural learning ecologies as a threat to the approach.

### **5.6.2 Geographical location of the rural learning ecologies**

From the FGD empirical data, it was clear that the geographical location of the school affects the proficiency to monitor and promote the ABA application. It was supposed that it is problematic to manage communities from a distance due to the geographical location of the rural communities.

Hlautelo adult participant 5 commented that, *“I feel that there is a shortage of manpower to promote and monitor these good programme rural areas. The employer must employ more social workers to be at ward level and not district level at least promoting, and monitoring would be easier.”* In the above analysis, at text level by CDA, the absence of proficiency in the promoting and monitoring of the ABA is a result of the geographical location of the school and the few social workers employed by the government. Discursively, I deduced that it is difficult to manage a programme while you are distant from the actual community. The social worker, as participant, comes from town to attend this meeting and he was the only one representing the district. I noted that the participant revealed that it is also difficult to manage a large community alone, for example, a district, but ward level management would be better, as he suggested that this makes *“...monitoring would be easier.”* From the participants, it is evident that the

absence of proficiency in promoting and monitoring the ABA concept affects its full implementation. The following subsection will deliberate lack of trust among those trusted in current rural learning ecologies as a threat to the approach.

### **5.6.3 Marginality of the community and the ABA system**

One of the impeding factors that prevent the implementation of the ABA is the negative attitudes of the community towards the ABA programmes. From the FGD, the participants revealed that rural people have an inferiority complex that impedes them from being active because they are less educated than those from the urban areas.

As we deliberated about the secondary assets we had in the community, one parent from Humelelo adult participant group commented, “*Isu hedu tingadiiwo ipapa tisina kudzidza kudai, zvinotoda vakadzidza vanonogara kuchirungu izvi*” (*we cannot do anything because we are not educated, this is meant for urban dwellers who are educated*). A textual analysis of “tingadiiwo” (Cannot do anything) would mean the parent looked down upon herself believing that she cannot be an effective asset. I also noted that “tisina kudzidza” (not educated), meant that she believed that to be an asset needs someone who is qualified like those in urban areas. It did not surprise me because it meant the parent was not ready to promote and monitor the implementation of the ABA because she is less educated, and the duty is meant for the educated ones. The discussion reveals that *an attitude of looking down upon oneself* hinders the application of ABA in mitigating LMVs. This shows that rural people have low esteem, thus thinking they cannot participate fully in such programmes.

In addition to the above, the participant further states, “*zvinoda vakadzidza vekuchirungu*” (*this is meant for urban dwellers that are educated*). The text

“*vekuchirungu*” (urban dwellers) would mean rural people view the urban dwellers as superior in solving problem. For them, they look forward to someone from somewhere coming to solve their problems. A social practice level of analysis to this statement reveals that rural dwellers cannot do anything for themselves because they are less educated. I would interpret it that even if given a task to perform as an asset, rural dwellers have an ‘inferiority complex’ that they are incapable of correctly executing the duty. If this low confidence is found in the person promoting and monitoring the ABA application, what is transferred to the person receiving the assistance? This *inferiority complex attitude, and community attitude*, prevents the application of ABA from mitigating LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

#### **5.6.4 Synthesis of the theme outcomes**

This theme has discussed threats that may hinder the ABA to mitigating LMVs. I concluded that four threats were generated from the study that may hinder the ABA. The next theme is going to discuss mitigating process against LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through the ABA.

### **5.7 EMERGING THEMES WITHIN MITIGATING AGAINST LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES THROUGH THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH**

This section explains mitigating against LMVs through the ABA. It considered detailed phases in outlining the ABA as a process to mitigate the LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

#### **5.7.1 Establishment of the team as part of the approach**

The proposed research team was comprised of Zimbabwean rural ecologies members, learners, parents/guardians, teachers, headmaster, faith-based representative, a social

worker, and NGO representatives. Our research team had a common vision and mission and was highly dedicated to outlining an approach that will mitigate the LMVs in Zimbabwean rural ecologies.

To reach the objectives of the study I felt that participants (names have been changed) should be grouped into three groups that they decided and named themselves [Hlamulo learner participant — for the learner participants; Humelelo adult participant — for the adult participants group 1 (the parents and the faith-based representative-local pastor); and Hlautelo adult participant — for the adult participants group 2 (the headmaster, the teachers, and the NGO representative and the social worker)]. Working together within their levels would allow openness, accountability, and reciprocity among participants, especially learner participants. From Hlamulo learner participant focus group discussion, Shalati — Hlamulo learner participant 1 was the research group secretary. Hasani — Humelelo adult participant 4 voluntarily requested to be the secretary for Humelelo adult participant group and Mhlava — Hlautelo adult participant 1 freely chose to be the secretary for the Hlautelo adult participant focus group. They all willingly requested to be the group secretaries. I was excited to have such a team willingly to act because they were going to capture information on approaches to alleviate LMVs. Our overall team secretary for discussion meetings was Mhlava. She who wrote our minutes noted resolutions and gave presented a report.

I was concerned about the wellbeing of the co-participants. The ten learners were selected to actively participate in addressing issues affecting them. The two teachers responsible for guiding and counselling learners and the everyday planning and/organisation of the projects at school had been chosen due to their experience in counselling and project management. The headmaster, as an advisor overlooking everyday management of the school, an intermediary between the community and the ministry, and the parents/guardians are co-researchers whose voices are respected in

the community. The faith-based representative and the NGO representative accepted to be participants as they viewed the programme to be “*beautiful and good idea*” aimed at mitigating LMVs. The motive towards ABA application fascinated them and they felt it was important to be involved. It was beyond any reasonable doubt that a number of participants were willing to be engaged in the ABA to mitigate LMVs. All the above-mentioned members are in full support of formulating the approach to alleviate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

In this research, we used the lens of PAR to gather data as it permits full participation of the co-researchers in the study. Due to PAR approaches, participants were not regarded as objects (Dube, 2016; Mthiyane, 2015); rather we engaged with them in a transformative manner to formulate an approach to counter the vulnerabilities they faced. Knowledge development through PAR and CER has the probability of addressing wider societal justice issues and empowerment of marginalised societies. Through PAR we considered critical social topics by letting participants partake in these studies to understand multiple vulnerabilities root causes and their effects. Through the dissemination of their findings, this may help stakeholders and policymakers assist in the mitigation process of LMVs (Chidarikire, 2017). For this and other reasons, I decentralised the research study to participants. The research was pinned by the CT and the ABA theoretical framework because we had to first find the problem and then the solution of the identified problem.

In this research study, I was facilitator and co-coordinator. I made sure all research logistics were put in place, and I participated on the same level as all participants. As the main researcher, I was one of the facilitators and provided my skills and knowledge with the help of the NGO representative and the social worker, rather than imposing them on the participants. We collectively agreed to adhere to all ethical considerations in the research process for the research to be dependable, credible, conformable, and

transferable. Furthermore, my role as co-coordinator in the research study ensured that we met our deadlines and research objectives. This research study did not intend to disrupt participants' work and study times. For parents, most work was done in the mornings and afterward they were free to attend the discussion. For the above reasons, we conducted our research study during the afternoons and weekends where there was a need, and we all agreed on the start and finish time.

### **5.7.2 Setting up our team's vision and mission**

Our research team was determined to carry out this research study in a way that was not chaotic. The groups gathered to deliberate on the vision for our team. Sharing of different group visions helped to bring people together and work collectively to emerge a single vision. Everyone was involved in decision-making and all voices were heard in the formulation of the vision and mission statement process. This was done to ensure that we have a collective consensus on all research issues. The following three visions were presented by Hlamulo learner participants, Humelelo adult participants, and Hlautelo adult participants respectively:

- *To reduce LMVs using the ABA.*
- *To find ways we can use to end LMVs using assets.*
- *To effectively utilise available assets to reduce learner vulnerabilities.*

We had to embrace a common vision and common purpose in formulating the ABA to mitigating LMVs. We agreed that the team vision to guide us would be:

- *To recommend the application of the ABA to alleviate LMVs.*

We agreed again that the mission statement to guide the team would be:

- *Empowering every person and every organisation in the community to fight all forms of vulnerabilities through the ABA.*

### 5.7.3 Setting out our team's precedence

The decision to actively involve participants in all research study processes was to allow them to have first-hand experience of research procedures so as to assist them in obtaining research results they could share with other community members. Success was their major objective, although not all vulnerabilities would be addressed in a short space of time. The agreement was reached to teach and develop the following:

- Communicating the vision clearly and ensuring empowerment and change;
- Promoting effective use of ABA and participant engagement, and;
- An approach for utilising the ABA to mitigate LMVs

The team's plans were identified as above. The subsequent sub-sections will explain how each was addressed.

#### 5.7.3.1 Communicating the vision clearly and ensuring empowerment and change

With a well-defined vision, I observed that the research study enabled participants to actively participate. The participants of the research study developed trust in achieving the desired objectives because we had a well-articulated vision to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through the ABA. This precedence was acknowledged as a result of realising that some participants did not understand what the ABA was all about and could not comprehend how the approach would work. The vision of the study was well articulated during a discussion meeting together with participants. After explaining and communicating the programme's vision, Hlamulo learner participant 2 said: "*Ahi yimelele nkari loyi hiku ahi hlupekile ngopfu ke rihanyo ra hina*" (*we have been waiting for this moment because we had difficult situations in life*). Analysing from a discursive level of CDA, the participants really welcomed the approach as they felt it was long overdue in dealing with their problems. The texts "*ahi yimelele*"

*(we have been waiting)* reveal that they have waited for a long time for such assistance to take place. Hlautelo adult participant 3, said: *“I agreed on the programme to take place here because I had seen that as so helpful especially to the learners, we are losing a lot of learners here because of them being vulnerable”*. The participants in this study were later allowed to give suggestions and other contributions to the vision. The contribution of participants in the formulation of the vision of this research study helped to create a democratic environment that permits the sharing of knowledge. *“Yes, hi wona nkarhi wakupfuna xikolo xahina (this is the time to help our school) as old students”*, said Humelelo adult participant 4. At the textual level, communicating the research vision enabled to diligently and collectively accomplish the aim of the study; the empowerment and total contribution of participants and change within the community. In his utterances, Hlamulo learner participant 9 said, *“kana zvichitibetsera upenyu hwese ndoona kuti zvakanaka ini” (if this approach can help us for life, I think this is good)*. This reveals that participants were willing to take part in the approach as they are gaining life skills. The programme was recognised and supported not only by the learners but also by the school’s administration and other members of the community.

### **5.7.3.2 An approach for utilising the ABA to mitigate LMVs**

As we deliberated on the effectiveness of the ABA, most of the participants highlighted the need to communicate why this approach was an alternative to mitigating LMVs in rural areas. Hlautelo adult participant 4 said, *“What are we waiting for them to tell others that we have resources with ours to our problems?”* From the level of the textual of analysis, it was clear that the participants were ready to communicate to others about assets they possess and can use to mitigate LMVs. The effective application of this approach would, therefore, depend on the preparedness of participants to engage in formulating a solution to their problem and contribute significantly to the mitigation of

LMVs. Because they were ready, we formulated our ABA research group to be ready to engage those facing LMVs at school.

The “**Hluvuko Wa Hina**” (**Our Change**) was formulated by Zimbabwean rural learning community members, together with the researcher, because the approach would collectively help to mitigate LMVs through collectively functioning as members. This intervention approach uses Zimbabwe’s readily available assets to mitigate the multiple vulnerabilities learners in rural learning ecologies face. This ABA can be used by headmasters, teachers, and rural ecologies members to alleviate LMVs problems. The learners’ family, social worker, NGO representative, and faith-based representatives were involved in this ABA, as they are able to create home and communities free from LMVs. The rural learners also participate in communities in order to bring awareness of the use of the ABA to mitigate LMVs. Furthermore, the formation of the team gave learners an opportunity to develop investigative and evaluative knowledge.

For the effective application of the approach, the social worker, Hlautelo adult participant 5, noted some of the issues that needed to be well-thought-out as part of a successful approach to mitigate LMVs, as this may worsen the situation, “...*make sure you first win the trust of the person, assure him or her of protection and act on the matter with confidence and courage.*” The textual analysis of his utterances reveals that: being professional when assisting the person; gaining trust that you can solve the real problem; and letting the person identify the problem and the solution to that problem is very important when assisting learners at risk. It was clear that the social worker wanted the person to develop intellectual skills in problem solving so that they may be able to solve a similar problem in future. His experience could have taught him that a someone facing vulnerabilities could find a better solution if allowed to be part of the solution.

In addition to the above, social worker, Hlautelo adult participant 5 said: “...yes, a number of people have knowledge to help others, we can be assets in other people’s lives.” Hlamulo learner participant supported the above submission and said, “...mina ni lava kupfuna vanhu, ni kumile ma skills (I want to help other peers because I got skills) from the group members on how to counsel and guide people.” The point that was emphasised by Hlautelo adult participant 1 was that every person should be responsible for ensuring that every person at risk is assisted. By supporting the social worker’s statement, the participants were ready to take their role in the community. Through ABA, the local community learn and develop life skills to mitigate LMVs. The ABA empowers rural learners with skills to mitigate LMVs. These skills help learners in rural communities to be able to survive in such an environment. Following their argument, I realised that the ABA needs total participation and involvement of the community for it to work effectively to mitigate LMVs.

### **5.7.3.3 Exploring avenues for conflict resolution for effective ABA application**

Whenever approach is initiated, some conflicts arise from within the group or community. There was a need to draft the ABA monitoring tool, which has specifics to meet performance standards that are to be followed. This ABA monitoring tool is to be given to all identified assets, and those who have involved school in management. “I think this asset-based monitoring tool should guide us to avoid conflicts between people involved”, uttered Hlautelo adult participant 4. His words were supported by Humelelo adult participant 4 who added, “Lesvi svi kahle, ha yinge hambani shuwa loko kune programme ya svilo svilavekaka kuendliwa xikolweni” (This is good because we will not have a conflict on what to do at school). Based on text analysis by CDA, the participants agreed on monitoring tools to be used, especially at school. The interpretation was that a programmed monitoring tool would help to address what needed to be done first and those to assist. It would be clear everyone in the implementation team to find technical assistance in terms of local and expert knowledge.

Secondly, the Zimbabwean rural community and those involved in the implementation of the ABA will undergo intensive training on how to monitor and implement the approach. The government, through its ministries (DoSW and MoPSEC), will be responsible for the monitoring and training of all members involved in the monitoring and application of the ABA in rural ecologies. Hlautelo learner participant 3 agreed to the submission above and said, *“We as professionals, we are ready to execute the duty to save lives. One troubled is too many”*. It was evident that there was a need to engage the government through its ministries and the ones who are knowledgeable within the community were ready to take the duty. *“As NGO, we are ready too to take part in activities that empower the communities and if we partner with the rural areas, there won’t be any resistance because we have been working with them for a long time now and there are experts we can find within”*, Hlautelo adult participant 4 reiterated. According to the NGO representative, the need for campaign and training within the community was necessary for an effective implementation of the ABA. Analysing from social practice, by involving the community the programme would be a success because other experts would assist and the community would feel ownership of the process.

Lastly, at school level, there is need for being exemplary as we try to monitor and implement the approach. Hlamulo learner participant 4 highlighted that *“Isu pachedu ngatitengei kuva vana vachinja kuburikidza nezvatawana izvi ndokuti tikwezve vamwe kuzviita”* (we need to change ourselves first to be able to attract others to do the same). An analysis from a discursive approach shows that participants were ready to engage themselves in the activities that would change their lives, and later pull others into it thereby leading to mitigation of LMVs. It was evident from the above discussion that there is a need for total commitment of all people in order to achieve a set vision

#### 5.7.4 SWOC analysis of the research team

To implement the activities effectively, the team conducted an evaluation to classify the valuable assets required to achieve our goal. Our strengths include that we are highly qualified personnel who are specialised, such as a social worker, a faith-based representative and, the NGO representative worker. These participants used their expertise, experience, and knowledge in mitigation methods of vulnerabilities and were willing to make this project successful. The headmaster, guidance and counselling teacher, and project management teacher were also devoted to the commencement of the project and the team observed that the school leaders were greatly keen to participate in this study to share their skills. Parents/guardians themselves were equally important as participants because among them were businesspersons and old students who showed willingness to assisting the local learner that they could assist others in future. Learners could not be left alone as they said, *“loko hiheta xikolo, hita pfunawo vam’wani onge ma old students”* (if we finish school we will help others as old students). We used our *“strengths”* to our own advantage since the team was highly dedicated and committed to the research study.

Even though the strengths assured our success, it was important to take note of our *weaknesses*. Due to the scarcity of time, it was impossible for participants to meet regularly. We would, however, utilise weekends to do our activities. The other issue was participants being called to do other activities at school. Sometimes participants, especially learners, would be called to do some other school activities, like quizzes and poetry in preparation for a competition which was to take place. Hlamulo earner participant 1 responded to the call, *“Mina na hlaula lesvo nivonako eku I benefit, ni lava ku attender lesvi mina”* (I attend programmes I benefit most, I need to attend the programme underway). It was clear the learners wanted to attend our programme than to attend quiz and poem programme. The headmaster of the schools gave permission interact with many stakeholders. The school allowed us to use the classrooms and

furniture during our focus groups and discussion meetings. The school allowed me to access official documents to support the verbatim from the discussions. The NGO representatives provided money to buy food whenever we met during the weekend. Having a government representative provided an opportunity that the social worker could communicate with the government to have support for the programme. Our *challenges* were high LMVs in the community under study (see Chapter Three). The other challenge we noted was that people in rural ecologies still look down upon themselves as critical assets to be used. The team did SWOC assessment as a base to the approach. It was our strong belief that if the stakeholders are supported, they will be able to mitigate LMVs as required.

### **5.7.5 Synthesis of the theme outcomes**

This theme validated the mitigation process against LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through the ABA. We discussed priority identification and the plan to address the priorities. The following sections will discuss the circumstances that made the resolutions work. To validate the effectiveness of the critical assets acknowledged, we formulated the **Hluvuko Wa Hina** ABA group.

## **5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on presented data gathered from discussion meetings, focus group discussions, and data consolidated from participant observation and document analysis. Data were analysed through the CDA focus, specifically at the three levels of analysis in line with the five research objectives of this research on the ABA to mitigating LMVs. We interpreted the generated data based on arguments by participants and found that there are a number of LMVs in rural learning ecologies. Through the generated data, the research team looked at the circumstance for the effective application of the ABA. The generated data in this research study looked at

anticipated risks and some solutions were highlighted. We proposed the best approach to a successful formulation and application of the ABA. Chapter Six will deal with the discussion of findings linking it with literature, and the theoretical framework of the research study.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FOR THE ABA TO MITIGATE LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter deliberated on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data on LMVs using asset-based approaches. Based on the previous chapter, the discussion of findings, linked to literature, the theoretical framework, and the methodology were presented in this chapter. The sections in this chapter are aligned with the objectives of this study and the emerging themes, as outlined in Chapter One and Chapter Five respectively. Findings on the situational analysis with a view to understanding current LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies, was discussed first. Mapping of assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs came next. After that, a discussion on circumstances under which the identified assets may be used, as well as the threats thereafter, followed. Finally, mitigation against LMVs through the ABA was presented.

#### 6.2 PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion below delivers grounds for the current situation in rural learning ecologies. The study focused on the following research question:

*How can we mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an ABA?*

The results of the study are linked to the five objectives of the research study. This section illustrates the study findings from both the empirical data through PAR and the

reviewed literature through the research theoretical framework. The following were the five objectives of this study:

- i. To conduct a situational analysis with a view to understanding current LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
- ii. To map assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
- iii. To identify circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
- iv. To find ways of lessening threats (if any) that hinder the asset-based approach application to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
- v. To demonstrate how we can mitigate against LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through the asset-based approach.

### **6.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS UNDER THE ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT LMVs SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE**

The following subsection discusses views by participants about LMVs in Zimbabwean rural ecologies.

#### **6.3.1 LMVs exist as *multiple entities* and affect learners *most***

In this section, the submission by participants was that facing a *single vulnerability* leads to facing *multiple vulnerabilities* (see 5.3.1) and this is because of the absence of learner needs in their education life. It was also evident from participants in different groups that they viewed LMVs as *multiple entities* and not as *single entity* as highlighted by their utterances about the complex situations/many problem learners face. As

participants, we agreed that LMVs existed in rural leaning ecologies and result in the need to find solutions of them.

The submission resonates with the literature reviewed in Chapter Three (see 3.2.1-3) that LMVs exist as multiple entities and create social inequalities that persuade the powerless rural learners to be more vulnerable. This is also supported by UNESCO (2018) and ZIMVAC (2019) that some learners, aged 13-17, were out of school due to absence of school levies (63%), pregnancy or marriage (8%), lack of interest (8%), work for food or money (3%), illness (2%), and disability (2%). Although the government has announced that no child should be turned away from school, it was interesting that ZIMVAC revealed that the proportion of learners being turned away for non-payment of tuition fees remains high at 63%. This is very common in rural learning ecologies where life is complex; things do not proceed as expected. Research done by Brown, Sarvet, and Hasin, (2017) concurs with the above submissions that much vulnerability affects the human condition resulting in many accounts of vulnerabilities. This is also in line with complexity theory as Ni and Branch (2009) assert that every society is complex and has unpredictable, often non-linear, patterns and that people need to deal with such complex issues in order to survive in the environment (see 2.3.1). This complex situation does not only function to destabilise the lives of learners, parents/guardians, and/or the community but also triggers thinking and emergence of adaptive life skills. This leaves the whole system in agony. In the context of this study, learners showed anguish that LMVs were the product of the society not providing for their needs. However, those complex systems helped the organism to reorganise and survive in the environment (see 2.3.2.2). Complexity theory positions that, an individual first senses and responds to its situation, thereby changing its state which changes the individual again, so that the individual responds to and thereby proactively alters its situation. The process, in repeating itself, creates dynamic and constant recursive alteration (Arévalo & Espinosa, 2014; Martin, McQuitty & Morgan, 2019). I argue that the presence of LMVs in learners' lives may require they evolve to another state in order to survive,

which thereby requires the immediate application of the ABA as a matter of urgency in order to address the *survival* of the learner within the complex system. In this case, learners need to find solutions to their problems by proposing for assets from the community to utilise to mitigate LMVs.

In this case, there was sufficient data to demonstrate that learners were more exposed and affected by LMVs and rose to the need to liberate themselves from such difficult situations. Undoubtedly, learners at the *receiving end* are in a position where they cannot control the situation but only adhere to it. To liberate learners from this suffering I argue that access to resources within the community, such as built, financial, social, political, and human capital (see 3.3.3), curbs the LMVs they face. These assets would ease the negative impacts of the LMVs as they create space for skill and knowledge development, relationships, and cooperation, which emancipate, transform, and empower individuals. The essential argument is that LMVs and their consequences need to be alleviated through the application of the ABA.

In conclusion, LMVs exist in rural learning ecologies, and have some negative effects. I realised that learners need survival skills in order to alleviate them and these can only be achieved through the utilisation of local assets because the external atmosphere is punitive. The application of the ABA would make the internal atmosphere (the brain) adjust and develop in order to survive the changing atmospheres. The ABA would leave the learner empowered and changed, thus able to survive harsh LMVs ecologies.

### **6.3.2 Understanding drivers and effects of LMVs**

This section discusses the key issues causing LMVs as identified by the participants. The following subsection discusses socially constructed poverty, which exposes learners to LMVs.

#### **6.3.2.1 There is need to decolonise the community from the self-constructed poverty mentality**

Based on their expressions, I realised that poverty causes one to be vulnerable resulting in facing more LMVs (see 5.3.2.1). These vulnerabilities have detrimental effects on learners' education, often forcing them make high-risk decisions to survive that sometimes result in high dropout rates and early marriage.

As highlighted in Chapter Three (see 3.2.4.1), literature shows that poverty affects rural occupants, causing them to face more LMVs. Based on the data presented (see 5.3.2.1), the community is not poor, but adult participants viewed poverty as a self-construct. This concept was inconsistent with literature as the community had resources they could use (cattle, goats, and pigs) but did not want to utilise them. A study by Chinyoka (2013) revealed that poverty was found to be the root cause of the increase in LMVs in Zimbabwe. However, in this study, it was discovered that the poverty the community faced is *self-constructed*. Self-constructed poverty, by implication, is a result of the mismanagement of resources, a complete failure in the utilisation of their treasure (Motsa & Morojele, 2019). The above authors' argument is grounded on social constructivist philosophy that truth is not just a product of natural creation, but that it is rooted in societies, principles, and societal relations surrounded by cultural traditions. I, therefore, argue that social constructionism provided analytical insights needed to understand the complex processes the social environment can exert on the community in order to make them believe they are *poor*, despite possessing assets they can utilise

for their child's emotional and psychosocial needs. These assets are in the form of various capitals including social, political, natural, financial, cultural, built, and human (see 3.3.3). One of the philosophies of the PAR methodology (see 4.2.3.6) and CER paradigm (see 4.2.1) is to *decolonise*, the community of this socially constructed mentality through the utilisation of the ABA. This study has revealed that deprived communities, if informed of the assets they possess, have tendencies to create resilience on them to address the stress of problems they face.

In this context, the study concluded that *self-constructed poverty* was a significant drawback not only to material scarcities but also to mental proficiencies in the rural community people in context. Therefore, there is a need to assist parents to prioritise the decolonisation of their *mental poverty* and ensure they are *self-personalised* through the application of the ABA, which informs them of the critical assets they possess.

### **6.3.2.2 The absence of caregivers exposes learners to more LMVs**

In giving their responses, migration of caregivers to neighbouring countries to look for greener pastures due to poverty and/or economic situation, results in learners left without guidance and counselling (see 5.3.2.1; 5.3.2.2). The empirical data confirmed that death/separation/divorce of parents/guardians results in LMVs affecting the academic performance of a learner (see 5.2.3.3). In so doing, the participants revealed that this leaves learners exposed to other LMVs as they are left alone without guidance. The interpretation, having no parental or guardian guidance often leaves learners feeling vulnerable and hopeless, and experiencing further social living problems.

Additionally, the arguments by the participants (see 5.3.2.1) reflects literature reviewed in Chapter Three (see 3.2.4.5) that socio-economic changes have some indirect effect

on the lives and education of learners. According to surveys by ZIMVAC (2019), most parents/guardians in Zimbabwe who live within rural areas have left the region and travelled to neighbouring countries like South Africa and Mozambique to meet most livelihood and economic-based shocks such as low-income and price changes. Researches done by Chinyoka (2013) and Magampa (2014) in Zimbabwe reveals that such learners, if left alone with no guidance, end up participating in high-risk behaviours, resulting in pregnancy, contracting STIs, and becoming more socially and economically vulnerable. Furthermore, Pillay (2018) noted that such learners have a greater chance of dropping out of schools if they come from homes with no caregiver. This is in line with complexity theory which states that an individual is part of a web of relationships, systems, and life problems (Capra, 1996). As a member of a complex web, an individual's complex problems may result in complex and multiple consequences if the decisions taken are not suited to theirs and others wellbeing. In this case, if they are not guided, learners can be defined by their relationships and responses to these vulnerabilities resulting in their identity being ambiguous and contextual. I, therefore, argue that the situation of separated and lone learners placed in child-headed families has risks of exploitation and behavioural problems, leading from one vulnerability to another. If one is not guided to make the right decision, they may end up regretting them.

The essential argument is that dangers vindicate the need for ABA to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies where there is a need to explore ways we can guide and counsel learners so they may survive complex situations. The ABA provides critical assets like teachers and social workers who come to guide and counsel learners to make meaningful decisions that will enable them to survive in harsh environments.

Secondly, in relation to empirical data (see 5.3.2.3), literature reviewed in Chapter Three (see 3.2.4.4) shows that cognitive, emotional, and social capacities shape

children left alone or orphans' experiences throughout life. Subsequently, a recent survey done by ZIMVAC in Zimbabwe shows that death of main income earners, loss of employment, cash scarcities, and separation of caregivers were reported as having the most severe influence on the life and schooling of learners in rural ecologies (ZIMVAC, 2019). I argue that these multiple vulnerabilities have detrimental effects on the academic performance of a learner, especially in rural areas where the environment is already complex. Studies by Pillay (2018) in South Africa and Motsa and Morojele (2016) in Swaziland found that vulnerable learners experience strong feelings of unhappiness and annoyance because of the absence of their caregivers and these effects on the learner's academic performance. The absence of parental or adult guidance often leaves learners feeling helplessness and hopelessness due to the lack of psychological support to help them cope with the death of parents or caregivers. Although contexts differ, this study discovered that the loss/parting/break up of parents/guardians could cause a learner to become a social misfit. Evidence of such difficulties was communicated through their progressive experiences. I argue that it is true that death/separation/divorce of parents/guardians results in stigmatisation, ill-treatment, bullying, nervousness, despair, and stress, just to mention a few. However, although complex situations, the learner should actively construct their own meanings and understandings relative to their prior and existing knowledge and practices using what is readily available in the environment (Ni & Branch, 2009). In conclusion, this and other studies have agreed that learners facing LMVs experience difficulty with social relationships and behaviour.

In conclusion, learners facing LMVs need guidance and counselling from those close to them. We felt that there was a need to propose for teachers, faith-based representatives, and social worker to guide and counsel learners in order to emancipate and liberate them. Every community — whether urban or rural, privileged or underprivileged — have assets and resources they can use to mitigate vulnerabilities those communities of interest face. What is needed is the community needs to

knowledgeable what it embraces and how to utilise their assets, through the ABA. Educationalists and community dwellers are therefore, advised to work cooperatively to reduce the effects of LMVs through the utilisation of the ABA.

### **6.3.2.3 Age, peer and attitude affect decision making after cultural practices**

Another important finding was that cultural beliefs/practices have both negative and positive influences the lives of the learner, as discussed by the participants. This was because the behaviour learners display after initiation ceremonies could potentially result in learners facing more LMVs.

Literature reviewed in Chapter Three (see 3.2.4.3) confirms what learners said during the discussions that cultural practices could have negative influences that send learners into other vulnerabilities. However, the findings in this study were two-pronged bringing in aspects of positive cultural contribution. According to Chen (2018), Korean and Chinese researchers discovered that cultural dissimilarities between grown-ups and young people have an impact on how young people publicly react. Furthermore, paternities groom the youth to relate to broader society. It was found that young people raised in such settings, where parents teach them of their cultural belief, are more likely to submit to their parents' desires, even when they are unwilling to do so. This supports the above findings that parents from diverse cultures have an influence in shaping their children's actions and intellectual patterns. With Xangani culture, girls go through a month of strict segregation from their normal life with trainers to instruct them on the ways expected of them in society. These are; childbearing, traditional dancing, home making and food preparation that womanhood is obligated to know. Based on this, I argue that, it is a highly recognised event, where children learn cultural belief and are more likely to comply with good cultural beliefs. However, although culture is intimately linked to a positive structural influence within society, it is also linked to social inequality

(Teise & Alexander, 2017). In this way, culture could potentially be used to create and replicate power relations (Apple, 2013) effectively holding the potential to create social injustices by discriminating against and excluding others. This is confirmed by Alexander (2016) who asserts that culture has caused some African students to suffer injustice, marginalisation, powerlessness, and become submerged in the culture of the silence of the dispossessed. Power and related issues of inequality, inequity, and social injustice should, therefore, be central to any understanding of culture in education.

It is, therefore, possible to assert that culture could be used to reproduce social injustices and that, as agents of change; the community have to develop a critical orientation towards it. However, the inference one could draw from the above discussion is that cultural beliefs have equally constructive and destructive effects on how the learner reacts to LMVs, with literature and research supporting that culture is a vehicle to reduce LMVs as learners learn a lot from culture. It is however important that this research reveals that both culture and attitude of the persons make them behave the way that leads them into facing LMVs. I concluded that culture creates attitude, attitude influences culture. Thus, the need for the ABA was necessitated by the discussion above in order to assist learners exposed to societal injustices and inequalities for liberating marginalised learners to excel.

### **6.3.3 The current processes are biased in the selection process and they promote dependence syndrome**

Drawing from the participants' verbatim responses (see 5.3.3), I believe a number of local organisations and government departments have made efforts to assist learners facing LMVs. However, participants revealed that there was bias in the selection of beneficiaries. We also realised current processes promoted donor syndrome and did not assist the learners to gain skills that alleviate the problems they face.

The literature reviewed in Chapter Three reiterated that the issue of orphans and vulnerable children are among every stakeholder's main concerns (see 3.2.5.4). However, the literature reviewed was consistent with the findings of the study. The government implemented many collaborative approaches to care and support learners facing multiple vulnerabilities but they are not adequately monitoring the programmes. This poor monitoring has resulted in those who are supposed to benefit, not benefiting. Thus, the failure to attain basic needs for learners facing LMVs hinders the satisfaction of all other needs required by OVC (Ganga & Maphalala, 2013). The above researchers' findings further report that learners testified to the community's failures to help orphans and vulnerable children cope with vulnerabilities due to a bias in the selection of the beneficiaries. If such children lack required assurances that they have a chance to prosper in education, they face LMVs. In the long-term, they would suffer cognitive problems, emotional instability, and psychosocial problems that would affect their education. This would mean a complex environment would be created within the school leading to more suffering and resulting in LMVs if the learners continue to lack guidance. In addition to the above, even if assistance is given to the learner it may not be enough; research has shown that the assistance freely provided by BEAM may not cover all learner needs to improve learning and survival. One may conclude that education is not free for all as EFA stipulates (see 3.2.6.4), only if one is fortunate and enrolled under BEAM or CAMFED, where a percentage of the school levy is paid for (Jinga & Ganga, 2011). The findings made us agree that there is need for utilising the ABA in the community to gain skills, empower, and emancipate the rural people, removing the donor syndrome they have. Running school projects and businesses would equip learners with life skills. Thus, ABA creates sustainable initiatives that empower communities and creates sustainable livelihoods (Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993; Myende, 2014).

Drawing from the arguments above, I noted that the existing bias in the selection of BEAM and CAMFED beneficiaries have cognitive, emotional instability, and

psychosocial problems that would affect learner's education. There is a need for proper monitoring of the selection committee, by including community members experienced with those learners facing LMVs. There is a need to emancipate and empower the community to assist those in need and not just to avoid exploitation of available resources through power-related issues. The need to conscientise the community was initiated in order for the community to be moved from donor syndrome to independence through the utilisation of the ABA which rebuilds their internal and external skills of solving social problems through the process of empowerment.

#### **6.3.4 Synthesis of the discussion of findings**

The sections above discussed findings under the analysis of the current LMVs in Zimbabwean rural ecologies. The discussion revealed that LMVs exist in rural areas and cause agony in the lives of learners. The essential argument is that LMVs and their consequences need to be alleviated through the application of the ABA. The rural community should be conscientised of the assets they can utilise to mitigate the problems they are facing. Therefore, if the rural community are given the opportunity to identify their problems, they should be capable of finding answers to problems they have identified by using assets they have in the community.

#### **6.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS UNDER MAPPING OF ASSETS THAT MAY BE USED TO MITIGATE LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

The discussion below provides grounds to map assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

#### **6.4.1 Assets mapping, identification, and mobilisation emancipate and empower rural communities**

Asset mapping in the study is an effective tool in ascertaining assets that are accessible within and outside the school. By so doing, asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation results in emancipation and empowerment of participants as they are actively involved in the process.

The results recommend that recognising the existing abilities and gifts was easy for the participants since they had identified the LMVs faced in rural ecologies first (see 5.4.1.1-3). Literature in Chapter Three (see 3.3.1), states that by doing asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation the participants reveal the community assets and highlight how they can be utilised (Foot, 2012; Foot & Hopkins, 2010; McLean, 2012). By beginning with identifying LMVs, as in Chapter Five (see 5.3.1), they improved their thinking about appropriate accessible assets. This brings forward the concept of emergence in complexity theory that for an individual to be creative, imaginative, and adaptive; they need to undergo a *state of disequilibrium* because it triggers thinking and emergence into an adaptive life skill (Turner & Baker, 2019). The participants were triggered to think emergently into identifying assets that provide adaptive life skill. South African studies by Chikoko and Khanare (2012) and Myende (2014) show that asset mapping by participants is a good tool to acknowledge that everyone has the potential to contribute and everyone's skills, capacities and talents can be identified and used accordingly. I argue that involving Zimbabwean rural ecologies in this study, through PAR methodologies, builds pride in their achievements and an understanding of what they have contributed and creates self-reliance in their ability to produce, not just receive. In addition to the aforementioned benefit, the practice inspires the school community, giving power to the powerless leading to emancipation and empowerment of participants as they actively participate in asset mapping (Hlalele, 2012a; Myende, 2014). The idea is supported by Chidarikire (2017), Dube (2016), and Mthiyane (2015) that the utilisation of PAR brings participants together to identify community problems

and propose solutions through active participation with their peers, and then applies those solutions through premeditated and well-informed activities.

The conclusion from the discussion (5.4.1.1-3), in the context under study, the process of asset mapping, identification and mobilisation emancipates and empowers the participants. The research found out that it enables those facing LMVs to be creative, imaginative, and self-organised so they may be able to survive in a complex environment.

#### **6.4.2 Assets within the rural learning ecologies provide needs to learners facing LMVs to improve their educational outcomes**

During the ABA, a number of critical assets to mitigate LMVs within the present context were identified by participants. These were the teachers, the headmaster, and school projects, garden and utilising vacant rooms at school, faith-based representatives, local businesspersons, old student associations, social worker and educational psychologists, and local organisations, and NGOs, specifically PLAN International. Generally, these critical assets provide needs in learners' lives to improve the educational outcomes of learners facing LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

Asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation resulted in a number of assets commonly identified by all the groups from the community (see 5.3.1 and 5.4.1.1). Although the identified assets resonated with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two (see 2.4.2.1) and Chapter Three (see 3.3.3; table 3.2 and 3.3), specific assets needed to mitigate the identified LMVs were identified and discussed. It was noted in Chapter Three that rurality differs with context, therefore, there is need to identify specific assets in the community. These were notably human and material assets (capital types

included: social, political, cultural, natural, financial, and built) from the school to the community at large (Flora, Flora & Fey, 2004; Myende, 2014). Due to differences in context, human capital, built capital, and financial capital were mostly identified by the participants. I noted that there was a great need for empowerment and skill development (see 2.4.2.4) from the assets they identified in order to mitigate LMVs. Thus, Cilliers (2011) comments that when learners scan and sense the complex external environment, they adjust and develop to survive in those unpredictable situations (see 2.3.2.2). If the external environment is harsh, they force the internal environment (the brain) to adjust and are able to identify assets available in the community to mitigate LMVs. For this, the ABA should be framed through actively engaging affected Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies members who are vulnerable (Chidarikire, 2017) so they can be emancipated. This aspect of the emancipation and active participation of Zimbabwean rural communities agrees with literature submitted (see 3.3.2.1-2; 4.2.1; 4.2.3.6.1-5). Therefore, my argument, underpinned in the ABA, is that the approach through collective active participation of Zimbabwean rural communities, members should bring different skills, knowledge and experience to combat the LMVs present in the environment. Essentially, the ABA, as confirmed in Chapter Three (see 3.3.1), starts from community possesses and an evaluation of what can be done through active participation of community members. Participants were capable of categorising critical assets to mitigate vulnerabilities identified.

The conclusion from the discussion is that asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation raised the need for assets to be used to mitigate LMVs in specific rural learning ecologies. This is because rurality differs from one community to the other, thus specific assets are needed to mitigate specific LMVs. The study discovered that these critical assets provided for the needs in learners' lives. They improved the educational outcomes of learners facing LMVs by providing and promoting relationships, guidance and counselling, improving organisational abilities, co-operative abilities, problem-

solving abilities, self-direction and constant state of learning, cooperative working, and human and other resources as needed.

#### **6.4.3 Collective approach rather than an individual approach is important in the ABA processes**

From the empirical data, it was clear that working together was the best way to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

Although the literature indicates that a number of assets from the primary tier are important (see 2.4.2.1), this study identified three important assets within the rural ecology under study that should be used. These were teachers, headmasters, and school projects such as gardens and utilising the vacant rooms at the school (see 5.4.1.1). According to the participants, the above assets should collectively offer guidance and counselling to LMVs and build relationships with learners, communities, and the government in the mitigation of LMVs present in rural ecologies. The findings resonate with studies done by Myende (2014), in South Africa, which are primary tiers (teachers, headmasters, and school projects such as gardens and utilising the vacant rooms at school) are immediately available in making sure that learners' needs at school are provided. According to the researches above, teachers collectively serve as motivators, guides, and counsellors during hard times for learners facing LMVs because they possess capacities, knowledge, and skills. The same studies found that teachers and headmasters collectively create relationships between the school and other stakeholders for the benefit of learners. In the literature review section 3.3.1, it is suggested that applying the primary tiers will ensure that learners gain survival skills, thus giving them an opportunity to mitigate LMVs. Considering the findings are related to the ABA, it is argued that this approach promotes the collective use of primary tier assets to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

Furthermore, the headmaster was seen as central to building relationships between the learner, teachers, the community, and the government in protecting the rights of the learner to reduce LMVs. In Chapter Three (see 3.3.1), Keiti (2017) asserts that the headmaster acts as an instructional leader who determinedly communicates the model mission of the school to staff, parents, learners, the government, and other stakeholders in the community. This builds working relationships as a key aspect to collective approach (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011; Myende, 2014) and strengthens social capital (Hlalele, 2012a; Whelan & Timpson, 2014). To support collective approach, it was important for the headmaster to ensure that a reciprocal relationship between learners, teachers, the community, and the headmaster are built and maintained to ensure that all vulnerabilities learners face would be mitigated. For example, learner participants proposed that a suggestion box be used to ensure that shy learners be able to freely communicate their grievances. This was in conflict to what is stated in the reviewed literature with regard to the reciprocal relationship between learners and teachers, the headmaster, and the community at large. However, Myende (2014, 2017) in South Africa, found that the invitational relationship, leadership, and relationship leads to potential mitigation of LMVs.

In addition to the above, the use of built capital (school projects, garden, and utilising the vacant rooms at school) results in learners gaining business skills and manual work-life skills which they can utilise later in life. I argue for the utilisation of fixed assets, for example, poultry, piggery, and gardening projects, as aspects of built capital (Carnegie Commission, 2007; Emery & Flora, 2006). Drawing from the reviewed literature in Chapter Three (see 3.3.1) the existence of these services would facilitate skills development by promoting the whole school approach system. It is evident above that the whole school approach is crucial if the school is to develop skills or change and empower learners facing LMVs thereby causing them to become an energetic participant of society in order to survive within the complex environment (see 2.3.2.3).

The importance of secondary tiers (faith-based representatives, local businesspersons, old student associations, social workers and educational psychologists, and NGOs and local organisations) as the participants raised assets from the community (see 5.4.1.2). According to the participants, involving the above assets would ensure spiritual, financial and business skills, social support, emotional and psychological support, and cultural support among learners. Within the CCF (Emery & Flora, 2006), literature reviewed in Chapter Three (see table 3.2; 3.3) indicates that it is evident that human, cultural, financial, and social capital assets are present in any community. As such, they need to be identified and used accordingly. Search Institute researches have proven repeatedly that LMVs that are induced by other risky behaviours, need to be addressed through the external utilisation of assets named, see table 3.2; 3.3 (Whelan & Timpson, 2014). Therefore, the collective harnessing of all potential assets to collectively work together would assist in reducing these vulnerabilities in Zimbabwe.

Findings from Chapter Five (5.4.1.3) show that rural learning ecologies need to also work together with tertiary tier assets from the community and NGOs, specifically organisations like PLAN International. This conforms to literature in Chapter Three (see 3.3.1) that social capital has the ability to influence change through collective organised meetings to enable teamwork for joint support (Carnegie Commission, 2007; Emery & Flora, 2006; Wilding, 2011). It was evident from Myende's (2014) research that assets under this section have capacities and capabilities to promote mutual relationship between all stakeholders involved to promote the benefits of applying the ABA in rural learning ecologies through working together

From the discussions above, I conclude that schools should collectively focus on building relationships with assets to prepare learners for a brighter and safer future through working together with different assets in the community. If schools focus most on assets development and utilisation of assets within their community, they will

naturally be working towards LMVs reduction as well. The active participation of rural community members empowers them by permitting them to express their opinions and make conclusions on generated data. This can promote a culture of collaborative inquiry and innovation, a way of fostering teamwork, continuous learning and ownership of actions within a community.

#### **6.4.4 Synthesis of the theme findings**

The theme discussed findings under mapping, identification, and mobilisation of assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs. The research discovered that the process is crucial because it is empowering and emancipatory in nature. Furthermore, the process itself results in identification and mobilisation of critical assets to be used within the specific rural learning ecology to mitigate specific LMVs. It was evident that harnessing identified assets (working together) was the best way to mitigate LMVs in rural ecologies. Having done the mapping the following theme will deal with the circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigate LMVs in rural ecologies.

### **6.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS UNDER WHICH THE IDENTIFIED ASSETS MAY BE USED TO MITIGATE LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

The discussion below provides circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies

#### **6.5.1 Creating a conducive environment that supports the ABA application**

The need to defend the participants from any harm was found to be essential in the application of the approach since the participants feared victimisation because some LMVs were sensitive. Importantly, participants actively participated in FGD groups expressing ideas, opinions, and experiences in the language they understood. Thus,

they used Xangani, or Shona, and/or English in their FGD to express their ideas in a natural setting.

The idea of participant protection is supported by the literature in Chapter Four (see 4.8) as Creswell (2013) and Best and Kahn (2010) claim that researchers should abide by: the principle of anonymity to avoid discrimination; confidentiality to avoid release of sensitive information to third parties; and non-malicious to avoid emotional and psychological effects. All this was guaranteed in this study to reduce any harm to the participants and therefore create a supportive environment for the application of the approach. It is important to note the inclusion of the social worker who worked closely with the participants to prevent negative emotional and psychological impacts during the study. Myende's (2014) research in South Africa, shows that not guaranteeing participants the right to privacy and anonymity creates a tough environment in the implementation of the ABA. For this and other reasons, he further argues that it is essential that participants sign consent forms and be assured of protection from any harm they may face during the research process.

Additionally, the study was conducted in participants' natural setting, which permitted participants to express ideas, thoughts, and practices in their own languages. I observed that this did not limit their expression. As stated in the literature, Chapter Three, Mahoso and Kuyayama-Tambure (2014) and Chinyoka (2013) point out that this promotes harmony, creates cooperation and confidence, and captures the interest of the participants. It also allows participants to air their grievances without fear or favour. This promotes reciprocal relationships as a key concept in the ABA (Myende, 2014). By allowing participants to use the language of their choice, this resonates well with PAR methodologies and CER as a paradigm that it is transformative and emancipatory and it advocates for empowerment and emancipation of the marginalised members of society (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube, 2016; Mthiyane, 2015). This also captures the curiosity of the

indigenous society as it suggests they wanted to see what was happening, hence improved thinking and creativity which is the agenda of the asset.

The conclusion from the discussion above is that it is essential to guarantee participants from harm for the approach to be effective. More so, findings concluded that the active participation of participants in their natural settings in the application of the ABA creates cooperation and confidence, thus allowing emancipation, transformation, and empowerment of rural ecologies members.

#### **6.5.2 Engaging people directly affected and those knowledgeable from the local communities promoted emancipation, transformation, and empowerment**

Engaging with local people to identify and find solutions to the multiple vulnerabilities they face promoted effective implementation of the ABA approach in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

Firstly, the active involvement of participants with experiences of LMVs helped in the asset mapping, identification and mobilisation. This was in line with the literature in Chapter Two (see 2.3.2.1; 2.3.2.2) and Chapter Three (see 3.4.1.2) that engaging people experiencing complex systems will help them to identify and find solutions to the complexity they face. This helps them to move from path dependency (state of equilibrium) to emergence (state of disequilibrium). The active participation of participants helps them to self-organise, adapt, and survive in the complex environment they are living in (Bondarenko & Baskin, 2016; Cilliers, 2011; Morrison, 2008; Stacey, 1992). Researches done by Myende (2014) (South Africa) and Chidarikire (2017) (Zimbabwe) supports that by engaging disadvantaged rural community members in research studies, they become empowered and emancipated, thereby encouraging

them to express their opinions and make conclusions on generated data. Through PAR and CER collaboration, the participants are able to produce, own, and use knowledge to mitigate the LMVs they encounter in life. Thus, I argue that the Zimbabwean rural communities ought to be energetically involved in order to formulate their own ABA in their education ecologies.

Secondly, the engagement of knowledgeable participants (see 4.2.4.6) was found to promote the application of the ABA. This corresponds with Chidarikire's (2017) findings in Zimbabwe and Myende's (2014) findings in South Africa that any approach/strategy collectively formulated to centre on knowledgeable participants' ability to assist each other to deal with life's problems is usually successful. I argue that knowledgeable participants can share knowledge and skills with those with little knowledge and skills, in this case learners, in order to mitigate LMVs. This can act as a motivator to learner since PAR methodologies are democratic models that drive participants internally rather than externally to find solution to their problems (Mthiyane, 2015). From the ABA viewpoint, this thoughtful understanding is that rural people are important contributors in finding solutions to their own problems. Above all, this would ensure that the ABA stages are effectively implemented.

Findings from the discussion conclude that the active involvement of participants with experiences of LMVs and the engagement of the knowledgeable participants enable participants to produce and own knowledge and encourages knowledge and skills sharing through the application of the ABA. This promotes emancipation, transformation, and empowerment within participants involved.

### **6.5.3 Quality leadership creates a favourable environment for the ABA application**

Empirical data under section 5.5.3 showed that the success of the approach rests upon the leadership of the school. This study appreciated that a visionary leader is the one who makes progress at any organisation. They argue that the favourable environment is created by building relationships with local communities' stakeholders.

This finding resonates well with the literature reviewed in Chapter Three (see 3.4.1.3) when Myende (2014) explains that leadership approaches enhance harnessing of potential contributors and other stakeholders from the community to develop the application of the approach. The literature demonstrated that the key to bringing all assets together and solving *topical issues* depends on the leadership style of the school. A visionary leader attempts to build a strong bond and social trust with possible asset contributors (Oakley & Tsao, 2007). Previously, under asset mapping, identification and mobilisation promotes a collective approach (see 6.4.3), I indicated that the headmaster is central in building associations between the community and the school. To solve topical and sensitive issues, this requires the headmaster to be tactical, for instance, the matter of culture being twofold in causing and reducing LMVs. This matter goes beyond the headmaster, tactically touching on both issues to avoid disturbance between the school and cultural leaders. This issue may cause conflict between the school and the community and may disrupt the application of the approach. Research by Myende (2017) argues that the community and the school should not be separated from each other if the intention is to solve school problems using the ABA. Thus, I argue, that the better the leadership approaches in dealing with sensitive twofold cultural issues, the better the breakthrough and work to mitigate LMVs.

From the discussion above, I conclude that willingness and visionary leadership helps in tackling sensitive issues, for example, issues of culture can create social trust between

the schools and the community. I also argue that better leadership is central to building relationships between the school and the community.

#### **6.5.4 Synthesis of the theme outcomes**

The theme discussed findings under the circumstances for which the identified assets may be used to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies. The research discovered that creating a favourable environment for the ABA application by following ethical considerations and enabling participants to express their ideas and experiences in the participant's natural settings was found to create positive circumstance through which the approach can be implemented. Likewise, engaging people directly affected and those knowledgeable from the local communities, the participants are emancipated, transformed and empowered through active participation. It also improved creativity and cognitive processes, motivation, and the creation of other assets and helps in the monitoring and implementation of the approach. The following theme will deal with threats that may hinder the ABA to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

### **6.6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THE THREATS THAT MAY HINDER THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO MITIGATING LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES**

The following sections will shed light on some of the projected threats to the successful implementation of the approach.

#### **6.6.1 *Donor syndrome* challenges the implementation of the ABA in rural learning ecologies**

The first anticipated threat to the study was the participants showing limited information on the application of the ABA. The empirical data reveal that with donor syndrome, this

posed threats in the application of the approach. Findings show that most rural members have a donor syndrome that they do not see themselves capable of finding the solution to their problems.

Findings concerning threats show that there is difference from what was said by the participants to the reviewed literature in Chapter Three (see 3.5.1). Based on the data presented, the participants indicated that they did not understand what the ABA was about. However, in section 5.4.1.1-3, they listed quite a number of assets from their community. Literature revealed that poor communities suffer from low human, social, and political capital (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011; Hlalele, 2012a), however, this was contrary to findings in this study because human capital was available, but participants were not aware of them. At first, it was assumed that participants had limited knowledge of available assets, however, asset mapping revealed that participants knew of assets in the community but had limited information on how to utilise them. The application of the ABA informed participants of how rich they were, in terms of assets, through PAR methodologies, which required them to be active participants. Through the lens of complexity theory, participants learned how to identify the best solutions to their problems through a process called *tagging* (Holland, 2014; Wilson, 2017). The application of the ABA assisted rural ecology members to recover and realise the human, social, political, natural, and cultural capitals they could access and utilise to mitigate their LMVs thereby leaving them emancipated, transformed, and empowered.

Secondly, practical data revealed that rural communities have *donor syndrome* in that they do not see some assets as opportunities to gain life skills to mitigate LMVs. Cilliers (2011) argues that there is a need for positive feedback (see 2.3.2.2) to shift rural communities from the equilibrium state to the disequilibrium state in order to open up their minds and become independent. I argue that positive feedback could be achieved through the proper application of the ABA, which emancipates and transforms them

from the donor syndrome they were locked in and realises that they can find solutions to the problems they are facing through the utilisation of assets within their communities. The view of rural communities' limited understanding of the ABA was based on evidence that some people in rural areas are not well informed of the approach, due to marginalisation (Chidarikire, 2017). By allowing the active participation of rural community members, we ensured that the limited understanding of the ABA was lessened. On the other hand, in this research study, we involved knowledgeable rural community members in the ABA application.

From the discussion of findings above, the researcher concluded that the application of the ABA enabled the rural dwellers to recognise the assets they have in the community to transform and empower them and to move them from dependency syndrome to independency.

#### **6.6.2 The absence of proficiency in the promotion and monitoring of the ABA**

From the participants, it is evident that the absence of proficiency in promoting and monitoring the ABA concept affects its full implementation (see 5.6.2). It was presumed that it is difficult to manage a programme while you are geographically distant from the actual community.

Findings from the empirical data concur with the literature reviewed in Chapter Three (see 3.5.3), (Hlalele, 2012a; Myende, 2014) that because of geographical location, rural ecologies are isolated from receiving social, political, and human resources required for them to progress well. Research by Myende (2017), Myende and Hlalele (2018) in South Africa show that rural ecologies suffer from social ills that leave them increasingly more vulnerable. They further argue that geographical location detach and isolate them

from social networks, expert knowledge, and all forms of technical assistance they need; in other words, the “building blocks” that would leave them more vulnerable. For example, Chidarikire’s (2017) study on Zimbabwean rural ecologies revealed that there is a shortage of manpower to monitor and evaluate the approach/strategy which leads to the unsuccessful implementation of the approach or a strategy. He further noted, with concern, that since 2013 the government of Zimbabwe, through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), has not employed workers because the government has been experiencing financial difficulties. Regardless of the current state, there is a need for promoting and monitoring the ABA despite there being limited manpower knowledgeable of rural learning ecologies. With the findings above, I argue that the application of the ABA created opportunities for rural ecologies members to be imparted with capabilities to mitigate the LMVs they face. In this study, the involvement of those with knowledge (social worker, NGO representative, faith-based representative) helped impart knowledge and skills to all participants through active participation, resulting in emancipation and empowerment of those with limited knowledge is not being aware of your options, or not being aware of ABA less knowledgeable.

The conclusion from this finding was that the geographical location of rural learning ecologies detaches and isolates rural communities from receiving all forms of capital that helps transform them. However, the application of the ABA leaves them equipped, knowledgeable, emancipated, and empowered due to the involvement of those affected.

### **6.6.3 Attitude of the community members affects the application of ABA**

Based on their expressions, I realised participants revealed that the negative attitude of the community members was found to threaten the application of the ABA. Rural people

have an inferiority complex that impedes their participation because they are less educated than those from urban areas.

Based on the data presented (see 5.6.3), adult participants mainly commented that rural community members look down on themselves too much and that they view urban dwellers as more superior than they do. This results in a society having a negative attitude towards the support of the ABA application. This brings to light the issue of donor syndrome (see 5.6.1; 6.6.1), with rural people waiting for assistance for their needs, instead of solving their own problems. They view themselves as not being knowledgeable yet Myende's (2014) research discovered that rural parents, as part of rural ecologies, have native knowledge systems that they have been using to alleviate LMVs in the communities. These parents draw from indigenous knowledge systems and understand what is required for their children in order to mitigate LMVs. The participants exposed that the community success or failure to implement an approach or strategy depends upon the attitude of rural ecologies members' commitment (see 5.6.3). I argue that there is a need for relationship building among community members in order to appreciate and identify areas of partnership. There is a need to fix a bad relationship by finding causes of negative/positive attitude among the community. Chidarikire (2017), Dube (2016), and Mthiyane (2015) agree that engaging the community in relationship building through PAR methodologies is emancipating and empowering and that working together is important. This also results in the sharing of ideas between all within the relationship (Myende, 2014, 2017).

This study has established that some rural ecologies members have a negative attitude towards the application of the ABA. However, by engaging them through relationship building they can reveal their indigenous knowledge on ways to mitigate LMVs. This results in emancipation, transformation, and empowerment of other rural ecologies members.

#### **6.6.4 Synthesis of the theme outcomes**

The theme discussed findings on the threats that may hinder the ABA to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural ecologies. The study found that rural ecologies members have donor syndrome, which challenges the implementation of the ABA in rural learning ecologies. In addition, the absence of proficiency in promoting and monitoring the ABA hinders its application. Furthermore, the attitude of the community members affects the application of ABA. However, engaging them in activities that promote relationship building results in the emancipation, transformation, and empowerment of rural ecologies members. Having discussed findings on the threats, the subsequent theme will deal of findings under mitigation against LMVs in rural learning ecologies through the ABA.

### **6.7 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS UNDER THE MITIGATING AGAINST LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES THROUGH THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH**

The following sections highlight some of the indicators of the successful implementation of the ABA application.

#### **6.7.1 Recognition and support of the approach**

The effective application of this approach depended on the willingness of the participants involved in proposing solutions to the mitigation of LMVs. I felt welcomed and the participants were ready to work together as a team.

This resonates well with the reviewed literature in Chapter Three (see 3.6.1.2) which argues that for an activity to be successful, participants should be guided by a comprehensive plan on what they are going to do, arrange the scheduled actions, those

involved, those accountable, and what the required assets are (Rippon & Hopkins, 2015; Rippon & South, 2017). McLean (2012) asserts that the willingness to plan for specific activities helps participants to understand their duties. I was excited to have a team willing to act because some participants volunteered to be group secretaries who captured information to analyse approaches to alleviate LMVs in rural learning ecologies. In their research, Foot and Hopkins (2010) discovered that by inspiring active participation, participants feel confident in their capability to be producers, rather than receivers of change. Similarly, Myende (2014) adds that participants gain the self-confidence to participate in co-operative associations, which are participative in nature. It was concluded, for example, that nodding of heads by others was a sign of acceptance to be part of the team. All participants fully supported formulating the approach to alleviate LMVs as indicated by their active participation. As described, the willingness of rural participants to propose assets to alleviate LMVs in rural ecologies was one of the strengths uncovered in this study through the empirical data generated.

### **6.7.2 Appreciation of the collective approach**

Through active participation, the participants revealed that mitigating LMVs requires a *collective* rather than *individual* struggle, which is supported by this study (see 5.2.2). The effective application of this approach depends on cooperative participation of the participants involved in proposing a solution to the mitigation of LMVs.

The idea of collaboration in finding solutions to community problems is supported by the literature reviewed in Chapter Three (see 3.6.1.2). Evans and Winson (2014) and Myende (2014) held that cooperative planning and scheduling of work is vital in order to reflect participants' needs and to guarantee that their resource requirements from the ABA are unquestionably stated. McLean (2012) in Scotland and Myende (2014) in South Africa shared similar results; cooperative planning and scheduling resulted in

specific plans for activities and clear detailed plans were crucial in both assigning responsibility and to being aware of which resources were needed. In this study, because they were ready, we formulated our ABA research group who were ready to propose assets to mitigate LMVs at school. The study utilised PAR methodologies, which are collective in nature, and enabled participants to collectively propose for businesspersons, faith-based representatives, old students' associations, social workers and educational psychologists, and NGOs and other local organisation as connections to be utilised as assets. These assets were collectively identified to contribute financial, material, and moral support during the implementation and sustainability of ABA to alleviate LMVs. This is supported by Rippon and Hopkins (2015) and Rippon and South (2017) who say that collective approaches in ABA build relationships, develop a vision for the future, and leverage inside and outside resources to support actions to achieve the desired outcome. This can aid the abilities of the rural ecologies to position their resources together as an approach to mitigate LMVs.

### **6.7.3 Emancipatory, empowerment and transformation of the engaged people**

An analysis from the empirical data gathered shows that participants were ready to engage themselves in the activities that would change their lives, and later pull others to mitigate LMVs. It was evident from the discussion (see 4.2.3.6) that the total commitment and engagement of all people involved in ABA activities would result in the mitigation of LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

The study's findings resonated well with reviewed literature in Chapter Three (see 3.6.1) that ABA activities are emancipatory, transformative, and empowering (McLean, 2012; Spenser & William, 2017). Furthermore, the process of identifying, mobilising, measuring, and evaluating of ABA activities gave learners an opportunity to develop investigative and evaluative knowledge. Empowerment is the self-organisation of the

poor for collective survival (McLean, 2012; Venter, 2010). This is only possible through PAR methodologies because PAR inspires involved participants to gain understanding, skills, and opportunities to find solutions to their problems. We utilised PAR methodologies, as revealed by Mthiyane (2015, p.21), who concurs that “employing PAR endorses individual and group strengths, fosters active participation, and stimulates attainment of knowledge, empowerment, and continued participation”. Dube (2016, p.1) indicated that, “the PAR approach stresses justice and empowerment of all individuals and a collaborative approach to problem-solving”. In the South African studies conducted by Chikoko and Khanare (2012) and Myende (2014), ABA activities empowered and transformed the rural communities in which the studies were carried out and participants were able to find solutions to the problems they encountered. Myende and Hlalele (2018) argue that if rural communities are inspired to actively participate in problem-solving, this creates self-confidence in their abilities to be creators rather than receivers of change. Thus, I argue, empowered rural learners are in a robust position to have pride over the empowered and transformation in them.

The conclusion from the empirical data is that ABA activities empower and transform rural learners to solve LMVs through development of investigative and evaluative knowledge.

#### **6.7.4 Improved relationships of knowledge and connections**

The research team was comprised of learners, parents/guardians, teachers, headmaster, social worker, the NGO representative, and the faith-based representative. Participants revealed that there was an improved relationship (knowledge and connections) between the school, the community, and stakeholders while creating vulnerabilities-free homes and communities.

The literature reviewed in Chapter Three (see 3.3.2.1) resonates well with the research findings that ABA created relationships between the researcher, the research team and the community at large. In South African studies by Chikoko and Khanare (2012), Khanare (2009), and Myende (2014) ABA creates partnership between the primary and the secondary layers and the community. It follows that ABA programmes involve creating partnerships with different people and/organisations, thus engaging residents in solving their problems (Baker, 2014; Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1996; Morgan, 2010). The participants through PAR identified businesspersons, faith-based representatives, old students' associations, social workers and educational psychologists, NGOs and other local organisation as connections (assets) they can utilise to mitigate LMVs in their rural ecology. Similarly, one of the partnerships created by the ABA is knowledge partnerships (Emery & Flora, 2006; Emery et al., 2006; Ennis & West, 2010). This represents that one way of investing in community assets is through ABA, resulting in development of social capital. The participants indicated that they had gained critical evaluative skills on how to deal with LMVs. To clarify, research carried out in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOPE VI housing and community development programme in the United States contain numerous positive elements of these knowledge partnerships (US Department of International Development, 2012). I do not dispute that pursuing ABA interventions was worthwhile, resulting in joint benefits of a new relationship between local and expert knowledge (social worker, faith-based representative, and the NGO representative). Therefore, the application of this approach resulted in important partnerships between the layers of community assets for these benefits. In future, however, the participants wanted a locally available social worker so that they could benefit more from them since the one available during the ABA did not stay in the community.

### **6.7.5 Synthesis of the theme outcomes**

The themes above discussed findings discovered through the course of mitigating against LMVs in rural learning ecologies through an ABA. The discussion revealed that the successful implementation of the ABA in rural learning ecologies has positive results on the lives of learners. The central argument is that rural ecologies have to be informed of the ABA of these benefits can emancipate, transform, and empower learners.

## **6.8 SUMMARY OF THE THEME RESULTS AND THE CONCLUSIONS**

The synthesis of results and deductions are presented underneath each sub-question, and these sub-questions are discussed beneath as research questions 1 to 5 (RQ1 to 5).

### **RQ1: What is the current situation of LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?**

The study established that LMVs exist, and *most often* affect learners in rural learning ecologies. The most compelling evidence from the study showed that learners are more vulnerable and affected by the LMVs and rose to the need to liberate themselves from such a difficult situation. As a result, learners at the receiving end are in a position where they cannot control the situation and are forced to adhere to it. To liberate the learner from this suffering, we argue that the access to economic resources, built capital, financial capital, social capital, political capital, and human capital, would curb the LMVs they face in their lives. These assets would ease the negative impacts of the LMVs (Myende, 2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). The essential argument is that LMVs and their consequences need to be alleviated through the application of the ABA.

Furthermore, findings from the study revealed that single *entity vulnerability* causes *multiple entities vulnerabilities*. Notably, the discussion above indicates that there are various LMVs evident in rural learning ecologies. We believe that survival skills can only be achieved through the utilisation of assets because the external atmosphere learners live in is punitive. In this case, the application of the ABA would make their internal atmosphere (brain) adjust and develop in order to survive those changing external atmospheres (Arévalo & Espinosa, 2014; Martin, McQuitty & Morgan, 2019). The ABA would leave the learner empowered and changed, thus able to survive in harsh LMVs ecologies (complex systems).

This study further examined the causes of LMVs. Firstly, the study surprisingly concluded that *self-constructed poverty* exposes learners to face LMVs. It was important to note that rural community members under study were *not poor in resources* but were *poor in the mind*. Therefore, there is a need to assist parents to prioritise first things first and decolonise them from their *mental poverty* they have *socially constructed* through the application of the ABA, which informs them of the critical assets they possess. This justifies the need of the ABA, where critical assets like teachers and social workers can come in to guide and counsel the learner to make a meaningful decision that will enable them to survive well in harsh environments.

Secondly, the study found out that the socio-economic situation leads to migration of parents/guardians leaving learners exposed to vulnerabilities. Poverty has caused socio-economic problems in Zimbabwe, resulting in a number of citizens migrating to neighbouring countries in search of greener pastures. Consequently, this leaves learners exposed to other LMVs as they are left alone without guidance. The essential argument is that risks justify the need for the ABA to propose ways we can guide and counsel learners so they may survive and hopefully thrive in the complex situations they are left in. The justification for the need of the ABA is that it encourages critical assets

like teachers, social workers, and faith-based organisations to come in to guide and counsel the learner to make meaningful decisions that will enable them to survive well in harsh environments, using readily available assets.

Thirdly, the study revealed that death/separation/divorce of a parent/guardian results in psychological and emotional effects. Drawing from the discussion, having no parental or guardian support often leaves learners feeling vulnerable and hopeless, and experiencing more problems that are social. It was important to propose ways we could emancipate and liberate society from these LMVs. This is because every community, whether rural, isolated, or poor, have resources within them and these resources can be used to mitigate any vulnerability they face (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende, 2014). What is needed is the community needs to be knowledgeable of what it embraces and how to utilise them, through the ABA. Teachers, faith-based representatives, and social workers are urged to work collaboratively with the rural communities to minimise the effects of LMVs due to death/separation/divorce of parents/guardians.

Lastly, the research confirmed that cultural beliefs/practices have both harmful and helpful influences on learners' lives. It was recognised that in events where learners learn cultural beliefs, they are more likely to display good and/or bad behaviours. These behaviours were usually displayed soon after initiation ceremonies, resulting in learners facing more LMVs or being able to mitigate LMVs. It is, therefore, possible for one to assert that culture could potentially be used to reproduce social injustices and that, as agents of change. However, the inference one could draw from the above discussion is that cultural beliefs have both helpful and harmful effects on how the learner reacts to LMVs. It is important that this study acknowledges that it is not culture itself but rather peer pressure or attitudes people within culture that make people behave in ways that lead them to facing LMVs. Thus, the need for the ABA was necessitated by the

discussion above in order to assist the learner exposed to societal injustices and inequalities for liberating the marginalised learners to behave well.

In trying to determine the current mitigation methods, the study revealed that there is bias in the selection of those learners assisted in the current processes. This suggests that there is a need for proper monitoring of the selection committee, by including members of the community who are knowledgeable about those learners facing LMVs. Above all, the study realised that the current processes promoted *donor syndrome* and did not assist the learner to *gain skills* on how to alleviate the problems they faced. Likewise, there is a need to empower the community to assist those in need rather than just avoiding exploitation of available resources through power-related issues. The need to conscientise the community was initiated in order for the community to be emancipated and empowered to move from donor syndrome to independence through the utilisation of the ABA which rebuilds their internal and external skills of solving social problems.

## **RQ 2: How can we map the identified assets to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?**

The asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation stage in ABA highlights the assets available in the community and how they are interrelated. It was argued in this study that involving the Zimbabwean rural ecologies learners in need through PAR methodologies builds pride in their successes and what they can contribute, thereby creating self-confidence in their capability to be producers and not merely receivers. Accordingly, the study discovered that assets mapping, identification, and mobilisation emancipates and empowers the rural communities. It also enhances learner facing LMVs to be creative, imaginative, and self-organised to enable survival in a complex environment.

Notably, asset mapping, identification, and mobilisation bring forth critical assets within rural learning ecologies. Through this process, specific assets needed to mitigate identified LMVs were acknowledged and how they can be effectively utilised in specific rural learning ecologies discussed. It was noted that rurality differ from one community to the other, thus specific assets are needed to mitigate specific LMVs. The conclusion from the discussion was that these critical assets provide needs in learners' lives to improve the educational outcomes of learners. Assets build relationships, assist in guidance and counselling, improve organisational skills, collaborative skills, problem-solving skills, self-direction, and improve constant state of learning. Above all, ABA promotes cooperative working, and provide human and other resources needed in the mitigation of LMVs.

Remarkably, asset mapping was found to promote a collective approach rather than an individual approach in the mitigation of LMVs. For the purpose of mitigating LMVs in rural learning ecologies, the empirical data was clear that working together was the best way forward. From the discussions, it was concluded that schools should collectively focus on building up assets through active participation by working together with different assets in the community in order to prepare learners for a brighter and safer future. There is hope that active participation of rural learners emancipates, transforms, and empowers them by enabling them to express their opinions and propose assets they can utilise to mitigate LMVs. This can promote a culture of collaborative inquiry and innovation, a way of fostering teamwork, continuous learning and ownership of actions within a community.

### **RQ 3: What are the circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?**

Creating a conducive environment for the approach was found to be one of the circumstances under which the assets may be utilised well to mitigate LMVs. The research revealed that following ethical considerations and enabling participants to freely express themselves in a natural setting creates a conducive environment for the ABA application. The conclusion from the discussion above is that it is essential to guarantee the participants protection from harm in order for the approach to be effective. It follows that the active participation of participants in their natural settings, in the application of the ABA, creates cooperation and confidence, thereby allowing emancipation, transformation, and empowerment of rural ecologies members. It also helps participants to develop adaptive skills and goal-seeking behaviour, which seeks to develop survival skills within the harsh environment they live in.

Findings from the discussion concluded that engaging local people with experiences of LMVs to find solution to their problems helps in asset mapping and mobilisation. Equally important, the engagement of knowledgeable participants was found to promote the application of the ABA. As a result, the active involvement of participants with experiences of LMVs and the engagement of knowledgeable participants allows participants to produce and own knowledge, and allows skill sharing with less knowledgeable in the community at a later stage.. The conclusion is that involving people in finding solutions to their problems leaves those involved transformed and empowered in problem-solving situations when they encounter the same or similar problems.

From the discussion, the study discovered that the success of the approach rest on the leadership of the school. The study thereafter concluded that quality leadership creates

a favourable environment for the ABA application to take place. I conclude that willingness and visionary leadership helps in tackling sensitive issues, for example; strong leadership during cultural challenges can create social trust between the schools and the community. Consequently, it was concluded that creative leadership is central in building relationships between the school and the community at large in order to collectively mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

**RQ 4: What are the threats (if any) that hinder the ABA application to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies?**

The study identified three threats that hinder the ABA application. Limited information of what the ABA hindered the application of the approach. Practical data revealed that rural communities rely on a “donor syndrome” and they do not see some assets as opportunities to gain life skills to mitigate LMVs. However, through PAR methodologies, which required them to be active participants, the application of the ABA informed participants about how rich they were in terms of assets. From the discussion of findings, the researcher concluded that the application of the ABA made the rural community recognise their assets thereby transforming and empowering them to move from dependence syndrome to independence.

More so, it is evident that the absence of proficiency in promoting and monitoring the ABA concept affects its full implementation due to the geographical location of the learning ecologies. For this reason, it leaves the rural learning ecologies to suffer from social ills that leave them more and more vulnerable. The conclusion from this finding was that the geographical location of rural learning ecologies detaches and isolates them from receiving all forms of capital that may help them to transform. However, the application of the ABA leaves them equipped, knowledgeable, emancipated, and

empowered with assets they possess due to the involvement of the knowledgeable ones in the approach.

The study established that negative attitudes of community members were found to be a threat to the application of the ABA. Rural people have an inferiority complex that impedes them from taking an active role because they are less educated than those from urban areas. On the contrary, participants revealed that rural members have indigenous knowledge systems, which they use to alleviate LMVs in their community. This suggests that engaging them, through relationship building, could result in emancipation, transformation, and empowerment of other rural ecologies members on other ways to mitigate LMVs.

**RQ 5: How we can mitigate against LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through the ABA.**

First, the recognition and support of the approach ensured the success of the application. As described, the willingness of rural participants to propose assets to alleviate LMVs in rural learning ecologies was one of the strengths uncovered in this research study through the empirical data generated. Thus, the study concluded that participants, guided by a comprehensive plan on what to do, arranged the scheduled actions, those involved, those accountable, and the required assets. These inspired active participation and built self-confidence in participants' capability to be producers rather than receivers.

Second, the appreciation of the collective approach ensured the approach's a success. It follows that cooperative planning and scheduling of work is good in order to reflect participants' priorities and to guarantee that the assets needed from the ABA are

evidently stated. As a result, this can further lead to abilities of the rural ecologies to put their assets together as an approach to mitigate LMVs. Thus, the study concluded that collective identification and mobilisation of assets contributes positively to the application and sustainability of ABA to alleviate LMVs in rural learning ecologies.

Third, the total commitment and engagement of all people involved in ABA activities would result in the mitigation of learners' multiple vulnerabilities in rural learning ecologies resulting in the empowerment of those engaged. This is because, the process of identifying, mobilising, measuring, and evaluating of ABA activities gave learners an opportunity to develop investigative and evaluative knowledge. As a result, the conclusion from the empirical data is that ABA activities empower and transform rural learners so they are able to solve LMVs through development of investigative and evaluative knowledge.

Last, the participants revealed that there was an improved relationship (knowledge and connections) between the learners, the school, and the community and other stakeholders in creating vulnerability-free homes and communities. The ABA activities created relationships between the researcher, the research team, and the community at large. Additionally, the participants indicated that they gained critical evaluative skills on how to deal with LMVs. Therefore, the study concluded that the application of this approach as important as it resulted in joint benefits between new associations with local and expert knowledgeable.

## **6.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter is aligned with the objectives of this study and the emerging themes, as outlined in Chapter One and Chapter Five respectively. Findings on the situational

analysis with a view to understanding current LMVs in rural learning ecologies were discussed first. Secondly, the mappings of assets that may be used to mitigate LMVs were discussed next. After that, a discussion on circumstances under which the identified assets may be used, as well as the threats thereto, followed. The mitigation against LMVs in rural learning ecologies through the ABA was presented. Finally, the chapter discussed the summary of results and deductions were presented in each sub-question answer these sub-questions.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE PROPOSED ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO MITIGATING LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter discussed the research findings and conclusions for the ABA to mitigate LMVs. In line with the purpose of this study and based of the findings, the reviewed literature, and the objectives of this study, this chapter proposes an exclusive and comprehensive ABA to mitigate the contextual problem in Zimbabwean situation. In this chapter, the guiding principles for the approach, in line with the ABA principles, are presented. These guidelines should assist learners to be able to live a normal life as others do.

#### 7.2 THE PROPOSED ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO MITIGATING LMVs IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES

The proposed asset-based approach is cited below in **Table 7.1** and elaborated upon.

<b>Asset(s)</b>	<b>Objective(s)</b>	<b>Action(s)</b>	<b>When</b>
<b>PRIMARY TIERS</b>	<b>Cooperation, Teamwork, Active participation, Relationships building, Shared vision and mission, Monitoring and evaluation</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To identify the LMV</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively participating in</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• From the start of the ABA</li></ul>

Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To propose assets that mitigate LMVs</li> </ul>	ABA activities	activities and continuously done
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To actively contribute to the formulation and owning of team vision and mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attending ABA activities to understand what the programme is envisioned for and to have ownership</li> </ul>	
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To guide and counsel learners facing LMVs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively participating in asset-based approach activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every time learners need guidance and counselling</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To actively contribute to the formulation and owning of the vision and mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attending ABA activities to understand what the programme is envisioned for and have ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the start to the end of the ABA application</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To teach organisational, collaborative, problem-solving and self-direction skills through the learning of hands-on subjects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning of hands-on subjects at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During learning time, every week</li> </ul>
Headmaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To coordinate guidance and counselling sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively participate in ABA activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every time learners need counselling</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To select teachers to counsel the learners</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the beginning of the year</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To coordinate working together of assets in order to make the agenda a success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting relationship building and teamwork between the learner, the teachers, the community, and other stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuously</li> </ul>
<b>SECONDARY</b>	<b>Cooperation, Relationships building, Active participation,</b>		

TIERS	Shared vision and mission, Monitoring and evaluation		
Parents/guardians	<p>Identification of the LMVs faced by learners in life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending ABA activities to understand what the programme is envisioned for and have ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the start of the ABA application and continuously done</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively contributing to the formulation and owning of the vision and mission</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide human, material, or resource support to learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every time learners need human, material, or resource support</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively contributing to the formulation and owning of the vision and mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending ABA activities to understand what the programme is envisioned for and have ownership</li> </ul>	

Faith-based representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide spiritual guidance to learners facing LMVs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting assemblies and Scripture Unions at schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every Wednesday of the week and during assembly time</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide material support to learners facing LMVs</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every time learners need human and material support</li> </ul>
Social worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively contributing to the formulation and owning of the vision and mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attending ABA activities to understand what the programme is envisioned for and have ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every time learners need social, emotional, and psychological support</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide social, emotional, and psychological support to learners facing</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To mobilise community resources to enable learners to learn effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting meetings with communities to inform and educate them about LMVs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once per term</li> </ul>
<b>TERTIARY</b>	<b>Cooperation, Active participation, Shared vision and</b>		

TIERS	mission, Communication, Monitoring and evaluation		
NGO representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively contributing to the formulation and owning of the vision and mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinating activities and strategies to be applied to facilitate independence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the start of the ABA application and continuously done</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To engage all stakeholders to work together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting workshops about issues affecting learners at school to motivate and empower the people involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once per term</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide financial assistance to learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Situational analysis of learners facing LMVs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When there is a need</li> </ul>

**Table 7.1: The proposed ABA to mitigate LMVs**

### 7.3 REFLECTION ON THE ABA AND METHODOLOGIES

There are three pillars of the ABA as shown in the above **Table 7.1**, namely the *primary tier assets*; the *secondary tier assets*; and the *tertiary tier assets*. Assets within the three-tier assets of the ABA should collectively and efficiently execute their different

duties through active participation, shared vision and mission, relationship building, and communication, in order to apply the ABA to mitigate LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

**Table 7.1** shows that for the three-tier assets to be efficiently utilised by the ABA, there is a need for cooperative work among the three tiers assets. There is need for relationship building among the three tiers through: respect, open and clear communication, high commitment, understanding, dedication to the vision and mission, plentiful resources, clear and stated responsibilities and opportunities, and consistent update meetings that permit participants to articulate their opinions. This improves the organisational structure, collaborative process, overall problem solving, learner self-direction, self-learning among participants and as a result the importance of the overall ABA application.

In addition, for the approach to be effective there must be specifically stated responsibilities for every participant as shown in **Table 7.1**. Chidarikire (2017) states that this helps participants in their effort to work and support one another and to avoid replication of responsibilities and conflicts among themselves. According to Moleko (2014), the stated responsibilities also help them to understand other participants. This study highlights that the success of the ABA application is reliant on the active participation and collaboration of all team members. Giving the participants responsibilities empowers the powerless leading to creative thinking and self-organisation of participants, hence emancipation, transformation, and empowerment.

Furthermore, for the approach to be successful, the team should also constantly engage in meetings with regard to ABA application so that they can collectively deliberate on

issues (Chidarikire, 2017). Frequently engaging and meeting for ABA activities, as shown in the above **Table 7.1**, allows participants to advance their knowledge, skills, and understanding. As such, they are emancipated and transformed in their behaviour and ability to reason and solve problems. Additionally, regular information sharing develops survival skills in learners to be able to survive in the changing atmosphere (Bondarenko & Baskir, 2016; Cilliers, 2011). Notably, systematic information sharing helps to decolonise or emancipate participants from self-constructed and socially-constructed philosophies. In this study, our team frequently attended ABA activities in order to gain an understanding and improve their abilities of the ABA application. It was vital to be resolute so that the research team could collectively achieve its mission.

Notably, teamwork trains potential assets to attain appropriate ABA knowledge and skills (Myende, 2014). In this study, active participation of rural learners in context was essential to emancipating, transforming, and empowering them. This process gives voice to rural learners who are the 'most' affected by LMVs and are implementers of the ABA. Particularly, it empowers them to correctly utilise the available resources and avoids misuse through power-related issues. Hence, the ABA proves that the voices of the rural learners are valued in the discourse aimed at formulating and implementing the ABA in Zimbabwe rural learning ecologies.

ABA activities should be interactive and proactive to enable team members the opportunities to offer suggestions that are appreciated and respected by potential assets and other stakeholders (Chidarikire, 2017). Moleko (2014) adds that, for learner performance to progress there is need for cooperation/solidarity to prevail among participants to make it possible for operative plans to be established. Through interactive and proactive approaches, ABA application empowers participants and stakeholders by encouraging them to participate in researches and collectively develop activities to solve problems they face in future.

This study recommends for an ABA that is transformative in nature with respect to LMV. I argue that the desired transformation usually occurs at the end of the ABA application even though the approach includes contrasting elements (Myende, 2014). Through communication and interactions with other participants in this study, it was assumed that many changed their attitudes towards the LMVs affecting their lives. Through ABA implementation, participants' distinctive behaviour and perceptions about LMVs changed. This was observed through changes in facial expressions, gestures, body movements, tone of voice, language usage, and other verbal and non-verbal cues. In this study, change emerged following on-going interaction with other participants.

#### **7.4 COLLECTIVELY SETTING UP A TEAM VISION AND MISSION**

As highlighted in **Table 7.1**, it is important to agree on the vision and mission of the team in order to effectively accomplish the objective of the approach/strategy (Chidarikire, 2017; Moleko, 2014). Sharing a common vision and mission enhances its ownership of set targets. To have ownership of the vision and mission, all participants must actively formulate it. This provides confidence in collaborative relationship building between participants, the learner in particular, and stakeholders in what has to be achieved.

In addition, Moleko (2014) and Shangase (2013) argue that appropriate visions and missions can create democratic sharing of knowledge, thus enabling social interaction. It cannot be disputed that to collectively work together and accomplish ABA results, it is important to collectively formulate the vision and mission as they give the participants direction. The team's vision and mission act as a reminder of what participants intend to attain, and it supports in binding the efforts of the participants in achieving its purpose to mitigate LMVs. The participants should verbally clarify the vision and mission and transcribe it so that they can visualise and comprehend it (Chidarikire, 2017). As shown

in **Table 7.1**, the vision and mission of the ABA should be clearly articulated by all in order to involve participants and other stakeholders, and to ensure all involved take ownership, are committed, and accomplish the stated concepts.

## **7.5 PROMOTING EFFECTIVE UTILISATION OF THE ABA**

In this section, the study responds to the question of how we can mitigate against LMVs in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through the ABA. In response, an attempt to assess the critical phases of the approach is addressed below.

### **7.5.1 Planning**

The planning process determined the success of the ABA as shown in this study. Firstly, we considered the planning process of the approach as being helpful because it is concerned with cooperative working to attain constructive empowerment and transformation by utilising local community assets (Spencer & Williams, 2017). In this study, planning is regarded as the most important phase that lays the basis for a well-managed ABA process that has a bearing on the results. Planning for the ABA involves, *who* is to be included in the approach, *why* and *how* (**see Table 7.1**). To keep the vision and mission of the study on track, these questions should be appropriately aligned and answered. In addition, a favourable environment for the participants should be created (Chinyoka, 2013) and the appropriateness of language used in communication should be seriously considered (Chidarikire, 2017) to enhance empowerment and transformation of learners. There is also a need to discuss the ethical considerations to be followed. For these reasons, Foot and Hopkins (2010) discovered that creating self-reliance inspires rural learners to actively find solutions to their problems. Furthermore, the selection process is significant as it determines the success or failure of the whole process. I argue that reliable results are produced when the planning process is appropriately and functionally designed which also involves creating a safe,

communicative, space for participants to engage in discourse in a relaxed atmosphere. In preparation of the ABA, these measures and procedures were considered, thus contributing to dependable and reliable results.

### **7.5.2 Implementation**

Secondly, implementation of the ABA is the next step to consider, in particular; how well can such plans be implemented? According to Chidarikire (2017) and Moleko (2014), well-defined objectives create a visual depiction of what is going to happen, by whom, and why. Therefore, results can be used to raise awareness about how to develop or improve the approach. Applied to this study, we considered initiating discussion meetings to understand each other and our experiences. Such meetings allow participants to react positively or negatively and feel relaxed and/or welcomed. Additionally, at this stage, participants normally want to be kept informed of issues under discussion, reasons for their engagement, and how they are expected to contribute (Matsumunyane, 2019). This undoubtedly highlights the significance of sharing all ABA processes. If the implementation process is not well managed or designed to encourage active, inspiring, and free engagement among participants, they may lose interest and absent themselves from future meetings. Thus, failure of the whole process becomes inevitable. It is through this implementation process that an on-going, wholesome, relationship among participants and stakeholders occurs, and that the development of trust and intercommunication cohesion is possible.

### **7.5.3 Reflection or Evaluation**

Lastly, the ABA process includes a critical reflection and evaluation of how the whole ABA process went. Moleko (2014) and Shangase (2013) agree that critical reflection and evaluation help to assess whether the plan will yield the intended purpose. Thus, through ABA monitoring and evaluation, the participants are able to strategies whether

the approach is going to achieve the anticipated research objectives. I argue, as participants are implementing premeditated plans, it is crucial that ABA reflection and evaluation are conducted regularly to note and respond early to the challenges encountered during ABA application and if necessary implement necessary procedures to solve these challenges. In other words, this also involves pronouncing all pros and cons of the approach. The researcher together with the co-participants should be self-reflective and self-evaluative on their positive and negative contributions during the ABA processes. Overall, one major practical motive of this stage is allowing the researcher and the co-researchers to make sense of what emerged during the ABA processes; *how*, *when*, and *why* things happened the way they did (Matsumunyane, 2019). This helps in considering improvements that are essential for further planning or studies.

The following subsection deliberates on the SWOC analysis of the ABA application

## **7.6 SWOC ANALYSIS OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH APPLICATION**

Importantly, SWOC analysis, as explained by Shangase (2013), provides an outline for rural communities to determine and focus more closely on serving the necessities of the learners. Additionally, Moleko (2014) agrees that SWOC analysis helps the study team to categorise the valuable assets available to mitigate LMVs. Thus, the SWOC analysis helps participants to identify the *strengths* of important resources that are essential to achieve the intended purpose. It is important to work with highly dedicated and committed personnel; those willing to save and to be saved, in order for the ABA to be a success. Likewise, it is useful to identify the *weaknesses* of the ABA in that they may impede its successful implementation. Most important to note are ethical considerations and time issues, which can cause participants to withdraw from participating. Moreover, a SWOC analysis provides participants with *opportunities* for successful implementation to mitigate LMVs. Skills and resources the participants have should be helpful to the study. Above all, they help in the identification of *challenges* to the ABA application. The early identification of strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges allow

participants to establish, mitigate, and avoid obstacles that may affect the success of the ABA.

## **7.7 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

This study will contribute to the ABA as a conceptual framework, particularly within the rural setting. Additionally, the study places an importance on conducting methodological activities that support the utilisation of assets within the Zimbabwean situation. Above all, this study will contribute to improved knowledge and reviewed literature in relation to the application of ABA in rural ecologies.

### **7.7.1 Contributions to theory**

The study has revealed the advantages of using CT and ABA, especially within rural ecologies. To be specific, the study has contributed to the effectiveness of ABA in Zimbabwean context. The current study has revealed how we can holistically assist learners to mitigate LMVs within Zimbabwean context. Additionally, the study acknowledges that communities have the ability to find solutions to the problems they face through the ABA, rather than depending on external assistance. I argue that the utilisation CT and ABA provides guidance to rural learners to mitigate problems they face in the context where this approach may work.

Studies by Arévalo and Espinosa (2014); Baker (2014); Bondarenko and Baskin (2016); Browne (2010); Butcher, Egan and Ken (2008); Chikoko and Khanare (2012); Davis and Sumara (2007); Deogratias (2018); Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003); Eloff and Ebersöhn (2001); Emery, Fey and Flora (2006); Evans and Winson (2014); Katunga and Lombard (2016); Khanare (2009); Kretzmann and Mcknight (1993); MacDonald (2005a, 2005b); Myende (2012, 2014); Rippon and Hopkins (2015); Rippon and South (2017) were

reviewed and I noted that they used either CT or ABA to conduct research on a different phenomenon in different context (that is, rural or urban). Similarly, all the researches did not take an eclectic approach by utilising CT and ABA simultaneously. This study however demonstrated how CT and ABA can be combined and utilised to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies leaving learners emancipated, transformed and empowered.

### **7.7.2 Contributions to methodology**

More so, the use of participative activities in gathering and analysing data has some methodological contributions to this study. The methodological approach created a conducive environment for emancipatory, transformative and, empowerment of the engaged to take place. More importantly to note, the participants appreciated the need for collective approach that led to improved relationships of knowledge and connections. Additionally, their minds were decolonised from believing they cannot self-construct philosophies to utilise in their context. Additionally, there is a need for active participation, total commitment, and engagement of learners in context with potential assets and/or stakeholders to find solutions to their problems. Rural learners must be informed of the assets they possess in their communities, through active participation, in order to mitigate LMVs. The approach utilised focus group discussion, discussion meetings, and participant observant which are participant centred. Through this, learners are proactively emancipated, transformed, and empowered to survive in harsh/complex environments.

The methodological impact lies in the PAR and CDA processes where participants are fully involved as drivers of the data generation and analysis processes. Through active participation and critical reflection, the study positions participants at the heart of the study process. The approach helped the ABA team to believe and accept that they have

something of value to offer others while also providing them with strategies on how to deal with their problematic situations.

### **7.7.3 Contributions to practice**

It is worth noting that a positive atmosphere and environment allows for holistic growth and development socially, intellectually, spiritually, culturally, psychologically, and emotionally. For the approach to achieve the above there is a need to create a positive atmosphere and environment with holistic assistance given to learners. In addition, there is a need to collectively work together to assist learners facing LMVs. A collective approach in planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, rather than an individual approach, assists the learners holistically through the sharing of experiences, knowledge, and skills on how to alleviate LMVs that leave learners empowered and transformed.

It is important to remember the need for positive feedback in order to open up the minds of the people involved so they may become independent. I propose that regular feedback be provided and that the monitoring of the approach continues in order to unlock learners from the donor syndrome they are trapped in. Sharing of positive feedback helps to decolonise and emancipate learners from their self-constructed philosophies which have them believing that they cannot excel in the ways their fellow peers have. Through a participative approach, it is important to note that the activities improved the different skills in the participants.

Notably, more participatory action researches are required to test the viability of the research approach or something similar. LMVs differ from one context to another; hence, assets needed to mitigate these are also different. However, research in other rural context, with similar parameters, we believe, it will yield the same outcomes. In conclusion, as a team, we acknowledge that the approach is crucial to addressing rural

learning ecology challenges if effectively utilised. In order to mitigate these challenges within a rural school context to achieve a holistic learner, we highlighted some implications for further study and application.

## **7.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study was a special and educative experience that changed my perspective from being an individualistic researcher to becoming a participatory researcher. The proposed ABA to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies opened up opportunities that stand to benefit not only myself, but also learners, parents, teachers, other stakeholders and other researchers. With this in mind, this study suggests and recommends that:

- ❖ Different stakeholders within school, within the community and outside community should implement the proposed plan to mitigate LMVs in rural learning ecologies.
- ❖ Rural schools should create conducive environments that supports the ABA application. These conducive environments should encourage relationship building and collaborative approaches rather than individualistic approaches in mitigating LMVs.
- ❖ More PAR studies be conducted on how CT and ABA principles could be incorporated in education fraternity so as to mitigate LMVs among learners to achieve quality education especially in rural learning ecologies.
- ❖ More studies be carried out to prove that LMVs should not be regarded as negative and destructive, rather carries some constructive possibilities that leaves the learner emancipated, transformed and empowered.
- ❖ The MoPSE in Zimbabwe should adopt policies that promote the holistic approach in learners to LMVs among learners, promoting independence rather than dependence. The ministry should promote and constantly monitor the full implementation of the updated curriculum as it equips learners with some life

skills (self-direction, organisational, problem-solving, collaborative skills, and a constant state of learning)

- ❖ The GoZ should adopt policies that prioritise decolonisation of poverty mentality in rural communities and ensure that they are self-personalised by promoting independence in them (self-reliance) rather than dependence (donor syndrome) through implementation of CT and ABA principles.
- ❖ Future researches could examine management LMV in rural schools and the intervention approaches that may possibly be utilised.

## **7.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This study utilised emancipative, transformative, and empowering activities as appropriate research methods to understanding the issue of LMVs in Zimbabwe. The theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning this study and research methodology were aligned harmoniously to respond to the objectives of the study. The study proposes assets that mitigate LMVs in the Zimbabwean context. Through the ABA, the research also promotes open and honest communication. With the application of ABA, open communication for all participants was demonstrated. Similarly, through the application of ABA, all diverse social structures (as represented by different participants) were incorporated. Seeing that the majority of participants had changed their views and attitudes towards the LMVs, the study, therefore, confirmed that ABA is an effective tool to address LMVs in Zimbabwean context. It should, however, be borne in mind, that this study does not suggest that consensus is reached through active participation alone, rather hope for constructive communication was created which in itself often leads to a positive change in attitudes. Lastly, it is remarkable that the emancipative, transformative, and empowering nature of ABA involves meeting regularly with participants and working together towards reaching a higher level of participation that leads to understanding and mitigation of LMVs in rural learning ecologies in future.

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## APPENDIX A

### ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY



21 May 2019

**Mr Nowell Chidakwa (217080991)**  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Chidakwa,

**Protocol reference number : HSS/1659/018D**

**Project title:** An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies

**Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol**

With regards to your response received on 30 April 2019 to our letter of 05 April 2019, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 1 year from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
PP Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Professor DJ Hlalele  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Ansurie Pillay  
cc School Administrator: Ms Sheryl Jeenarain

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

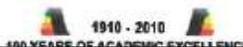
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

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## APPENDIX B

### PERMISSION FROM THE DIRECTOR POLICY PLANNING RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

Date:

The Director Policy Planning Research and Statistics  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
Head Office  
P. O. Box CY 121  
Harare

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: APPLICATION TO CARRY OUT AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN CHIREDDI DISTRICT  
(MASVINGO PROVINCE) UNDER THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL (UKZN)**

My name is Nowell Chidakwa *I.D. 14-160305 K 14, E.C # 5618064Q*. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) specialising in Education Psychology. I am entailed to conduct research as part of my degree requirements and my research topic is **“An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.”** In this respect, I kindly seek permission to conduct research at **Muhlanguleni High School** in Chiredzi District.

The purpose of this study is to explore ways that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities to promote quality education for sustainability in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies (schools) through an asset-based approach. Furthermore, the study also aims to explore an action that should be taken so as to empower the learners, community members in an effort to transform them. The targeted research participants are secondary school learners. There is voluntary participation and participants can withdraw at any time without reprisal. Confidentiality and anonymity will be upheld in this study. Data will be generated through the use of discussion meetings, focus group discussions, participant observation and document analysis.

There will be no financial benefits that the participants will accrue as a result of participating in the study. The information obtained will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity so as not to divulge the identity of the participants. I will also observe specified ethical considerations regarding research with human subjects. Furthermore, I commit that I will share with you the full report of my research study upon completion.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

<b>RESEARCHER</b>	<b>SUPERVISOR</b>
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155/ +27748456416( <b>WhatsApp</b> ) e-mail: <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 e-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you immensely.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

All communications should be addressed to  
"The Secretary for Primary and Secondary  
Education  
Telephone: 732006  
Telegraphic address : "EDUCATION"  
Fax: 794505



**Reference: C/426/Masvingo**  
Ministry of Primary and  
Secondary Education  
P.O Box CY 121  
Causeway  
**HARARE**

03 September 2018

Nowell Chidhakwa  
Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

**Re: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN MASVINGO PROVINCE:  
CHIREDDI DISTRICT: MUHLANGULENI HIGH SCHOOL.**

Reference is made to your application to carry out research at the above mentioned schools in Masvingo Province on the research title:

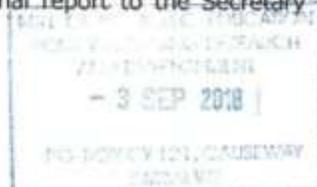
**"AN ASSET BASED APPROACH TO MITIGATING LEARNER MULTIPLE  
VULNERABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES"**

Permission is hereby granted. However, you are required to liaise with the Provincial Education Director Masvingo Province, who is responsible for the schools which you want to involve in your research. You should ensure that your research work does not disrupt the normal operations of the schools. Where students are involved, parental consent is required.

You are also required to provide a copy of your final report to the Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'E. Chinyowa'.

E. Chinyowa  
Acting Director: Planning, Research and Statistics  
For: **SECRETARY FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**  
cc: PED – Masvingo Province



## APPENDIX C

### PERMISSION FROM THE PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR (MASVINGO PROVINCE)

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

Date:

The Provincial Education Director  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
P. O. Box 89  
Masvingo

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **Re: APPLICATION TO CARRY OUT AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN CHIREDDI DISTRICT UNDER THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL (UKZN)**

My name is Nowell Chidakwa *I.D. 14-160305 K 14, E.C # 5618064Q*. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) specialising in Education Psychology. I am entailed to conduct research as part of my degree requirements and my research topic is **“An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.”** In this respect, I kindly seek permission to conduct research at **Muhlanguleni High School** in Chiredzi District.

The purpose of this study is to explore ways that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities to promote quality education for sustainability in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies (schools) through an asset-based approach. Furthermore, the study also aims to explore an action that should be taken so as to empower the learners, community members in an effort to transform them. The targeted research participants are secondary school learners. There is voluntary participation and participants can withdraw at any time without reprisal. Confidentiality and anonymity will be upheld in this study. Data will be generated through the use of discussion meetings, focus group discussions, participant observation and document analysis.

There will be no financial benefits that the participants will accrue as a result of participating in the study. The information obtained will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity so as not to divulge the identity of the participants. I will also observe specified ethical considerations regarding research with human subjects. Furthermore, I commit that I will share with you the full report of my research study upon completion.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

RESEARCHER	SUPERVISOR
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155/ +27748456416( <b>WhatsApp</b> ) e-mail: <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 e-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you immensely.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

ALL communications should be addressed to  
"The Provincial Education Director for Primary and Secondary Education"  
Telephone: 263585/264331  
Fax: 039-263261



Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
P. O Box 89  
Masvingo

4 September 2018

Nowell Chidakwa  
Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN MASVINGO PROVINCE:  
CHIREDCI DISTRICT: MUHLANGULENI HIGH SCHOOL.**

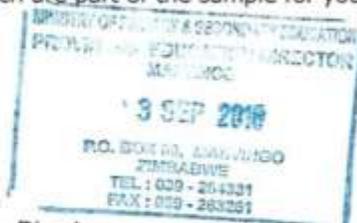
Reference is made to your application to carry out a research at the above mentioned school in Chiredzi District on the research title:

**"AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO MITIGATING LEARNER MULTIPLE  
VULNERABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES."**

Please be advised that the Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education has granted permission to carry out your research.

You are also advised to liaise with the District Schools Inspector who is responsible for the schools which are part of the sample for your research.

Z. M. Chitiga  
Provincial Education Director  
MASVINGO PROVINCE



Noted!

APPENDIX D

PERMISSION FROM THE DISTRICT SCHOOLS INSPECTOR (CHIREZDI DISTRICT)

DECLARATION

I NSABANGA SHADRECK (Full name(s) of the authority) being the ACTING DISTRICT SCHOOLS INSPECTOR (Designation) do confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures of the study: "An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies."

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I voluntarily consent the study to be conducted at **Muhlanguleni High School** in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Chiredzi District while the researcher uses the learners and the teachers.

I am aware this is voluntary and that the participants are at liberty to withdraw from the research project any time should they desire to.

Signature of the DSI: *NSABANGA SHADRECK* Date: 05/09/18

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX E**

**PERMISSION FROM THE PRINCIPAL (HEADMASTER) OF THE SCHOOL**

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: APPLICATION TO CARRY OUT AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL**

My name is Nowell Chidakwa *I.D. 14-160305 K 14, E.C # 5618064Q*. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) specialising in Education Psychology. I am entailed to conduct research as part of my degree requirements and my research topic is **“An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.”** In this respect, I kindly seek permission to conduct research at **Muhlanguleni High School**.

The purpose of this study is to explore ways that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities to promote quality education for sustainability in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies (schools) through an asset-based approach. Furthermore, the study also aims to explore an action that should be taken so as to empower the learners, community members in an effort to transform them. The targeted research participants are secondary school learners. There is voluntary participation and participants can withdraw at any time without reprisal. Confidentiality and anonymity will be upheld in this study. Data will be generated through the use of discussion meetings, focus group discussions, participant observation and document analysis.

There will be no financial benefits that the participants will accrue as a result of participating in the study. The information obtained will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity so as not to divulge the identity of the participants. I will also observe specified ethical considerations regarding research with human subjects. Furthermore, on completion, I will share with you the full report of my study.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

<b>RESEARCHER</b>	<b>SUPERVISOR</b>
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155/ +27748456416( <b>WhatsApp</b> ) e-mail: <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 e-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you immensely.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

**DECLARATION**

I HEBERT PIKELA (Full name(s) of the authority) being the HEAD (Designation) do confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures of the study: "An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies."

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I voluntarily consent the study to be conducted in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Chiredzi District at Muhlanguleni High School while the researcher uses the learners and the teachers.

I am aware this is voluntary and that the participants are at liberty to withdraw from the research project any time should they desire to.

Signature of the Headmaster: [Signature] Date: 13/09/18

Signature of Witness: [Signature] Date: 13/09/18

THE HEADMASTER  
MUHLANGULENI HIGH SCHOOL  
2018 -09- 13  
P.B.7036  
CHIREZI

**APPENDIX F**  
**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM THE HEAD FOR PARTICIPATION**

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is **Nowell Chidakwa**. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) specialising in Education Psychology. I am doing research for a study entitled “**An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**”). As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct research. I have identified you as one of my potential research participants to participate in the Focus Group Discussion and Discussion Meeting. Please be informed that I have sought in advance the necessary permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education; Masvingo Province; Chiredzi District and has been granted. This explored study is being ethically reviewed for approval by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. I therefore kindly seek your permission on your capacity as a teacher responsible for OVCs to part of my research project.

### **1. Purpose of the study**

This research aims to explore how we can mitigate learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach.

### **2. Selection of participants**

The study focuses on one rural secondary school with the participants who will form a team including the headmaster, two teachers, four parents/guardians, ten learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities, one NGO representative, a social worker and a faith-based representative.

### **3. Voluntary participation and confidentiality**

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to decide today. You can think of it and tell me later what you decided. The data we will generate from the research will be kept confidential. Any information about you will have a pseudo name and a code on it in place of your real name.

### **4. Duration of the focus group discussion**

The focus group discussions (FGD) will take about an hour of your time twice per month. The duration of your participation, if you accept to participate and remain in the study, is expected to be three (3) to six (6) months. The above will take place outside school hour to avoid disturbance of the learning time.

## 5. Benefits and Incentives

There will not be any direct benefit for you, but your participation is likely to help me discover more about the effects of being a learner facing learner multiple vulnerabilities, mitigation measures to be taken and there might be some potential life skill benefits for them. You will not be paid for taking part in this research. I anticipate that the findings of this study will likely inform and empower learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities with different strategies to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities can be utilised in enhancing sustainable learning in a rural school context. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

RESEARCHER	SUPERVISOR
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155/ +27748456416( <b>WhatsApp</b> ) e-mail: <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 e-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

**DECLARATION**

I ..... (Full name(s) of the authority) being the..... (Designation) do confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures of the study: **“An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.”**

I have been asked to give my consent for my child to participate in this research study which will involve her participating in the focus group discussion. It has been made clear to me that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study. I am also aware that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I may contact the researcher on cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 and email: [nowellchidakwa@gmail.com](mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com); the supervisor on cellphone: +27833799328 e-mail: [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za).

Furthermore, I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspects of the study or the researcher, then I may contact the **Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban, 4000; KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)**

RESEARCH METHOD	YES	NO
Audio-record my focus group discussion		

Name of the head \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the head \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>APPENDIX G</b> <b>REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM THE TEACHER</b>
---

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

31 August 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is **Nowell Chidakwa**. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) specialising in Education Psychology. I am doing research for a study entitled "**An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**". As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct research. I have identified you as one of my potential research participants to participate in Focus Group Discussion and fill in for me the observation guide. Please be informed that I have sought in advance the necessary permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education; Masvingo Province; Chiredzi District and has been granted. This explored study is being ethically reviewed for approval by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. I therefore kindly seek your permission on your capacity as a teacher responsible for OVCs to part of my research project.

### **1. Purpose of the study**

This research aims to explore how we can mitigate learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach.

### **2. Selection of participants**

The study focuses on one rural secondary school with the participants who will form a team including the headmaster, two teachers, four parents/guardians, ten learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities, one NGO representative, a social worker and a faith-based representative.

### **3. Voluntary participation and confidentiality**

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to decide today. You can think of it and tell me later what you decided. The data we will generate from the research will be kept confidential. Any information about you will have a pseudo name and a code on it in place of your real name.

### **4. Duration of the focus group discussion**

The focus group discussions (FGD) will take about an hour of your time twice per month. The duration of your participation, if you accept to participate and remain in the study, is expected to be three (3) to six (6) months. The above will take place outside school hour to avoid disturbance of the learning time.

## 5. Benefits and Incentives

There will not be any direct benefit for you you, but your participation is likely to help me discover more about the effects of being a learner facing learner multiple vulnerabilities, mitigation measures to be taken and there might be some potential life skill benefits for them. You will not be paid for taking part in this research. I anticipate that the findings of this study will likely inform and empower learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities with different strategies to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities can be utilised in enhancing sustainable learning in a rural school context. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

RESEARCHER	SUPERVISOR
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155/ +27748456416( <b>WhatsApp</b> ) e-mail: <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 e-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

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4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you immensely.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

## DECLARATION

I ..... (Full name(s) of the authority) being the..... (Designation) do confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures of the study: **“An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.”**

I have been asked to give my consent for my child to participate in this research study which will involve her participating in the focus group discussion. It has been made clear to me that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study. I am also aware that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I may contact the researcher on cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 and email: [nowellchidakwa@gmail.com](mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com); the supervisor on cellphone: +27833799328 e-mail: [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za).

Furthermore, I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspects of the study or the researcher, then I may contact the **Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban, 4000; KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)**

RESEARCH METHOD	YES	NO
Audio-record my focus group discussion		

Name of the teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX H**  
**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM THE PARENTS OR GUARDIANS FOR LEARNER PARTICIPATION**

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is **Nowell Chidakwa**. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) specialising in Education Psychology. I am doing research for a study entitled “**An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**”). As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct research. I have identified your child \_\_\_\_\_ as one of my potential research participants. Please be informed that I have sought in advance the necessary permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education; Masvingo Province and has been granted. This explored study is being ethically reviewed for approval by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. I therefore kindly seek your permission on your capacity as a parent/guardian of the child to be part of my research project.

**1. Purpose of the study**

This research aims to explore how we can mitigate learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach.

**2. Selection of participants**

The study focuses on one rural secondary school with the participants who will form a team including the headmaster, two teachers, four parents/guardians, ten learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities, one NGO representative, a social worker and a faith-based representative.

**3. Voluntary participation and confidentiality**

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to decide today. You can think of it and tell me later what you decided about your child. The data we will generate from the research will be kept confidential. Any information about your child will have a pseudo name and a code on it in place of his or her real name.

**4. Duration of the focus group discussion**

The focus group discussions (FGD) will take about an hour of his or her time twice per month. The duration of his/her participation, if you accept him/her to participate and remain in the study, is expected to be three (3) to six (6) months. The above will take place outside school hour to avoid disturbance of the learning time.

**5. Risk, Discomfort and right to withdraw**

Any risk of discomfort, including any limits to confidentiality, will lead to the counselling of the learners by the social worker and the faith-based representative. Your child may stop participating in the FGD at any time that you or he/she wishes without any harm to either of you.

## 6. Benefits and Incentives

There will not be any direct benefit for your child or for you, but your child's participation is likely to help me discover more about the effects of being a learner facing learner multiple vulnerabilities, mitigation measures to be taken and there might be some potential life skill benefits for him. Your child will not be paid for taking part in this research. I anticipate that the findings of this study will likely inform and empower learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities with different strategies to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities can be utilised in enhancing sustainable learning in a rural school context. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

RESEARCHER	SUPERVISOR
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155/ +27748456416(WhatsApp) e-mail: <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 e-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

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4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you immensely.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

## DECLARATION

I ..... (Full name(s) of the authority) being the..... (Designation) do confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures of the study: **“An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.”**

I have been asked to give my consent for my child to participate in this research study which will involve her participating in the focus group discussion. It has been made clear to me that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study. I am also aware that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I may contact the researcher on cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 and email: [nowellchidakwa@gmail.com](mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com); the supervisor on cellphone: +27833799328 e-mail: [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za).

Furthermore, I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspects of the study or the researcher, then I may contact the **Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban, 4000; KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)**

RESEARCH METHOD	YES	NO
Audio-record my focus group discussion		

Name of the child \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent or guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the parent or guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX I**  
**LEARNER ASSENT FORM**

My name is **Chidakwa Nowell**; I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) in the Educational Psychology Department. I am conducting a study on: “**An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.**” I would like you to take part in the study voluntarily.

If you agree to participate in the study, we will have some discussions with you and our discussions will tape-recorded. Your parent’s permission has been sought. We will be discussing the current situation ways that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities to promote quality education for sustainability in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies (schools) through an asset-based approach. Furthermore, the study also aims to explore an action that should be taken so as to empower the learners, community members in an effort to transform them

You can ask any questions about the study. If you feel at any time that you don’t want to continue being part of the study, you can always tell me and you will not be in any trouble for that.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

<b>RESEARCHER</b>	<b>SUPERVISOR</b>
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 E-mail <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 E-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**  
Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Thanking you in advance.

Chidakwa Nowell

## DECLARATION

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name and surname of the learner) would voluntarily like to take part in this study. I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part for the provision of psychosocial support services to the participants. I declare that my services in this study are entirely voluntary and that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project any time should I so desire.

It has been made clear to me that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study. I am also aware that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I may contact the researcher on cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 and email: [nowellchidakwa@gmail.com](mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com); the supervisor on cellphone: +27833799328 e-mail: [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za).

Furthermore, I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspects of the study or the researcher, then I may contact the **Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban, 4000; KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)**

RESEARCH METHOD	YES	NO
Audio-record my focus group discussion		

Signature of the learner \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>APPENDIX J</b> <b>REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM THE PARENTS OR GUARDIANS</b>
--

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is **Nowell Chidakwa**. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) specialising in Education Psychology. I am doing research for a study entitled “**An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**”). As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct research. I have identified you as one of my potential research participants to participate in the Focus Group Discussion and Discussion Meeting. Please be informed that I have sought in advance the necessary permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education; Masvingo Province; Chiredzi District and has been granted. This explored study is being ethically reviewed for approval by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. I therefore kindly seek your permission on your capacity as a parent/guardian to part of my research project.

### **1. Purpose of the study**

This research aims to explore how we can mitigate learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach.

### **2. Selection of participants**

The study focuses on one rural secondary school with the participants who will form a team including the headmaster, two teachers, four parents/guardians, ten learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities, one NGO representative, a social worker and a faith-based representative.

### **3. Voluntary participation and confidentiality**

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to decide today. You can think of it and tell me later what you decided. The data we will generate from the research will be kept confidential. Any information about you will have a pseudo name and a code on it in place of your real name.

### **4. Duration of the focus group discussion**

The focus group discussions (FGD) will take about an hour of your time twice per month. The duration of your participation, if you accept to participate and remain in the study, is expected to be three (3) to six (6) months. The above will take place outside school hour to avoid disturbance of the learning time.

## 5. Benefits and Incentives

There will not be any direct benefit for your child or for you, but your child's participation is likely to help me discover more about the effects of being a learner facing learner multiple vulnerabilities, mitigation measures to be taken and there might be some potential life skill benefits for him. Your child will not be paid for taking part in this research. I anticipate that the findings of this study will likely inform and empower learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities with different strategies to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities can be utilised in enhancing sustainable learning in a rural school context. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

RESEARCHER	SUPERVISOR
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155/ +27748456416( <b>WhatsApp</b> ) e-mail: <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 e-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you immensely.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

## DECLARATION

I ..... (Full name(s) of the authority) being the..... (Designation) do confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures of the study: **“An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.”**

I have been asked to give my consent for my child to participate in this research study which will involve her participating in the focus group discussion. It has been made clear to me that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study. I am also aware that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I may contact the researcher on cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 and email: [nowellchidakwa@gmail.com](mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com); the supervisor on cellphone: +27833799328 e-mail: [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za).

Furthermore, I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspects of the study or the researcher, then I may contact the **Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban, 4000; KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)**

RESEARCH METHOD	YES	NO
Audio-record my focus group discussion		

Name of parent or guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the parent or guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX K

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION (NGO)

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is **Chidakwa Nowell**; I am a PhD student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct a research. I have identified you as one of my potential research participants. Please be informed that I have sought in advance the necessary permission from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education; Provincial Education Director, Masvingo Province, District Schools Inspector, Chiredzi District and has been granted. This explored study is being ethically reviewed for approval by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. I, therefore, kindly seek your permission in your capacity as a **Non-Governmental Organisation** to have your member to play an advisory role and caring role to the affected learners in identifying all the assets relevant in their lives. He / She will be important because he/she will be taking a leading role in discussion meetings and focus group discussion meetings with participants in learner multiple vulnerabilities ecologies on how to mitigating the learner multiple vulnerabilities they face. The title of my study is: **An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**

The purpose of this study is to **explore** ways that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities to promote quality education for sustainability in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies (schools) through an asset-based approach. The targeted research participants are secondary school learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities in rural context. There is voluntary participation and participants can withdraw at any time without reprisal. Data will be generated through the use of discussion meetings, focus group discussions, participant observation and document analysis.

There will be no financial benefits that participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names and that of the school in the research report/thesis and conference presentations. Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part. The focus group discussions and discussion meetings shall be recorded to assist in concentration and participation in transcription of data generated. Any information given and discussed cannot be used against you, and it will be used for purposes of this research only.

I anticipate that the findings of this study will likely inform and empower learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities with different strategies to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities can be utilised in enhancing sustainable learning in a rural school context. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years. Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

RESEARCHER	SUPERVISOR
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 E-mail <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 E-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

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 Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
 Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you immensely.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

# HOPE TARIRO TRUST



MA 333/03  
263763 Robert Mugabe Way  
P.O.Box 1546  
Masvingo  
Tel.263-39-264606/264534/  
266332/ fax 266335  
Mobile: 0773301701/0772406644  
Email:hopetarirotrust@yahoo.co.uk

HOPE TARIRO TRUST  
MA 333 / 03  
P.O. BOX 1546  
MASVINGO  
DATE: 15/04/19

15 April 2019

Nowell Chidakwa  
Muhlangeni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

**RE: COMMITTING TO VOLUNTARILY TAKE PART IN YOUR RESEARCH STUDY**

Reference is made to your application for us to be part of the participants, we voluntarily consent to be part of the research participants on the research study title: .

**"An asset-based approach to investigating learners multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean learning ecologies."**

We have received, read and understood the written information about the study.

Yours faithfully

PP P Shonge  
Administrator

*"Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless, maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed" Psalm 82 vs. 3-4*

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## APPENDIX L

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM THE FAITH-BASED ORGANISATION

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is **Chidakwa Nowell**; I am a PhD student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct a research. I have identified you as one of my potential research participants. Please be informed that I have sought in advance the necessary permission from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education; Provincial Education Director, Masvingo Province, District Schools Inspector, Chiredzi District and has been granted. This explored study is being ethically reviewed for approval by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. I, therefore, kindly seek your permission in your capacity as a **Faith-Based Organisation (local church pastor)** to be included as a participant so that he/she assists in spiritual guidance and counselling of learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities. He / She will be also important because he/she will be taking a leading role in discussion meetings and focus group discussion meetings with participants in learner multiple vulnerabilities ecologies on how to mitigating the learner multiple vulnerabilities they face. The title of my study is: **An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**

The purpose of this study is to **explore** ways that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities to promote quality education for sustainability in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies (schools) through an asset-based approach. The targeted research participants are secondary school learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities in rural context. There is voluntary participation and participants can withdraw at any time without reprisal. Data will be generated through the use of discussion meetings, focus group discussions, participant observation and document analysis.

There will be no financial benefits that participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names and that of the school in the research report/thesis and conference presentations. Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part. The focus group discussions and discussion meetings shall be recorded to assist in concentration and participation in transcription of data generated. Any information given and discussed cannot be used against you, and it will be used for purposes of this research only.

I anticipate that the findings of this study will likely inform and empower learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities with different strategies to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities can be utilised in enhancing sustainable learning in a rural school context. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years. Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

RESEARCHER	SUPERVISOR
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 E-mail <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 E-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

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 Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
 Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you immensely.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

**DECLARATION**

I RUSOCHA LOYEMORE (Full name(s) of the authority) being the MINISTER OF RELIGION (Designation) do confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures of the study: "An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies."

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part for the provision of psychosocial support services to the participants. I declare that my services in this study are entirely voluntary and that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project any time should I so desire.

I am also aware that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I may contact the researcher on cell:0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 and email: [nowelichidakwa@gmail.com](mailto:nowelichidakwa@gmail.com); the supervisor on: cellphone: +27833799328 e-mail: [hialeled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hialeled@ukzn.ac.za).

I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspects of the study or the researcher, then I may contact the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban, 4000 ; KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Signature of the local church pastor... [Signature] Date: 15/04/19

Signature of Witness: ..... Date: .....



## APPENDIX M

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM THE SOCIAL WORKER

Muhlanguleni Primary School  
Private Bag 7033  
Chiredzi

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is **Chidakwa Nowell**; I am a PhD student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct a research. I have identified you as one of my potential research participants. Please be informed that I have sought in advance the necessary permission from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education; Provincial Education Director, Masvingo Province, District Schools Inspector, Chiredzi District and has been granted. This explored study is being ethically reviewed for approval by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. I, therefore, kindly seek your permission in your capacity as a **Social Worker** to be available for debriefing of the participants should there be a need. I suspect that because of the nature and sensitivity nature some participants might be affected. In that sense, I would kindly require you to be on standby during and after the generation process to safeguard the well-being of learners. The title of my study is: **An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**

The purpose of this study is to **explore** ways that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities to promote quality education for sustainability in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies (schools) through an asset-based approach. The targeted research participants are secondary school learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities in rural context. There is voluntary participation and participants can withdraw at any time without reprisal. Data will be generated through the use of discussion meetings, focus group discussions, participant observation and document analysis.

There will be no financial benefits that participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names and that of the school in the research report/thesis and conference presentations. Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part. The focus group discussions and discussion meetings shall be recorded to assist in concentration and participation in transcription of data generated. Any information given and discussed cannot be used against you, and it will be used for purposes of this research only.

I anticipate that the findings of this study will likely inform and empower learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities with different strategies to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities can be utilised in enhancing sustainable learning in a rural school context. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me and my supervisor at the following contact details:

<b>RESEARCHER</b>	<b>SUPERVISOR</b>
Mr Chidakwa Nowell Cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 E-mail <a href="mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com">nowellchidakwa@gmail.com</a>	Prof Dipane J. Hlalele Office tell: +27312603858 Cell: +27833799328 E-mail: <a href="mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za">hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za</a>

You can also contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

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Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you immensely.

Yours sincerely

Chidakwa Nowell

## DECLARATION

I ..... (Full name(s) of the authority) being the..... (Designation) do confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures of the study: **“An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.”**

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part for the provision of psychosocial support services to the participants. I declare that my services in this study are entirely voluntary and that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project any time should I so desire.

I am also aware that if I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I may contact the researcher on cell: 0772942155/0719942155/0732942155 and email: [nowellchidakwa@gmail.com](mailto:nowellchidakwa@gmail.com); the supervisor on cellphone: +27833799328 e-mail: [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za).

Furthermore, I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspects of the study or the researcher, then I may contact the **Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban, 4000 ; KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)**

RESEARCH METHOD	YES	NO
Audio-record my focus group discussion		

Signature of the social worker: ..... Date: .....

Signature of witness: ..... Date: .....

<b>APPENDIX N</b> <b>DISCUSSION MEETING(S) SCHEDULE FOR LEARNER PARTICIPANTS</b>
---

Welcome remarks by the researcher as the facilitator. The session will be relaxed. A comfortable setting and sitting round in a circle will help to establish the right atmosphere. This will also help us to have eye contact with each other. The session will last for not more than one hour. Disagreements within the members of the group could be used to encourage the participants to explain their point of views, and to clarify why they think that way.

**KNOWING EACH OTHER, EXPLAINING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR) AND LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES**

- a. Ground rules:
- b. Only one person talks through the facilitator.
- c. Confidentiality is assured.
- d. No wrong or right answer to any question answered, let's give ideas experiences and opinions that are valuable to all of us.
- e. Any language of your choice is allowed to be used during the session.
- f. Responses will be recorded and also notes taken by the chosen assistant researchers.
- g. The researcher will listen to all sides of an issue, both the positive and the negative.
- h. What is Participatory Action Research?
- i. Characteristics and stages of PAR.
- j. Suggestions on how to conduct FGDs.
- k. Signing of consent forms
- l. Understanding the meaning of learner multiple vulnerabilities

In trying to explain learner multiple vulnerabilities, the facilitator explained himself as follows;

**Aims and objectives that will guide the researcher**

All the participants will be informed of the purpose of the study and what is expected of them in the study since the letters had invited them to constitute the research team.

**Major objective**

To explore ways that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach.

**Sub-objectives**

1. To conduct a situational analysis with a view to understanding current learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
2. To map assets that may be used to mitigate learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.

3. To identify and discuss circumstances under which the identified assets may be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
4. To anticipate threats that may hinder an asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.
5. To suggest how we can mitigate against learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies through an asset-based approach.

This is where I will give, read and have them sign consent forms for all selected participants that they voluntary consent to be participants in this study.

<b>APPENDIX O</b> <b>FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SCHEDULE FOR PARTICIPANTS</b>
--

**Welcome remarks by the researcher as the facilitator:**

The session will be relaxed and will be done in phases. A comfortable setting and sitting round in a circle will help to establish the right atmosphere. This will also help us to have eye contact with each other. The session will last for not more than one hour. Disagreements within the members of the group could be used to encourage the participants to explain their point of views, and to clarify why they think that way.

**Study topic: “An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies”**

We shall be guided by four topics, each carrying probing questions, guidelines and activities.

**PHASE 1 – Objective 1 (Problem identification)**

**1. UNDERSTANDING LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES AND THEIR EFFECTS**

**a. Learner multiple vulnerabilities**

- a. Are there any vulnerable learners at your school? May you make a list of vulnerabilities they face?
- b. What do you think are the causes of these problems listed above? May you explain your answer?

**b. What are the key challenges of learner multiple vulnerabilities on learners in;**

- i. Adjusting to and coping with teaching and learning demands (teaching and learning materials needed, and participation in classes)?
- ii. Relationship with others (peers, teachers and administrative personnel)?
- iii. Home responsibilities and school context responsibilities?
- iv. Topics related to HIV and AIDS, sexual abuse and poverty that induce anxiety?
- v. Any other factors or issues (e.g. issues of power, discrimination, empowerment, transformation)?
- vi. Do you know of any learner in this school facing learner multiple vulnerabilities? How do they react to learner multiple vulnerabilities they face? Do you see themselves as different from others? If so, how? Please explain.
- vii. What help is currently being given to such learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities?

**c. Reflections on the FGD**

All participants are put together in DM for verbal reflections on;

- i. What are the pros and cons of the discussed issues in the above PHASE?

**PHASE 2 – Objective 2 (Planning-geographical boundaries)**

**2. APPROACHES TO ASSET MAPPING AND IDENTIFICATION**

**a. Asset mapping**

- i. What resources/assets are there within the community that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities?
- ii. Of the listed assets/resources you above can identify the:
  - Human/Intangible assets** in your local community
  - Material/Tangible assets** in your local community
- b. **Critical asset identification to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities** (Building a comprehension plan)
  - i. Of the **assets identified**, which ones are effective in mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities? May you explain your answer?
- c. **Reflections on the FGD**

All participants are put together in DM for verbal reflections on;

  - i. What are the pros and cons of the discussed issues in the above PHASE?

**PHASE 3 – Objective 3 (Planning-SWOC and Inventory analysis)**

**3. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH CAN BE UTILISED**

**a. Environment analysis**

- i. Are there any **situations that may hinder** an asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities?
- ii. How best can we **avoid situations** (above 4(i)) that may hinder an asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities?

**b. Reflections on the FGD**

All participants are put together in DM for verbal reflections on;

- i. What are the pros and cons of the discussed issues in the above PHASE?

**PHASE 4 – Objective 4 (Reflection)**

**4. LESSENING THREATS (If any) THAT MAY HINDER ASSET-BASED APPROACH UTILISATION**

All participants are put together in DM for verbal reflections on (a) the potential benefits of these identified solutions in learners' lives, (b) How we can effectively use the identified assets to effectively lessen learner multiple vulnerabilities in rural school context, (c) How can we **utilise** these assets **to effectively alleviate** learner multiple vulnerabilities. These are guided by the following questions;

**Using identified solutions (assets) to mitigate learner multiple vulnerabilities**

- a. What are the **potential benefits if any**, of using the assets identified in **PHASE 2**?
- b. Can you **link assets and opportunities/benefits** to learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities and;
- c. How **effective** is the asset-based approach to mitigating multiple vulnerabilities?
- d. How best can we **reflect** and **communicate** to others about the assets we can utilise to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities and their **benefits**?

**PHASE 5 – Objective 5 (Action- Measuring and reflecting on the available assets)**

**5. MITIGATION AGAINST LEARNER MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES USING AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH**

**a. Utilising the available assets into action**

- i. How best can we mobilise and utilise the identified assets in **PHASE 4** to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in rural learning ecologies?
- ii. How best can we set out courses of action conducive for identified assets not to feel forced through preconceived ideas and plans?
- iii. What favourable environment is conducive for the asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities can be created?

**b. Reflections on the FGD**

All participants are put together in DM for verbal reflections on;

- i. What are the pros and cons of the discussed issues in the above PHASE?

**APPENDIX P**  
**PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION GUIDE**

The researcher will participate in DM and FGD and will be observing the following during and after the DM and FGDs

1. How participants react if
  - i. Participants are asked about **learner multiple vulnerabilities** in DM and FGDs.
  - ii. **Key challenges of learner multiple vulnerabilities** are discussed within FGDs.
  - iii. All participants are put together in DM for **verbal reflections**.
2. How learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities socialise with others during and after FGDs
  - i. Do they take an **active role** or they are **passive** in discussing matters in FGD?
  - ii. Reactions after **asset mapping and critical asset identification** to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities.
3. Having discussed the **utilisation of the available assets 2(i) into action**, what behaviour do participants portray in relation to learner multiple vulnerabilities faced?
4. Their feelings after **discovering** the potential benefits of **asset-based approach** the identified to multiple vulnerabilities faced in learners' lives
5. Do participants feel **ownership, empowered and transformed** during and after their participation in the study?

<b>APPENDIX Q</b> <b>DOCUMENT ANALYSIS SCHEDULE</b>
--

The documents that will be analysed will not be older than two years and will include:

1. Daily registers to check the patterns of coming to school of learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities
2. Learners' progress reports (Individual progress record books, end of term reports)
3. OVCs record books (school documents with lists of learners facing multiple vulnerabilities).

Revisiting the documents in place was important as a starting point to see what had been done and what needs to be in future. This information will be triangulated with information from FGD, DM and PO to fill in the missing gap and find meaning thus improving the trustworthiness of the findings.

**APPENDIX R  
RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS**

**Researcher**

Mr Chidakwa Nowell  
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+27748456416(**WhatsApp**)  
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**Supervisor**

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Date:

**RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY**

Dear Prospective Participant: .....

Please accept my request for your assistance in conducting this research study titled: **An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies**

The purpose of this study is to **explore** ways that can be used to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities to promote quality education for sustainability in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies (schools) through an asset-based approach. The targeted research participants are secondary school learners facing learner multiple vulnerabilities in rural context. There is voluntary participation and participants can withdraw at any time without reprisal. Data will be generated through the use of discussion meetings, focus group discussions, participant observation and document analysis.

There will be no financial benefits that participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names and that of the school in the research report/thesis and conference presentations. Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part. The focus group discussions and discussion meetings shall be recorded to assist in concentration and participation in transcription of data generated. Any information given and discussed cannot be used against you, and it will be used for purposes of this research only.

Your participation will add great value to this study and assist in identifying better ways to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities to promote quality education in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies. Please tick in the following box.

<b>AGREEMENT BY PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I agree to take part in the research study		

Yours thankfully

Chidakwa Nowell

**APPENDIX S**  
**LANGUAGE EDITOR LETTER/CERTIFICATE**

Christine Davis  
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Roosevelt Park  
Tel: 0716850170  
Email: christinem4c@gmail.com

Chidakwa Nowell  
Student No. 217080991  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Durban  
South Africa  
3610

29 January 2020

To whom it may concern

**Re: Thesis: An asset-based approach to mitigating learner multiple vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies.**

This letter serves to confirm that I edited Chidakwa Nowell's (Student No. 217080991) thesis before submission.

No content was added and little was changed by me during the process. Changes were limited to spelling and grammar, while content changes were identified and submitted to Mr. Nowell for review.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any further questions.



Christine Davis

**APPENDIX T  
TURNITIN REPORT**

Multiple vulnerabilities

ORIGINALITY REPORT

<b>2%</b> SIMILARITY INDEX	<b>1%</b> INTERNET SOURCES	<b>0%</b> PUBLICATIONS	<b>2%</b> STUDENT PAPERS
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