CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING THIS RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 Introduction

With the adventure of this thesis I begin the journey into the second half of my life and bring to an end the formal aspects of my professional education. It is an exciting personal crossing into the unknown blown on by the sails of my convictions, beliefs and thirty five years of experience on the difficult oceans of educational reality in South Africa. It is an attempt to take what I have seen, done, learnt and understood over this time and in a planful way apply it all to a situation in the country which I believe is becoming more and more relevant and worrying. It is also an opportunity to make the next part of my life productive and more importantly significant. This study will allow me the privilege of working from the fire of my passion for teaching and caring for children and not merely from the damp mantle of need and necessity. It will give me meaningful purpose, considerable pleasure and hopefully provide some solutions to the growing problem posed by street children in our country. It is a journey I look forward to.

1.2 Reasons and purpose of this study

1.2.1 Personal reasons:

At the age of fifty five I bought and read a book called *Half Time* by Bob Buford (Buford, 1994). The gentle whisper of discontent that I had been hearing deep within myself for some time but had not listened or heeded became a deafening roar as I turned the fascinating pages and realised that I was not alone with this feeling. During the first half of my life I had done all the getting, gaining, learning and earning. I had completed a successful and satisfying career in formal education, I had enjoyed over ten fulfilling years working for an NGO in the daunting world of community development, I had studied until Masters level and been through what a close friend cheerfully called the whole "domestic catastrophe" of family, house mortgage, blocked plumbing, teenagers, pets and divorce. I was financially comfortable, secure now in my relationships but exhausted physically, psychologically and emotionally due to a job which for five years had taken me into the deep rural areas of the Northern Province to work with the Tsonga people for three weeks each month. I still found my work stimulating but could not stop the little voice inside challenging me with difficult questions: Is this as good as it gets? Who are

you really after all this time? What has been the purpose of all your effort? What are you going to do to provide meaning and structure to your daily activities and relationships in the afternoon of your life?

And so I listened to the advice of the book, resigned my position, took Half Time for a year and a half, travelled widely, reflected and waited patiently.

I wanted the second half to involve living beyond the now. I wanted to release the creativity and latent energy I knew I possessed and I wanted to use my talents, gifts and what I had gained from all my experience in the service of others. I was prepared to wrestle with who I was and I was willing to risk the unknown as long as it met with what had emerged in my heart during my time away. While contemplating my second half I had come to the conclusion that the one thing in the "black box" of the emerging vision for myself was to teach - not adults but children. It was the single thing that made me soar, took me away from everything else without effort, made time evaporate like due at sunrise and which made me feel like I was needed by myself and others. It gave me a sense of purpose and belonging, it lifted my spirit, I felt alive. But how was I to join all this with meaningful service to others? Where could this dream and passion be brought to fruition with significance? I waited and time passed.

Then one arbitrary day I received a wonderful phone call out of the mists of the unexpected. It was the promoter of Magdel, my wife's doctorate . Would I consider doing a PhD alongside her - mine in education hers in psychology? A suitable area of investigation for us both could be that of street children - a growing area of need in South Africa. Perhaps we could play a part in the healing of their stories of hurt. I knew nothing of street children other than the fact that I had seen them as waifs waving parking "lappies" and sniffing glue surreptitiously from hidden plastic bottles in the centre of Pretoria and on the beachfront of Durban. Then I caught my breath. In a flash it was there - the focus of my second half - the purpose - the meaning - the service - the journey. I accepted.

1.2.2 Educational reasons

1.2.2.1 Early influences

The first twenty-two years of my professional involvement in education was spent in white

schools under the Cape Education Department in the East London area. Although I held a number of promotion posts, including that of principal of a small rural primary school, the bulk of my time was spent in the educational trenches of the classroom. While my teaching experience was mainly gained in the senior primary classes, the type of schools in which I taught varied a great deal. My first eight years were spent at a co-educational, parallel medium school; the next three at a multi-grade, dual medium, small country school; the last eleven years at a large, long standing, traditional, upper socio-economic, government school for boys.

What was fortunate for me in all three of these situations was the fact that at no point did I consciously feel that my freedom to experiment with and apply my own teaching ideas was being restricted by the educational system, the institution I was in, or by my superiors. In the first situation the school was new, the headmaster young, progressive, enthusiastic and keen to give me my head and let me develop my potential independently. In the second I was the headmaster and so could introduce my own ideas and in the third as the deputy principal it was expected of me to provide educational leadership, innovation and vision.

It was during these years, through the hard experience of day to day teaching, the unrelenting reality and complexity of a classroom of children and the superimposed dynamics of school life, that I started to develop a philosophy on which to base my classroom practice. Within the first year of teaching I realised that the three years I had spent at Teachers Training College had been irrelevant, outdated and clouded by the conservative educational philosophy prevalent at the time. Gradually, as I gained confidence in the classroom, I started to experiment with alternative teaching and learning methods and began to introduce my own classroom innovations. In the early years these innovations were motivated not by outside influences but by unsystematic and informal self-reflection and gut feelings with regard to what I should do to make learning more meaningful and fun for children. These innovations were driven more by my youth and enthusiasm than by a conscious effort to improve my teaching or the learning of the children.

My method consisted of trial and error. If a new idea worked and I could see that it had a positive effect on the children, I kept it. If not, it was discarded. There was no planned attempt to analyse the classroom situation, design a course of action, implement it and then reflect on its effect. The process was not a conscious and systematic one but rather a gradual discovery

through a series of haphazard experiments, of educational principles that worked for me.

As an example of the above process I would like to mention the following innovation. During the second year of my teaching I decided to introduce a series of outdoor experiences to my class. These outings included some strenuous hikes, field studies and camping out. They were not planned systematically, introduced consciously to achieve specific aims or because I had analysed what the pupils needed, but purely because I enjoyed the outdoors and thought that it would be a good idea. However, after a number of these outings it became evident that when I arrived back in the classroom the quality of my relationship with the pupils had improved dramatically. The time we had spent together informally, the hardships we had shared and the fun and the laughter had spilt over into the classroom. The pupils had seen the human side of me and I had experienced different aspects of them. It was this deeper and mutual understanding of each other which I believed made the difference in the formal classroom setting. I had not deliberately introduced the outdoor programme to improve my relationships with the pupils but that had been the result. I therefore made the outdoor programme part of the curriculum each year.

It was during one of these outdoor activities which I had combined with a friend who was teaching at a nearby school, that I was given my first real lesson in a child centred approach to teaching. As I observed my friend interact with both his pupils and mine on the hike I was struck by how at ease he was with them, how completely he gave them his attention and how warmly they responded to him. He asked them deep questions and listened to their answers intently and without interruption. I asked him about what I had noticed. He thought for some while and said: "I take children seriously. When I am with them I am with them with my whole self. I believe they have worthwhile things to say. They seem to respond well to my genuine interest in their thoughts. Their individuality and trust is precious." Although at the time I did not realise it this was the first and probably the most important demonstration and lesson I had received on the psychological and emotional side of teaching and learning. I realised that the children connected to him not so much because of what he said but for what he was and did - and there was an accordance between the two. The personality and emotional connection with the children by the teacher was as important if not more so than the teaching. It was only later that I came to know this as Rogers'(1969) positive regard, empathy and congruence.

Gradually, other basic principles grew out of these informal experiments. For example, the pupils seemed to do better on achievement tests if they understood the content rather than having just memorised it. Children generated excellent ideas if they were encouraged and given the opportunity to express them. Pupils seemed to enjoy working together if the tasks were challenging, meaningful, relevant and clear. Concepts seemed to be better understood if lessons began with concrete, practical examples to which pupils could relate. Discipline became much less of a problem when the students were interested, fascinated, meaningfully occupied and participated in the construction of the rules governing it. Varying the teaching style kept pupils interested and motivated. At no point did I capture these principles formally but they became the unwritten guidelines which governed my classroom practice.

As a primary school teacher I was required, more often than not in the early part of my career, to teach a wide range of subjects. This was exacerbated when I became principal at a small rural school with only a staff of three. My group was the dual medium, combined standard three, four and five class. However, even though necessity had forced me to teach almost all the primary school subjects, a preference for the teaching of Mathematics and General Science had developed. On becoming Deputy Principal of an all boys' school where a limited amount of subject specialization occurred, I was able to extend and concentrate this interest and devote almost all of my teaching to these two subjects.

At this point in my career my interest in education and the focal point of my attention lay within the walls of my classroom. I was concerned with the practical task of teaching the thirty-five or so pupils in my class. My interest in learning was insular and limited to my closed classroom environment. Even later when I held promotion positions and where much of my time and effort was taken up with broader school issues, teaching and helping children to learn was always of primary importance for me.

I was also comfortable and secure working in white schools, living in a white suburb and, broadly speaking, unaware of what was happening around me both socially and politically in the rest of the Republic of South Africa.

1.2.2.2 Further influences

With the advent of the Soweto Riots in 1976, the gradual escalation of violence, a personal friendship I had developed with a Xhosa family through sport and a Bachelor of Education degree I had started at Rhodes University, I was gradually exposed to wider perspectives. A deeper awareness of social, political and educational issues developed within me.

Firstly, I read more widely for my degree and was pleased to discover that my personal and informal discoveries with regard to teaching practice had their roots firmly set in existing educational theory. It was my introduction to the theories of Carl Rogers (1983) through his book *Freedom to Learn for the 80's,* that I began to discover and understand why many of my innovations were proving to be successful. For the first time I deliberately decided to interact with my pupils according to a set of basic principles, purposefully observe the effect and consciously reflect on the process and outcome. The six principles I used were:

- Children are naturally curious. Use their curiosity.
- Children learn best when they have a positive regard for the teacher and are not afraid.
- Children learn best by doing.
- Children learn best when they take responsibility for their own learning.
- Children learn best what they perceive as being relevant for themselves.
- Learning which involves the feelings as well as the intellect is the most lasting.

From my own subjective observations of the pupils, from feedback of peer teachers and from many interviews with parents, it became clear that applying the above principles in a conscious and ongoing manner appeared to be successful with the kind of children I was teaching. I also noticed that I had unconsciously listened to my friend's views on interacting with children. I was far more relaxed and myself with the students, there was a keenness from them to be in my class each year and the feedback from the adjacent high school about them when they moved there was very positive. What was even more exciting than the effectiveness of the approach was that I had now planned it, tested it and understood why it worked.

Despite the school having the reputation of being progressive in terms of educational innovation, my teaching style seemed very different to the majority of the teachers around me. They were inquisitive, interested and some even excited about what I was doing but very few were prepared

to experiment with some of the ideas. It seemed that good personal ideas were not enough. Although I had presented my ideas on a number of occasions at the East London Teachers' Centre and at Rhodes University, I felt the need to do so on a wider scale.

Secondly, through my contact with a Xhosa family I became aware that all education in South Africa did not take place in the privileged environment of my own experience. There were schools out there with huge teacher-pupil ratios, with little or no facilities or equipment and with very volatile and angry students. Thirdly, I realized that education could, had been and still was being used for political ends. I was rudely awakened. It dawned on me that there was a lot more involved in education than just teaching. Education had definite, direct and widespread political and social implications.

1.2.2.3 The influence of the Centre for Community Development

It was at this point, the beginning of 1988, that I joined the Centre for Cognitive Development (CCD). This non-governmental organisation had been started at the end of 1986 by Professor G.N. Naude. In the Centre's publication *Empowering learners through cognition* (1992, p. 3) she states the following:

> "My dream is for an equal, just system that develops people into confident, assertive, critical thinkers who feel good about themselves and can live together in harmony, I believe that education has a vital role to play in achieving this."

I met Professor Naude in 1987, listened to her describing her dream, strongly identified with it, resigned my position as Deputy Principal, left my comfort zone and joined the Centre the following year. I felt that the practical ideas I was using in my teaching were attempting to achieve these very aims and believed that the organization could provide the opportunity I was looking for to share my beliefs and ideas on a wider scale.

When I arrived in the former Transvaal the Centre was running in-service educator training with an emphasis on cognitive development in the classroom. It was during my time with the Centre that I was truly exposed to the harsh realities and brutal effects of South African apartheid on education and on social and private lives. Over the next twelve years I visited Attridgeville, Mamelodi, Soweto, the Odi, Mabopane, Tlhabane areas in the former Bophuthutswana, Umlazi

near Durban, Eersterust, Katlehong, the rural Grabouw area in the Western Cape, Khayalitshe, Eldorado Park, Reiger Park, the far Northern Province and I discovered what the living and educational conditions in these townships and deep rural areas was like. I became aware of the problems that teachers experienced when having 100 or more pupils in a class. I witnessed how poor the facilities were in most schools and how badly equipped they were. I worked in schools in the Tzaneen district with no water, no electricity, furniture or text books. I saw how difficult it was for teachers to teach through a second and sometimes a third language. I saw pupils trying to learn in, what was to them, almost a foreign language. I noticed teachers having, more and more, to deal with pupils' militancy and a breakdown in school discipline. I observed teaching and learning cultures fade. The broader, deeper and crucial issues surrounding education in the Republic of South Africa were brought home to me rudely and quickly.

The classrooms and school dynamics I observed over the years whether in the Western Cape, Gauteng, the North West Province, in the Durban area or especially during my last five years when involved with whole school development in the deep rural areas of the Northern Province, made me realise that much of South African education was based on conservative and authoritarian values. The evidence and emphasis in the majority of classrooms that I visited was on the rewarding of conformity, authoritarian teaching, the memorization of facts with little or no concern for thinking, insight or transfer of knowledge, passive pupils, transmission teaching methods and funless lessons. The difference between the schools seemed to lie mainly in the provision of facilities and the degrees of affluence or poverty. The similarity, I noticed, lay in the way the pupils were being taught. I seldom observed moments of empathy, of mutual warmth, of acceptance and rarely encountered a classroom atmosphere, spirit and teacher-child relationship which was enthusiastic, warm and incisive. The arrival of OBE and curriculum 2001 with all its fanfare and good intentions improved nothing. In fact conditions in the classrooms deteriorated even further as confusion, lack of structure and direction led to apathy and licence. I saw very little evidence in the schools that I visited of the teaching and learning principles in which I believed.

As South African society enters this ongoing time of rebuilding and restructuring a future for itself based on democratic values and practices it will need citizens who have a positive self-worth, who have the ability to think critically and who have the cognitive ability and inner

resolve to make the decisions needed to solve the daunting problems which face us. Quality education, which develops these attributes in its users, will be essential if this future is to be realised. It is the right of all children, including street children to this education.

One of the core elements of the provision of quality education is the teacher. It was the Centre's belief at this time that by using the teacher as a change agent it could achieve its mission statement (CCD, 1996, p. 40):

> "The CCD seeks to transform autocratic values and processes to democratic alternatives. This will be achieved through interventions which empower educators to reflect critically on their educational practices and their relationships with others. We encourage the development of skilled, responsible, confident, critical and creative learners through cognitive development and the fostering of individual worth."

In so doing the Centre believed it could make a positive contribution towards quality education and the future of the country.

Having joined the Centre almost at its inception, I was involved from the beginning in the extensive staff workshops used to plan, design and implement its programmes. The CCD's programmes focusses on two areas. Firstly, the Personal Empowerment process which reaffirms the teacher's moral purpose. This purpose being the belief that the teacher can make a difference both within the classroom as well as within the system that is essentially disempowering. It dealt with the psychological, emotional and power issues in the classroom. It was designed to motivate teachers to look for ways of achieving this moral purpose. The Teacher Empowerment process, which occurs in the context of school subjects, is aimed firstly at nurturing deliberate strategies to teach for thinking by using a cognitive style of teaching. This style uses techniques such as mediated learning, cooperative learning and getting pupils to language for their understanding. Secondly, it encourages teachers to teach about thinking by explicitly developing cognitive skills and processes which are embedded in the various school subjects. The emphasis of the programmes therefore lies on the implicit and explicit use of generic teaching and learning strategies to develop thinking in the classroom.

Educators have for a long time called for the school to take more responsibility for the total development of the child (Naude & Bodibe, 1988). School education should go beyond teaching basic content but must also cultivate and promote the psycho-social emotional development of the child as well (Dewey, 1956). The argument advancing this belief is that intellectual development cannot be separated from psychosocial-emotional development. Kaplan (1959) is of the opinion that the school should assist strongly in improving their psychological adjustment. Kaplan also states clearly that schools must:

"educate for mental health so that youngsters will learn to work together in wholesome and satisfying ways and develop some capacity to live with themselves and other people as mature, responsible citizens" (Kaplan, 1959 p.13).

If this is true for children who come from stable families and who attend mainstream schools how much more so is it true for children who have experienced deep personal trauma and have spent time surviving on the streets. The programme of the CCD therefore also focusses on the crucial role that emotional and psychological mediation plays in developing a more holistic educational approach.

During the first nine years that I was with the CCD my main contribution was in the development and implementation of the Teacher Empowerment part of the CCD's model and programme in general, and the teaching of Science and Mathematics in the Primary School in particular. Through my interaction with the staff at the Centre and the contact I had with a great many teachers from a wide range of different educational levels and contexts, much of my original thinking with regard to the teaching and learning was not only confirmed, but expanded and grew. During this time at the CCD a model for the teaching of all subjects in the Primary school was developed.   This model is one of the inspirations behind this research project.

As mentioned before during my time at the CCD my original beliefs, ideas and practices evolved, were refined and supplemented from a wide range of sources and people. Although my visits to classrooms to implement and test these ideas took place over a wide range of contexts, they were always of short duration and from an "outside" perspective. They were not from within a school or over an extended period of time because of the INSET delivery model that the

CCD used. In 1994 the time was right for me to go back into the classroom and put aspects, because of time restraints, of the teaching model to the acid test of reality and to choose a context which would have meaning and relevance to myself, the CCD, and perhaps a wider audience.

In 1994 therefore I undertook to do a Master's degree study to test the applicability of this cognitive teaching style in the teaching of physical science themes to standard five pupils in a black farm school. I became a teacher in this school for four months. The teaching methodology was very well received by both the school and pupils and proved to be successful. It was from this experience that I realised that not only was the approach very compatible with the newly introduced Outcomes Based Education system but that my basic psychological and cognitive teaching and learning tenets were suitable and desirable in the less privileged classroom. I also began to wonder what part my own personality had played in the success of the implementation.

The above is a summary of the best, I believe that came out of the professional side of the first part of my life.

The personal history which I have related up to this point provided a strong motivation for me to undertake this research during the second half of my life. I realised that my wide experience and the practical knowledge I had to draw on could be extremely useful in addressing the problem of ex-street children being reintegrated into schooling in the best possible way. However if I was to be involved with street children I realized that I would first have to get to know them well. Before one can hope to be involved with street children and work successfully with them in the classroom it is important to have an in depth understanding of their world and circumstances and to know and understand them well. As a beginning I decided to consult the available literature on the subject. In the following section I will therefore deal with the street child phenomenon from an international, African and South African perspective. It will also be concerned with the concept of childhood, the rights of children in general, the reasons and causes of children being on the streets and the life style they live.

1.3 Street children as a world phenomenon

The emergence of the growing number of street children throughout the world and especially in developing countries such as South Africa is without a doubt a problem which will have to

be addressed, not only by the international community and the authorities of individual countries, but also by a wider range of social institutions (Schurink, 1995; Richter, 1990). Glauser (1990) sees the concept of street children as a general expression to describe a group of children who have a distinctive relationship to the street. In all definitions of street children, including the one above, one needs to look into the assumptions underlying them. Therefore the concepts of family, home, child and street need to be unpacked. In much of the literature these notions are seen from a first world and northern hemisphere perspective. This international view therefore of childhood is that "the nuclear family is perceived to be the natural organization of humans, while any other structures are labelled pathological. Most psychological and other professional literature supports this view" (Tyler F.B; Tyler S.L; Tomasello A & Connoly M.R. 1992, p. 209). However children can be looked after and receive satisfactory care from a much wider range of blood relations and other significant people than just biological parents. These could for example include uncles and aunts, step parents, grandparents, cousins and other committed caring adults. The concept of home as being a private, secure and often spacious dwelling for play, culture and family life is biassed towards the northern and often affluent concept of home life. This excludes the vast numbers of the poor whose family life and homes exist in slums, squatter camps and townships. Here overcrowding forces play, cultural activities and often family life into the streets (Ennew, 1994). Children playing in streets here cannot be seen as "street children." Ennew (1994 p. 19) therefore sees them as "not just a child on any street but a child out of place."

The convention on the Rights of the Child which was adopted by the United Nations in 1989 defines a child as being under the age of 18 years (In Ennew, 1994). This same definition is used in the Children's Charter of South Africa drawn up at the International Children's Summit held in 1992 (1992, www.anc.org.za).

1.3.1 Who are street children?

Throughout the world it is a common sight to see children who have been compelled to resort to the streets in an attempt to solve social problems which have arisen around them or have been thrust onto them. In 1983 Inter-Non-Governmental Organization (Inter-NGO) in Switzerland defined street children as follows:

"A street child or street youth is any girl or boy who has reached adulthood, for whom

the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults " (in Schurink, 1995 p.5).

The United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (1988) differentiates between three categories of street children:

- Children on the street.

  Although these children spend much of their time working on the streets they still continue to retain fairly close and regular attachments to their families and their communities. Their "work" on the streets augments the finances of the family. 60% of all street children are made up of this group (Schurink, 1995).

- Children of the street.

  The purpose of resorting to the streets for these children is the quest for food, shelter and friendship. They regard the street as their home and have weak relationships with their families. 30% of all street children are made up of this group (Schurink, 1995).

- Abandoned children.

  These children for whatever reason, forced away or orphaned, have severed all connection with their blood relations and have to fend completely for themselves.

UNICEF (1988) covers all categories of these street children with the term "Children in especially difficult conditions". Within this label are four elements. First, the place of congregation is the street. Second, much time is spent on the street. Third, there is a low level of living and working conditions. Forth, protection is lacking.

Richter (1988a p.12) defines street children as "those who have abandoned (or have been abandoned by) their families, schools and immediate communities, before they are sixteen years of age , and drifted into a nomadic street life."

Agrawal (1999, p. 21) summarises the essence of all these definitions in the following.

"A street child is one who:

- lives on the street, waste land, public place most of the time;
- works in the street on jobs of low status and low income;
- lives in the exposed conditions of the street;
- has no or little parental or other social protection and supervision;
- has either continuous, intermittent or no family contact at all;
- is vulnerable to the hazards of urbanization and urban living conditions."

1.3.2 How many street children are there?

1.3.2.1 Internationally

Because of the fact that no one can agree on the definition of street children the available estimations of their numbers throughout the world vary considerably and are unreliable and unverifiable (Agrawal, 1999). Neither UNICEF nor the ILO are able to provide figures for working children throughout the world which include street children (Ennew, 1994). Tacon (1987) for instance estimated the number of street children who spent most of their time on the streets, although they did have families, as being in the region of 100 million. Ennew's study of 1986 (Agrawal, 1999) estimates the number of street children as being about 24 million - 8 million living permanently on the streets, 8 million permanently cut off from their families and another 8 million having been abandoned. The majority of the world's street children are to be found in developing countries and in Asia, Africa and Latin America in particular (Agrawal, 1999).

1.3.2.2 In Latin America

In 1993 there were an estimated 170 million people living in absolute poverty in Latin America. Of these 75 million were children up to the age of fifteen. The circumstances of street children in this part of the world seems to be more acute than in other developing countries. Connolly (1990) estimates that their are 40 million street children attempting to survive in the city areas. The numbers of street children have grown alarmingly in Brazil where the figure in 1993 had reached 20 million (Schurink, 1995). Many children in Latin America are forced to take to the streets because of a mixture of different factors: declining family income, grinding poverty, family disintegration, unemployment, fear, anxiety, violence, problems with a family member, migration, abandonment, illegitimacy and political violence (Swart, 1990b).

1.3.2.3 In Africa

The number of street children in Africa has increased dramatically as a result of rapid urbanization. Their presence is a widespread phenomenon in most African countries. Some of the street children are products of civil war and unrest but others are products of the same social conditions that have produced them in many of the other countries. Well documented and reliable statistics concerning the numbers of street children in African countries are scant and insufficient (Schurink, 1995).

1.3.2.4 In South Africa

Swart (1990a) is of the opinion that although there are many estimates of children "on" and "of" the streets the real number is not known. Assessments vary from that of the Werkgroep oor Straatkinders made in 1989 of 6276 to 9390 estimated by Richter (1988a). According to Donald, Wallis and Cockburn (1997), UNICEF (1992) figures put the total street child population at 12 500. Swart (1988) recorded the names of 266 "malunde" children in Hillbrow while The Daily News (1990) reported that the Durban City Police guessed the number of street children in the city to be about 600. The Annual Statistical Report on Social Welfare Services in Gauteng for 1:4:1999 to 31:03 2000 contains the official number of street children who were in registered and financed shelters and non registered shelters. Seven registered and financed facilities with a capacity for 230 children existed. In total 324 children were housed in these amenities. Of these 250 were boys and 74 girls. The number of these shelters decreased during the year as result of a lack of adequate funding. The number of shelters which were not registered however was 30. This had decreased from 38 to 30 over the year in question. Many of them had become unsustainable. The capacity of these facilities was 1300 but they had an occupancy of 1500. Of the 1500, 1440 were boys and only 60 girls. In total therefore an amount of 1834 children had been removed from the streets. It is interesting to note that all 37 shelters were occupied by black children. From these figures one can deduce that most of the work being done to get children off the streets of Gauteng is being performed privately. The figures do not show how many street children have been removed to registered secure care centres or who make use of the one registered drop in centre which caters for a maximum of 30 children. The report also does not give an indication of the number of children still living on the streets.

Gauteng therefore has 1500 ex-street children in shelters who are probably attending government

and private schools from the shelters. There is no information on how well these children are coping with the education they are receiving at these institutions.

In my interview with the chairperson for the Allianze for Pretoria's street children, in 2000, he estimated the number of street children in the city to be 600. 165 of these have been removed from the streets and are in shelters similar to that of Doxa Juniors.

1.3.3 The needs and rights of children

The past decade has shown a growing need by the world in general to appreciate the importance of the basic physical, psychological and emotional needs of children. Pringle (1974) divides the psycho-social needs into four classes. These are:

- the need for love and security
- the need for new experiences
- the need for praise and recognition
- the need for responsibility

To enable a child to develop into a mature and responsible adult these needs are basic. When they are missing to a large degree children will be tempted to find them in places outside their true family (Schurink, 1995). The streets often seem more of an option than home. It is an aim of
this study to see if through an empathetic, stable and caring classroom and school environment and an interactive teaching methodology provided by warm and sympathetic adults, some or all of these needs can be met to some extent.

The enforcement of basic children's rights is essential if the essential needs of children are to be met. These rights should safeguard the survival, development, protection and personhood of all below the age of eighteen. They should also apply regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, birth or other status (Schurink, 1995).

The declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959 stated that the basic needs of all children should be met. Because it was concerned with generalised principles and moral entitlements and

did not include enabling rights it did not have the clout and status to change the social or legal relationship of children to adults. It was therefore not legally binding or enforceable (Schurink, 1995).

The arrival of the Convention on the Rights of the Child set overall legal criterion for the protection of children. This Convention protected the child against neglect, abuse, and exploitation. It assured their fundamental human rights. These included the right to survival, development and full participation in social, cultural and educational activities needed for their personal growth and well-being (Grant, 1991).

In 1990 the World Summit for children held in New York recognized the child's personhood. This meant the acceptance of children's liberty, privacy, equality and nurturance as rights necessary for their personal integrity. It gave them the claim to take part in decisions that affected them and their future. Not only now did they have the right to express their feelings and opinions but these had to be taken into consideration when resolutions were adopted on their future. The convention covered three areas. These were survival, development and protection. Survival rights meant provision of acceptable living standards and medical services. Development rights included adequate educational standards, access to information, play and leisure, cultural activities and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Protection rights established that the state was required to protect children in difficult circumstances against exploitation whether this was physical, sexual or economic (Schurink, 1995).

With all these good intentions it still remains problematical whether the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which are based on Western concepts of childhood are practical and achievable in poor Third World and developing countries such as South Africa.

1.3.3.1 South African legislation and welfare policy regarding street children

Because of the difficult and widespread incidence of street children in South Africa the use of the law and well thought through policies to protect the unique and vulnerable exploitatory position of street children is most important. At the moment there is no direct legislation with regard to street children. In fact a street child is not defined specifically in any South African law (Schurink, 1995). As a result of this street children are treated the same as any child in need of

care. Children found on the street are therefore removed to a place of safety where they are kept pending the opening of their juvenile case. The purpose of the holding of the child, which can last up to six months, is to attempt to rehabilitate the child and his family by reuniting the children with their families. In many cases this is impractical because the families cannot be traced and more often than not the circumstances at home are precisely the reason why the child fled in the first place.

The topic of shelters for street children is also filled with argument, disagreement and uncertainty. Private organizations, churches or NGO's who wished to remove street children to places of safety were not allowed to register their shelters and so were not eligible for state subsidies or inspection by state officials (Schurink, 1995). The point was also made by the "house father" of Doxa Juniors that as "house fathers" they were not the legal guardians of the children and as such were vulnerable legally if any accidents happened to them. This also could lead to problems with school registration, medical treatment and social work attention.

In addition the Child Care Act does not cater satisfactorily for those children who decided to leave home on their own accord. At present there is no formal way of recording, managing or providing housing (safe houses) for these children.

It is truly extraordinary therefore what the POPUP programme has done by going beyond merely providing survival, security and protection for the street children in their care but also in meeting many of their other needs mentioned before in this chapter. It was hoped that the hidden and open agenda of the new school we proposed, the warmness of the classroom environment and the genuine concern of the adults who would teach there would meet more of these needs.

1.3.4 What makes children end up on the streets?

When analysing the reasons for children ending up on the streets studies show that there is no one single cause or factor responsible. The causes of children being on the street are complex and manifold and grow out of an intertwining of many inseparable factors some out of control of the children and some of their own choice (Schurink, 1995).

In amongst these complex reasons there are however two themes which are constant. Firstly

children leave their homes out of despair with their present circumstances and a youthful hope for a better life. In other words they run away from one thing to something else (Libertorff, 1980, Mathews & Ilon , 1980).

The South African National Council for Child and Family Welfare is of the opinion that the many factors can be grouped into three broad categories. They are the Macro, Meso and Micro levels.

1.3.4.1 The Macro Level

This level is concerned with economic, political and community issues. It is Agrawal's (1999) opinion that throughout the world the emergence of street children has arisen alongside the phenomenon of industrialization and accompanying urbanization. As countries have attempted to advance themselves technologically cities have developed. One of the results of this development has been the migration of people from the rural to urban areas. New opportunities, real or imagined, have drawn work seekers recently in the developing world to the cities. Industrialization does not also happen uniformly throughout a country. This often causes people to be displaced from their traditional places of work and workers find themselves moving from the relatively underdeveloped regions to more developed ones and having to leave their families behind in their historic homelands. This migration caused by rapid industrialization and urbanization has disturbed and broken down the age old patterns of family and community life and ties (Swart, 1990). Swart also believes that Westernization has eroded traditional indigenous ways of life. In the West there is more of a stress on individuality and less on community. A money economy has replaced a subsistence one. In African cultures family members including children were responsible for family welfare. With cultures in transition this family view is changing.

Agnelli (1986) emphasises that the street child problem of today has its genesis in the historical context of economic conditions and in the international and national policies adopted by different countries. The trend is for more street children to appear on the streets as the economy of a country declines (Schurink, 1995). The downswing in the South African economy which started as far back as 1989 has shown no sign of coming to an end and has therefore contributed to the number of children on the street.

With the slowing of the economy has come the accompanying deterioration of social conditions. Unemployment has escalated and with it has come poverty. The interim report to the WMC in November 2001 on transforming Tshwane's welfare domain states that of the 40 million people living in South Africa 20% live in poverty. 50% of South Africa's population are children and most are exposed to the conditions which accompany this poverty - malnutrition, no basic education, lack of social security and inadequate protection against abuse.

In many cases children have been sent out into the streets to supplement the family income. Health care has deteriorated and inadequate housing and nutrition have either contributed to child abuse and neglect or are so damaging as to outweigh the abuse and neglect which result from parental psychopathology (Swart, 1990).

There is also the political legacy of apartheid. Although much in South Africa has changed even in 2002 it is evident as one travels around the country that very little is different with regard to where and how the citizens of the country live. The majority of black people still live in townships, informal settlements and the rural areas and white people in the cities and suburbia. The ethos of black areas is very different from white areas. This is because the black townships were established near to white towns and cities to serve them and since 1994 the new dispensation has not changed the economic situation of the disadvantaged enough to have altered this situation substantially. The ability of black townships to sustain themselves economically depends very much on the white cities they serve. They therefore fall into no man's land being neither industrial nor true urban areas. Nor can they be classified as suburbia. They also have a severe housing shortage (Swart, 1990). Manganyi (in Swart, 1990) contests that black townships have a high rate of social pathology and are characterised by non-supportive and non-traditional child rearing practices. Our history of township unrest, the politicisation of children, past hostilities between the police and the public, corruption, escalating crime and violence have all contributed to an environment and culture of insecurity. It is in conditions such as these where street children are created.

The interim report to the WMC in November 2001 called Transforming Tshwane Welfare Domain states that according to statistics drawn in 2000 for the Tshwane region 918 000 of the

2.4 million people are HIV positive. This represents 38.25% of the population. It also states that by the year 2005 there will be 1 000 000 orphaned children in South Africa and 12% of the population could experience children being orphaned by the year 2015. In the worst scenario by the year 2005, two hundred and fifty one thousand children will be born HIV positive. The reality is that a significant number of these children will die. Because of the HIV/AIDS issues it is probable that many children will also be orphaned and end up on the streets.

1.3.4.2 The Meso level

This level has to do with the level of the family. It is a fact in South Africa that virtually all street children come from either black African families or coloured families. There are virtually no white or Indian street children (Swart, 1990). This could be because care facilities for white children were more extensive and that the extended families of Indian children take care of those who get into difficulties. Even though there are a number of different black ethnic groups in South Africa and these are to be found in differing parts of the country Nzimande (1987) believes that the black African family originally differed substantially from the white family. Strong ties on both the maternal and paternal side with the extended family were held by the African family. Status in the African family is determined by a hierarchal system of seniority. A strict adherence to this structure provided order and stability to the family and went a long way to strengthen moral, social control and discipline (Levitas, 1983). The extended family:

• offered security to its members and gave them a feeling of commitment and duty towards each other

• provided material and psychological support to the members

• encouraged leadership and advanced the prosperity of dependent members. This protected the continuance of the extended family.

As mentioned the ongoing economic development in South Africa had a considerable effect on the social structure of the African people within it. This change in the African family system has caused it to move more towards a nuclear family system and away from the more traditional extended family. The living conditions for the members of the family have therefore changed (Nzimande, 1987). The migratory system of labour , mainly for males, which affected many African families resulted in the absence of fathers, elder brothers, grandfathers and even chiefs. This broke down the hierarchal structure. Discipline, social control and morals were weakened

and women had to take over many of the traditional roles and responsibilities held by men.

As a result of the special socio-political history of South Africa most of the black children here grow up unsupervised and in poverty. Their environment is overcrowded and characterised by family and community breakdown. This condition leads to a lack of bonding between parents and children and an absence of necessary discipline in the formative years. Frustration and a life without norms results. Often in townships children are left on their own and without recreational facilities, life becomes boring and bad for them (Schurink, 1995). The protection, care and support received by the nuclear family from the extended family therefore has faded away (Levitas, 1983).

Schurink (1995) writes that the urbanised black South African family has become very vulnerable and lists a number of family circumstances which can lead to children ending up on the streets:
• Single parenthood
• Unmarried mothers and illegitimacy
• Estrangement between mother and father
• Divorce
• Temporary absence of a parent
• Absence of a parent due to death
• Desertion by parents and rejection
• Desperate financial position of family
• Overcrowded living conditions
• Social isolation of families
• Social problems and delinquency in the family. Under this heading the following are some of the problems found. Alcohol abuse among guardians and parents, excessive discipline and cruelty, truancy from school, physical abuse and fear of violence, neglect, wrongdoing by child and peer group influence (Agrawal, 1999).

1.3.4.3 The Micro level
This is at the level of the individual. Many of the situations, whether they be in an institution or of family nature, become so intolerable for children that they decide on their own accord to

leave. These could be a result of failure at school, hunger, brutality, abuse both physical and sexual, shame, feeling an unwanted burden to the family, desire to earn money, contribute to the family income, or even the call to freedom made by other children who have lived on the streets.

As Schurink (1995) says many of the reasons why children turn to the streets are either push factors eg. overcrowding and alcohol abuse or pull factors such as desire to earn money or roam the streets freely. In any event those that end up on the street are there because they have been thrown away, have run away or have been abandoned.

1.3.5 Becoming a street child

Becoming a street child is more a process of drifting away than an event and starts long before the child physically leaves his home. To leave home, stay on the street and take on a street identity happens only after the child has experienced certain conditions. These could involve problematic relationships and conditions at home, the realization that the opportunity of a better life exists elsewhere and the ability to deal with the practical problems of getting to the street (Schurink, 1995).

Being integrated into street life consists of two phases which are interrelated. The newcomer phase precedes the street wise phase and varies in length according to how much friendship and help is received from boys who came from the same area as the newcomer and others. Becoming street wise and being accepted and respected by other street children and themselves comes only after they have performed a set of positive experiences (Schurink, 1995). Through these episodes they come to believe that they are capable of living on the street and taking on the identity of a street child.

1.3.6 Life on the streets

Life on the streets is no picnic. In the Pretoria area most street children can be found during the day around shopping centres and filling stations. At night they sleep in groups. When it gets dark their first priority is to find a safe place to pass the night. This can be in disused or derelict buildings, under bridges, in storm water drains, rubbish bins, cardboard boxes, in parks, vacant lots, on pavements or in alleys (Swart, J. 1990).

Street children in Pretoria live in groups of about eight members and their ages vary between six and twenty. In this area however there is the added phenomenon of groups of younger boys. These have more members and operate with more of a pack mentality. The reason could possibly lie in the safety of the increased numbers. Because of movement not all groups have leaders. Where there are leaders they are usually the bigger, more clever, sometimes protective and stronger boys (Swart, 1990).

What is needed most to survive on the street is money, particularly easy money (Schurink, 1995). Money is obtained by either, working, begging, prostitution, scavenging, crime or paid jobs like newspaper selling. Work is made up of piece work like helping to park, wash or guard cars, pushing trolleys or sometimes garden work. Crime involves theft, mugging, prostitution, pick pocketing and house breaking.

There is also much physical abuse on the street from the public, security guards and by the older boys within their own. Older boy and peer pressure is also often so strong as to almost force the younger boys into participating in theft. Sexual abuse is also prevalent from the public in the form of homosexuals and paedophiles as well as from within their own groups (Interview with Doxa Juniors' House Father, 2001). A common practice is for the older more dominant boys to extort money from the younger ones.

Street children in the Pretoria area abuse mostly glue, dagga and alcohol. The most destructive addiction is the "smoking" of glue. Glue is poured into plastic bottles the fumes are inhaled. This gives a fast effect which is called "sphaku-sphaku" - getting high. The main purposes of this habit is to get high, dull the senses, shut out cold, dissipate loneliness, close out the horrors of the night, stall hunger and to sleep in a comatose state. The side effects are depression, aggression, hallucinations, mood swings, impaired concentration and vision, hoarse voice, running nose and the grey pallor of the skin (Swart, 1990).

1.3.7 A psychological profile of street children

I believe that the psychological and emotional approach and interactive ability of the teacher working with ex-street children will be as important as the teaching methodology used. It is important to have some idea of the assessments of their psychological health. Unfortunately the

information available with regard to this aspect in South Africa is meagre.

1.3.7.1 Self-perceptions and attributions

Street children show a well developed internal locus of control (Richter, 1989 & 1996). They believe that they have control over or influence events and people in their lives to a similar extent as Anglo-American samples. They also show a well developed sense of control over their everyday activities and encounters. This "operating efficiency" can be observed in their manipulative behaviour on the street. This perception of self-efficacy flows out of and is maintained by their day-to-day activities. However this perception of self-image must be seen as separate to their self-worth and emotional resilience. Their assessments of self-value showed a high sense of vulnerability and pessimism and their sense of their ability to cope emotionally was also brittle. This lack of self-worth and emotional fragility rises out of their historical and contemporary social transactions (Richter, 1989).

On the other hand adult attributions of the street child are completely opposite to the children's personal sense of competence. The historical attacks by adults on their sense of having emotional value, hostile contemporary responses and the negative appraisals of incorrigibility by the public make it extremely difficult for the street child to keep a healthy sense of self-esteem (Richter, 1989). The longer the children are exposed to the degrading reflection of themselves on the streets the lower will be their perception of self-worth and emotional resilience. The children also internalise conflicting self-perceptions. This creates a disquiet in their sense of self. On the one hand they feel effectual and instrumental but on the other contemptible and bad. What makes matters worse is that most street children are in adolescence at a time when the self-concept is threatened and its development is at risk by environmental factors (Richter, 1989).

It was my experience when working with the Doxa Juniors that their desire for approval, genuine acceptance and affection was overwhelming. In one sense the experience of the children at Doxa House has gone a long way to help the children to dismantle the damage that has been done with regard to self-esteem. However the time spent in formal schooling and in the classroom has worked against the restoration of positive self-worth. The aspect of self-worth will therefore be of vital importance in the approach used at the new school.

1.3.7.2 Cognitive development

In Richter's cognitive assessment of street children for Street Wise in 1996 she found that the children performed very much below Western norms. Most of the children operated at six or more years below their chronological ages. Their scores on the WISC Mazes and the Category test did not differ significantly from other black school going South African boys. This could be because early school experience is too limited to produce significant differences. It also might be that the tests teach cognitive abilities unaffected by formal schooling or that apartheid schools in black South Africa did not enhance cognitive development (Richter, 1996).

These findings support Apteker's opinion that street life might promote cognitive growth because of the self-managed, non-supervised activities and the high amount of social awareness of people and knowledge of their natural environment (Apteker, 1988).

Richter (1996) also points out that the more time the child spends on the streets the worse the cognitive deficiency. This is because of abilities being lost and handicaps being acquired. What is of cardinal importance to this study is what Richter says and I quote:

> "What is clear is that the cognitive disabilities of some boys will preclude alternatives to street life if they do not receive special educational help, at least to become functionally literate and numerate." (Richter, 1996, p. 215).

1.3.7.3 Problem solving

Richter (1996) found that in comparison to a sample of South African school going children street children were more confident about trying alternatives, more creative in finding different solutions, more determined to succeed and less put off by failure. In general they found difficulty in uncovering generalities from a number of examples and they showed regressive, perseverative and learning errors of thinking. Richter's research showed that problem solving is retarded by children being deprived of formal schooling (Richter, 1996). In the problem solving situation street children find it difficult to learn from experience and tend to approach each problem as if it was a new one.

1.3.7.4 Psychopathology

Street children have been classified as presenting a non-aggressive undersocialised conduct disorder. In Richter's study (1996) she found that most of the boys showed some form of adjustment problem specifically in the interpersonal domain. Some boys showed serious emotional and/or behavioural disturbances such as chronic bed wetting. Moderate depression and anxiety were also prevalent. However one third of the children also showed adequate to good psychological adjustment (Richter, 1996).

Street children also displayed a sense of sub-cultural values. These values brought them into direct conflict with most kinds of social authority. However as a group they did not seem to be psychopathologically withdrawn from or against mainstream society (Richter, 1996).

1.3.7.5 Dimensions of people and the physical world

It is common for street children to perceive their world in very simple, undifferentiated ways. Emotions are seen as happy or sad and people are described by simple physical features. The future is very seldom mentioned. They also show very little knowledge of the dominant society where personal, qualities, physical attributes and emotional states are used to describe people. Richter states that this apparent socio-cognitive deprivation will probably cause street children to continue to be excluded from mainstream society (Richter, 1996).

1.4 Getting to know street children

As important as a literature study is in learning about the phenomena of street children nothing teaches better than the in your face reality of first hand experience. In order to achieve this Magdel and I decided to locate and spend a substantial amount of time immersing ourselves in the lives and environment of a group of these children. We found such a group in a shelter run by the Doxa Deo Church of Pretoria and spent six months during 2001 working and interacting with them. This group and their house father were located in a building in Salvokop and formed part of the POPUP project run by this church. A more detailed exposition and description of our time with them there is included in chapter five as part of the reconnaissance aspect of the study.

1.5 Conclusion

The time spent with the Doxa Juniors proved on the one hand to be a fascinating, absorbing, stimulating, intriguing and a privileged insight into a strange new world - a twilight world of

which I knew nothing and of which I was almost unaware. It absorbed my thinking, taxed my creativity, challenged my principles and forced me to consider social issues I had never dared to raise. On the other hand however, even though I had worked for many years with disadvantaged people, this was disadvantage in the extreme. It awoke within me, all at the same time, a moral outrage, a private uncomfortableness, a sense of humility, an uneasy feeling of personal privilege and the awareness of an emerging responsibility and debt to these children prostituted by society and so terribly at risk. I had no choice but to continue. I wanted to be part of it and I wanted them to play a part of the second half of my life.

In chapter two I will provide the theoretical background to the model of teaching and learning that I propose to use with the street children and to the emotional mediation I intend to incorporate into it.