FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DROPOUT RATE OF LEARNERS AT SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS IN KING WILLIAM’S TOWN

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23 January 2012
DECLARATION

I, Ntombikazi Gloria Dekeza-Tsomo, declare that the contents of this treatise represent my original work and I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it in any university for a degree.

Signature: _________________________  Date: __________________

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ABSTRACT

Once learners reach high school, they seem to lose focus and become less interested in fulfilling their educational goals. This leads to learner dropout in schools. Yet, the government expects all children to attend school daily and receive the best education so that they can have a bright future. Education prepares the child for life, if the child drops out, he or she will struggle to succeed in life. There are real social reasons that make it difficult for some learners to succeed and lead to them dropping out of school. For example, many learners in South Africa are extremely poor and they dropout because their parents cannot provide for their families. Dropout learners from poor backgrounds also tend to be involved in crime. Young people are under a lot of pressure and consequently, they end up using drugs, smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol instead of going to school. Teenage stress also contributes to learner dropout. The transition from childhood to adulthood brings challenges, thus making teenagers vulnerable to physical and emotional stress. Many learners do not get the support they need when they are experiencing stress. The high stress levels experienced by learners tend to result in high levels of absenteeism. Pregnancy seems to be another contributing factor to the dropout of learners from school. Thus, learner dropout is a significant problem within the South African context. Not only is learner dropout a problem, but it is linked to many other issues that negatively affect society.

This study has examined factors influencing learners to dropout. It employed a qualitative research methodology, using interviews and questionnaires to elicit and investigate the causal factors of learner dropouts. The researcher made use of non-probability sampling because it can be regarded as the only sampling method that makes possible representative sampling design. Purposive sampling was used for the research, because it was convenient for the researcher in terms of time. By using purposive sampling the researcher was able to include participants according to the relevant criteria based on the emerging research questions. The principal, one educator and 18 learners in each of the two high schools were chosen as participants of the study. These participants were coming from two high schools, which are located in King William’s Town District. Learners who participated in the
study were chosen from grade 10, 11 and 12. There were six learners chosen per grade. The sampling method used to select learners from grade 10 to 12 and educators was purposive sampling. This type of sampling was used because the researcher wanted rich information from participants and individuals who can express themselves very well about the reasons of learners dropping out at school and also who met the sampling criterion of having had the experience of dropping out of school.

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors contributing to the dropout rate of learners at selected high schools in King William’s Town District. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. The study population was confined to two public high schools in the King William’s Town District. Using qualitative methodologies, involving a sample of 36 learners, two educators and two principals, the study found multiple motives, associated with individual characteristics of dropouts and social problems emanating from their family background and influence of the community, prompting the learners to dropout.

It emerged from the empirical findings of this study that learner dropout is *inter alia* caused by social factors such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, HIV or AIDS infection, gangsterism and learning barriers. These factors are complex issues, which should be handled by skilled people. As learners spend a great deal of their time in the school environment, the educator has become an important role-player to assist learners to alleviate social problems. It is essential that learners with social problems should at an early stage get professional help. The educators who are, due to circumstances, are obliged to help these learners, are not necessarily equipped to give the required assistance. Suggestions and recommendations are espoused to alleviate the situation.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABET  Adult Basic Education and Training
CEM   Council of Education Ministers
DoE   Department of Education
FET   Further Education and Training
FETC  Further Education and Training Certificate
GET   General Education and Training
HE    Higher Education
HEDCOM Heads of Education Departments Committee
NQF   National Qualifications Framework
NSFAS National Student Financial Aid Scheme
SACE  South African Council for Educators
SGB   School Governing Body
SAQA  South African Qualifications Authority
SASA  South African Schools Act
NSNP  National School Nutrition Programme
CHAPTER ONE

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION
According to Griessel and Oberholzer (1994: 44) education is a purposive aid that equips children to independently complete their tasks in life. Thus, education is deliberate assistance for children towards their maturity. Education helps learners to accept a particular approved order and orientates them to progress independently in terms of that order. This contributes to the learners becoming more human.

The school is an institution which has been established for the purpose of educative teaching and learning. Duminy and Sohng (1994: 5) indicate that the school came into being in the course of the development of civilisation. A fundamental characteristic of the school is its role in the development of the child through the act of knowing. This involves training the child to discriminate (analyse), to understand, to grasp and to learn. The school is concerned with the growth of the child as a whole.

The role of the educator is to direct the learner towards a goal. Griessel and Oberholzer (1994: 45) state that the successful educative activity is terminated when the learner realises that his or her intention runs contrary to the goal of education and yet he or she is willing to obey the demands of propriety. Griessel, Louw, and Swart (1991: 51) believe that the school has an extremely difficult task. However, they argue that the educative task of the school should be so wide that the child, as a future adult, should be able to hold his or her own in any situation. To qualify as education, teaching has to assist the child to integrate his or her knowledge into a system of values. This is to be done in order for the child to accept his or her task as a participant in the creation of a harmonious world for fellow humanity.

Educative teaching is planned and organised according to the school timetable, work assignment, classroom practice (the preparation of lessons) and other activities. Gunter (1988: 11) argues that education is not only concerned with the development
of the head and hand of the child, but also with the will and emotions. Therefore, education deals with the child as an indivisible spiritual-physical unit in his or her total existential situation. Education is aimed at more than just knowledge, skills and independent thought. Education is principally concerned with the positive formation of the moral character and the development of the entire personality of the maturing adult. Robin and McGregor (1992: 18) state that prior to South Africa becoming a democracy in 1994, the South African education system was shaped by Apartheid and characterised by underdevelopment. South Africa suffered from a generally low level of education. The Apartheid education system has resulted in the juxtaposing of a privileged white education sector with a less developed black education sector. Discrimination, segregation and subordination of blacks has a long history in South African education, but separatist practices culminated into Apartheid ideology with the accession to power of the National Party in 1948.

According to Robin and McGregor (1992: 20) during the last forty years, education has been used to achieve the following:

- To divide and control,
- To protect white privilege and power (socially, economically and politically),
- To ensure Afrikaner dominance.

Robin and McGregor (1992: 21) assert that decades of apartheid education and rising pupil numbers have resulted in gross inequalities and huge backlogs in the provision of a better quality of education, especially in African education. The previous education system which was known as Nated 550 was divided into the following phases of three years each:

- Junior Primary which referred to the first three years of school. These were comprised of Sub-standard A, Sub-standard B and Standard 1 (currently Grades 1 to 3).
- Senior Primary school years which were comprised of Standards 2 to 4 and are currently Grades 4 to 6.
- Junior Secondary referred to Standards 5 to 7 and is currently Grades 7 to 9.
- Senior Secondary school meaning standards eight to ten (Grades 10 to 12).
During the Junior Primary phase of education, only class teaching was allowed since subject teaching by different teachers might easily confuse the child in the early stages of his or her school tenure. Subject teaching was gradually introduced so that learners could familiarise themselves with the educational approach of Secondary School. In the Junior Secondary phase of education, learners were familiarised with the educational approach of High School. The Senior Secondary phase of education made a provision for different comprehensive possibilities so that learners could choose one of eight courses or fields of study. These fields of study cover aspects such as: Technical studies, Agriculture, Humanities, Science, Domestic science, Commerce, Art, and General courses. Each course consisted of a range of subjects that learners could take on Higher Grade or Standard Grade. The curriculum for every course or field of study had six examination subjects which included the two official languages (English and Afrikaans) and compulsory non-examination subjects, such as; Religion, Physical Education and Youth Preparedness (Venter and Verster, 1996: 122).

According to Burger (2008: 172) the new system of formal education in South Africa is currently divided into three levels, namely; General Education and Training (GET), Further Education and Training (FET), and Higher Education (HE). The GET band is from the Reception Year (Grade R) to Grade 9, and includes an equivalent Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) qualification. The FET band consists of Grades 10 to 12 which are offered in schools, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 2 to 4 and N1 to N6 qualifications which are offered in FET colleges. The HE band is comprised of Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates and Postdoctoral Degrees. Burger (172) states that these are integrated within the NQF as provided by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (Act 58 of 1995). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) has vested power in the provincial legislatures and governments to manage educational affairs (other than universities and universities of technology) subject to a national policy framework. The National Department of Education (DoE) is responsible for formulating policy. It is responsible for setting the norms and standards; as well as for monitoring and evaluating all levels of education. The National DoE funds HE institutions through subsidies and the provision of financial support to qualifying students through the National Student Aid.
The National DoE is jointly responsible with Provincial Departments of Education for school education, ABET, Early Childhood Development and FET colleges. The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) further devolves responsibility to schools by delegating the governance of public schools to democratically elected school governing bodies (SGBs) composed of parents, educators, non-educator staff and secondary school learners. Relations with Provincial Departments of Education are guided by National policy, within which the Provincial Departments of Education have to set their own priorities and implementation programmes (DoE, 2001).

The National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) formalised relations between National and Provincial authorities, and established a Council of Education Ministers (CEM) and the Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM) as intergovernmental forums for collaboration in developing the South African education system (Burger, 2008: 172). Burger (2009:165) states that the DoE has introduced the White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (White Paper) (2001) with the aim of educating every child, even those who are physically challenged and have barriers to learning. According to the White Paper (2001) the DoE must ensure that:

- All levels of the education system adhere to the set education policies and laws.
- Mechanisms are in place to monitor and enhance the quality of the education system.
- The education system is on par with international developments.
- The core activity of the DoE is to monitor the implementation of policy, norms and standards; and to assess their impact on the quality of the educational process and identify educational policy gaps.

Section 29(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), states that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education and further education, which the State, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible. Everyone has the right to receive education in their official language or language of their choice in public educational institutions,
where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effectiveness and implementation of this right, the State must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account equity, practicability, and the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

Although Jakuja (2009: 13, 14) believes that learner dropout affects all Grade levels in South Africa, he asserts that the high dropout rate of learners mostly occurs at High Schools. Jakuja (2009) notes that learners usually dropout in the FET band and not in the GET band and HE. While there are ongoing debates regarding the grade level mostly affected, dropping out seems particularly prevalent at the Primary and Secondary School levels. At Primary School level the most affected Grade is Grade 1 and at Secondary School level it is mainly Grades 9, 10 and 11 (Motala, Dieltiens, Carrim, Kgobe, Moyo, and Rembe 2007: 55).

These dropout patterns are primarily manifest in rural communities. Learner dropout analysis by province shows that in the King Williams Town area, and the wider rural districts of the Eastern Cape, Grades 9, 10 and 11 consistently experience the highest dropout rates (DoE, 2006: 83). This trend also applies nationally, even after the dropout rate is adjusted for Grade repetition (Motala et al., 2007: 10). In the Eastern Cape, the average dropout rate for all Grades was 10 percent between 2003 and 2006 (DoE, 2006: 3). There is also a higher dropout rate amongst male learners than female learners (Motala et al., 2007: 11). Mgwangqa and Lawrence (2008: 2) have established that the main reason for learners dropping out of school in rural areas is poverty. Poverty then serves as an overarching cause for other factors, such as; illnesses, child pregnancies, and hunger. These factors result in learners committing petty criminal offences.

Teachers and parents need to be made aware that motivation in the home environment and school is an important factor in encouraging learners to continue with their studies. When learners are motivated they manage stress better and are also eager to initiate learning activities. Motivated learners tend to be more willing to take risks, to remain involved in a learning task and are more committed (Hawksley, Jacoby, Louw, Coetzee, and Findlay, 2002: 138). This means that motivation
energises learners to achieve their goals, which can be intrinsically and extrinsically stimulated. When learners are motivated at home, they wholly take part in the learning and teaching environment for a better quality of education. Teachers who exhibit a strong sense of professional commitment usually influence their students towards higher levels of engagement in their learning process, and more significantly, tend to have much higher classroom on-time attendance rates than teachers who do not display the same professional commitment (Whitbourne, 2002: 125). Adrian (2001: 18) notes that little research has been done in the area of high-stakes testing and its effect on learner retention and dropout rates. As more States are using high-stakes tests as a means to end social promotion and accountability, it is likely that there will be changes in learner retention and dropout rates. Ideally, learners that are successfully retained would benefit from repeating their current Grade level. However, Sadowski (2000: 6) states that nearly all of the research about retention shows that it has strong negative effects on children.

Adrian (2001: 18) mentions 63 studies that were conducted to review the effects of retention. Out of those studies 54 revealed retention as having negative effects, while 9 revealed retention as having positive results. Attempting to eliminate social promotion by making learners repeat a Grade is one of the issues behind high-stakes testing and high school exit examinations. According to Heubert and Hauser (1999: 122, 129), evidence suggests that retention is typically not beneficial in the education process as it leads to lower academic achievement and a higher dropout rate. Research data indicates that simply repeating a Grade does not generally improve achievement. Thus, adopting a policy of learner retention would be cause for concern.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Once learners reach high school, they seem to lose focus and become less interested in fulfilling their educational goals. This leads to learner dropout in schools. Yet, government expects all children to attend school daily and receive the best education so that they can have a bright future. Education prepares the child for life, if the child drops out, he or she will struggle to succeed in life. According to Coetzee, Hawksley, and Louw (2002: 86) there are real social reasons that make it
difficult for some learners to succeed and lead to them dropping out of school. For example, many learners in South Africa are extremely poor and they dropout because their parents cannot provide for their families. Dropout learners from poor backgrounds also tend to be involved in crime (Hawksley, Jacoby, Louw, Coetzee, and Findlay, 2002: 120).

Dilley, Clitheroe, Visser and Bottaro (2006: 40) observe that young people are under a lot of pressure and consequently, they end up using drugs, smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol instead of going to school. Teenage stress also contributes to learner dropout (Carstens, Pretorius, Vercueil, and Walls (2008: 20). The transition from childhood to adulthood brings challenges thus making teenagers vulnerable to physical and emotional stress. Many learners do not get the support they need when they are experiencing stress. The high stress levels experienced by learners tend to result in high levels of absenteeism. Pregnancy seems to be another contributing factor to the dropout of learners from school (Carstens et al., 2008: 142). Thus, learner dropout is a significant problem within the South African context. Not only is learner dropout a problem but it is linked to many other issues which negatively affect society.

1.3 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY
According to Mgwangqa and Lawrence (2008: 2) there are certain behavioural patterns exhibited by learner dropouts. The learner loses interest in school, resulting in lower performance at school and thereafter the learner begins to skip classes. The subsequent learner dropout creates underdeveloped, unskilled, illiterate and poorly educated citizens who are generally much younger, less mature and unemployed (Cloete and Wissink, 2006: 83). South African youth is increasingly affected by poverty, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), drug use and crime. It is difficult for South Africa to develop, whilst its youth, instead of developing themselves academically, are deeply involved in crime and drugs. Thus, the socio-economic development of South Africa is adversely affected. Learner dropout prevents the full development of the community and the society at large. Various educators tend to attribute learner dropout to the laziness of the learners. However, there are several possible reasons for learner dropout. The
The proposed study seeks to investigate the factors contributing to learner dropout in order to devise ways of motivating learners who have dropped out of school to resume their studies.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
The research objective of the study is to:
- Establish whether the principles of the new curriculum for retaining learners are being implemented by the DoE.
- To determine the reasons that cause learner dropout in schools.
- To bring suggestions and recommendations of reducing the rate of learners dropping out in schools.
- For the Department of Education to address the challenges of dropout learners in schools.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The study seeks to address the following research questions:
- What causes learners to contemplate dropping out of school?
- What are the signs displayed by a learner who is contemplating dropping out?
- To what extent do social factors contribute to learner dropout?
- To what extent do academic factors contribute to learner dropout?
- What is the role of educators in preventing learner dropout?
- What is the role of the parents or family of the learner in preventing learner dropout?
- What is the role of the DoE in preventing learner dropout?
- Is new curriculum for retaining learners being implemented by the DoE? If so, is it effective?

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY
The study is limited to the King Williams Town District in the Eastern Cape. Only two rural high schools were used as part of the research. This is to save time and minimise costs.
1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The study adopted a qualitative approach in order to provide acceptable answers to the stated research problem. The qualitative research method addresses questions to with how social, school, personal, and family factors contribute to learners dropping out of school. The qualitative research method is utilised to uncover the socio-environmental factors that influence learner dropouts. Thus, a qualitative data analysis approach is employed so as to arrive at a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon of learner dropout. Qualitative research is a multi-pronged method that applies an interpretive, naturalistic approach in dealing with the researcher subject matter. The study focuses on the way participants use their experiences to interpret their surroundings and describe what is happening by holistic listening, interpreting, and gaining better understanding.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN
The researcher used case studies to collect and analyse data received from the two King Williams Town high schools. Questionnaires were issued to the learners of these schools. Interviews were scheduled with educators that are currently working in the two rural high schools. These interviews were conducted in order to minimise the role and influence of the researcher and to enable a more objective comparison of the results. Questionnaires were also used as a control mechanism for those target groups which the researcher is unable to interview.

Punch (2000: 150) defines a case study as a field of inquiry that investigates a specific area in order to gain access to the real life context where the problem is clearly visible. A descriptive case study, together with an interpretive case study, is suitable for the purpose of this study. Punch (2000: 154) defines descriptive data as being data that is collected in the form of words and actions of the respondents, rather than numbers as is the case in quantitative research approaches. Interpretive methods allow the researcher to gain insight into the nature of the phenomenon. Thus, an interpretive case study enabled the researcher to acquire new ideas, views and perceptions about the causes of learner dropout. In this study, both descriptive and interpretive data were used to identify the reasons for learner dropouts in rural high schools.
1.9 DATA COLLECTION
The researcher collected information from different primary and secondary sources, such as; questionnaires and interviews. Primary data was collected from forty participants, which means twenty participants from each rural high school. The participants include the principal of the school, one Level One educator who is a class teacher and is responsible for school admissions or controlling the admission register, six Grade 10 learners, six Grade 11 learners and six Grade 12 learners. Data from the educators and the principals was collected in the form of face-to-face interviews. Learners on the other hand were given questionnaires to complete. All participants were randomly selected.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
The researcher asked permission to conduct the research from the DoE since the study involves educators and learners. A letter requesting permission to conduct the empirical survey was written to the principals of the two schools clearly stating the purpose of the study. A preamble letter and letters of consent to participate in the study was written to the parents of learners since the learners are minors. The researcher also received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University before the empirical survey was conducted.

Since the research deals with human beings the names of the participants are not revealed under any circumstances. Codes are being used to conceal the names of participants. For example, they are being addressed as participants from school A and participants from school B. The use of codes ensures that the people who will read the research report will be unable to link the response to a particular participant even though the researcher will be able to link the responses to individual participants. Participants were informed of their guarantee to anonymity and confidentiality during the course of the study.

The respondents were notified that they have a choice to participate in the research voluntarily or to decline as they will not be forced to participate unwillingly. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from participating in the research should they so desire. The researcher was sensitive to and observed the ethical and legal
responsibilities involved in conducting research. The researcher strictly adhered to ethical principles, which include; voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality and objectivity.

2. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Curriculum: The curriculum comprises all the content taught at school (Duminy and Sohnge, 1994: 4).

Dropout: Dropout most commonly refers to a learner leaving school before the official exit grade level (Jakuja, 2009: 25).

General Education and Training Band: The General Education and Training band is composed of three phases which are; the Foundation Phase which starts from Grade 1 to Grade 3, the Intermediate Phase which starts from Grade 4 to Grade 6 and the Senior Phase which starts from Grade 7 to Grade 9 (Coetzee, Hawksley and Louw, 2002: 32).

Further Education and Training Band: The Further Education and Training band is made up of National Qualification Framework (NQF) Levels 2 to 4 and consists of Grades 10, 11 and 12. The Further Education and Training band concludes with learners receiving the Further Education and Training Certificate which can be obtained at any high school, training centre, private college, community college or technical college (Coetzee, Hawksley and Louw, 2002: 32).

Substance Abuse: Substance abuse refers to a person ingesting substances that are harmful to his or her health. These harmful substances include tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs. Substance abuse can be fatal (Dilley et al., 2008: 38).

Section 21 schools: Section 21 policy is an approach to educational reform that allows an individual school to make its own decisions related to finances supplied by the government in poor rural schools. The aim of this study was to investigate whether SGB members and SMT members have the required skills of managing finances in disadvantaged Section 21 rural schools (DoE 2006: 1).
3. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The research report is organised into the following chapters:

**Chapter 1:** This chapter mainly deals with the introduction of the study and its background. The reasons for selecting this particular topic are clearly stated. This chapter highlights the aims, limitations and research methodologies that are relevant in conducting the study. Ethical considerations and clarification of concepts is also incorporated in this chapter.

**Chapter 2:** This chapter focuses on the reviewed literature that is related to the research topic and the views of other authors regarding learner dropouts. The readings are taken from books, dissertations, journals and internet sources so as to get more relevant information about the study.

**Chapter 3:** The policy and legislative framework.

**Chapter 4:** In this chapter the researcher focuses on the research methodology.

**Chapter 5:** This chapter is an in-depth analysis of data collected through interviews. The empirical findings are correlated with objectives and research question.

**Chapter 6:** A summary of the study and recommendations is also provided.

The following chapter is an in-depth exploration of the relevant literature reviewed in terms of the topic of this study.
CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to provide a review of related literature on learner dropouts and causal factors leading to dropout of learners in schools. It aims to address what literature identifies as the factors that influence learners to dropout, the impact of dropout and the strategies that seek to limit this phenomenon. The literature review aims to discuss the phenomenon of school dropout and the factors that put learners at risk of dropping out. It explores the ways in which the School Management Team can provide effective support (Terhoeven, 2009: 9). This is done by adopting an Inclusive Education and Training System. This system is organised in such a way that it provides various levels of support to learners and educators (Department of Education, 2001: 15). In 2001, the Department of Education through its Education Management Systems (EMIS), reported that there was an indication of a possible high dropout rate of learners between grade 1 to 11 in South African schools (Department of Education, 2003: 16). This literature review will focus on theories to explain the phenomenon of school dropout and what the school can do to motivate these learners with regard to support.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF A SCHOOL DROPOUT

According to Brown (2004: 11), the term dropout can be defined as a student who exits the education system before completing the programme for which he or she was registered. This definition could embrace students at all levels of the education system whether primary, secondary or tertiary. However, a classification difficulty arises when students leave one institution and move to another; that is, initially dropping out but likely to reappear in another institution in another location. The argument by Brown is that, if a student soon continues his or her education elsewhere, he or she cannot be reasonably classified as a ‘dropout’. If a student exits the formal education system at a particular level without completing the programme designed for that level, he or she can be classified as a ‘dropout’.
Currently, schools face unprecedented challenges to educate increasingly multi-cultural and multi-lingual learners in addition to addressing the increasing social problems. Some learners are academically successful, committed and participate in class, while others struggle academically and are disenchanted (Abbas 2009: 1). According to Abbas (2009: 1), reports of high levels of drug addiction, teen pregnancies, gang activities, violence, physical and sexual abuse, appear daily in the South African local press. These incidents impact negatively on education in general and on what happens in the school in particular. Mandela (2000: 554), states that; “Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the Head of the mine that a child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another”. "The right to basic education is a fundamental human right and it is reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, of 1996 and in White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001: 11) of the Education Department.

2.3 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Brown (2004: 11) states that many students drop out of the secondary level of the school system before completion of the final year, and this is a problem faced in many countries, whether developed, developing or under-developed. The greater focus on secondary level dropouts is no doubt due to the accepted tenet of educational philosophy, which states that it is important to extend education for as long as possible within the developmental period from age 14 to age 18. The more time adolescents have to gain educational experience during the teenage years, the better prepared they will be to face life’s challenges (Battin-Pearson, 2000: 213).

Battin-Pearson, (2000: 214) maintains that identifying the predictors of high school dropouts is a crucial task for researchers, because understanding the causes and processes of dropping out can help guide the creation of effective approaches to preventing the problem. They also assert that it is critical to investigate the phenomenon “early dropout” as a possible distinct and unique pathway affecting
later adult outcomes. According to Brown (2004: 11), five different theories have been developed to explain the process of dropping out of school. Though each attempts to offer a unique set of affective influences or processes, the interrelationship of certain key variables becomes apparent overall.

2.3.1 Academic Mediation Theory
Poor academic achievement, typically assessed with standardised achievement tests or grade point average (GPA), has consistently been one of the strongest predictors of dropping out of school when the poor performance is associated with other variables such as anti-social affiliations, personal deviance, family socialisation, and structural strains (Garnier, Stein and Jacobs 1997: 121). Low academic achievement can also mediate the association between low school bonding and ultimately dropping out of school.

2.3.2 General Deviance Theory
General deviance or specific aspects of deviant behaviour have direct effects on high school dropout. According to Garnier, Stein and Jacobs (1997: 112), teenage drug use directly predicted dropout. Pregnancy has also been a predictor, although differences in family background were also found to affect the likelihood of the mother eventually completing secondary school. In addition, early sexual activity has been shown to affect academic failure. Teenagers who are not doing well in school and have lower educational aspirations are more likely to have sex during adolescence than those faring better in school (National Research Council, 1987: 122).

2.3.3 Deviant Affiliation Theory
Dropouts tend to have more deviant friends who also show potential for dropping out, but the mechanism of the influence of these deviant peers on the decision to leave school has not been widely investigated (Fagan & Pabon, 1990: 215). It is theorised, however, that deviant affiliations have a direct effect on high school dropout over and above the mediating influence of low academic achievement.

2.3.4 Poor Family Socialisation Theory
Families provide many of the chief foundations and experiences for later life, including academic achievement and success in school. Early influences include divorce, family stress (Garnier, Stein and Jacobs, 1997), parental behavioural control
and acceptance and, most importantly, parents' own education levels (Ellickson, Bui, Bell and McGuigan, 1998: 243). Therefore, low parent expectations and education would have direct effects on school dropouts over and above the mediating influence of low academic achievement.

2.3.5 Structural Strain Theory

Studies focusing on demographic factors have indicated that dropouts are more likely to be boys than girls, and are more likely to be from families of low socio-economic status (Rumberger, 1987: 163). The overriding hypothesis is that the structural strain factors of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status will have a direct effect on school dropout over and above the mediating influence of low academic achievement. Brown (2004: 11) has noted, however, that the study of the dropout phenomenon and its causes are difficult because “the same [environmental] factors may influence different pupils in different ways, and even affect the same pupil in different ways at different times”. Janosz, Le Blanc, Boulérice and Tremblay (2000: 136) state that while an empirical typology could be useful as a predictive tool with regard to the impact of social risk factors, differential dropout prevention strategies should be adopted for different personality profiles, for example the quiet, disengaged, low-achiever, and maladjusted. Miller (1998: 145) states that boys start their schooling later, attend school more irregularly, repeat more grades, drop out earlier, have lower completion rates and achieve less than girls while in school.

2.4 SOCIAL FACTORS CAUSING LEARNER DROPOUT

2.4.1 Teenage Pregnancy

According to Bezuidenhout (2006: 43), teenage pregnancy is viewed as a social problem in many developed and developing countries. It is no longer perceived as a personal problem as it is prevalent in South Africa and society seeks to lower the high incidence of teen pregnancy. Cunningham and Boult (1996: 692) point out that the social consequences of teenage pregnancy are dropping out of school, interrupted schooling, falling prey to criminal activity, abortion, ostracism, child neglect, school adjustment difficulties for their children, adoption, lack of social security, poverty, repeated pregnancy and negative effects on domestic life. In South Africa teenage pregnancy is rising each year.
Statistics in the United States reveal that one in three pregnant teenage mothers drop out of school due to pregnancy (Novick, 2001: 226). The United States has the highest birth rates recorded amongst teenagers with 48% of teenagers giving birth between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years of age (Jean-Jacques and Loeber, 2007: 300). Only 50% of teenage mothers (younger than eighteen years old) complete their schooling (Novick, 2001: 227). Theron and Dunn (2006: 463), state that when teenagers become pregnant, it disrupts their schooling career as they have to leave school in the early stages of their pregnancy. Arguing along similar lines, Phoenix (1991: 218) indicates that many teenage mothers never return to school and this has a negative impact on their future as they become unemployable after giving birth. In South Africa, 30% of teenagers have given birth once by the age of nineteen (Kaufman, De Wet and Stadler, 2001). They do, however, have the right to return to school after giving birth, as they have the right to quality education as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, section 29. This also means that they cannot be expelled or suspended. Many of these teenage mothers return to school as they perceive education as the key factor in gaining access to good employment (Kaufman, De Wet and Stadler, 2001: 155). According to Kaufman, De Wet and Stadler (2001: 147 and 155), this is unlike in many developing countries where teenage mothers cannot return to school after giving birth. This marks the end of education for them. For example, in Mozambique, girls who fall pregnant are automatically expelled from school and in countries such as Togo and Zanzibar. By law, these girls have to drop out of school (Abbas, 2009: 14).

Chigona (2007: 159) asserts that teenage mothers need support and encouragement to aid their academic performance. Failure to obtain support from their school and home environment results in poor academic performance and may even cause many of them to drop out of school. Abbas (2009: 14) states that the consequences of teenage pregnancy include failure at school, dependency on welfare systems, and educational problems affecting the child due to intellectual and emotional inadequacy of the very young mother. Teenage mothers have a higher risk of poor health and their children, as well as “social, cultural and economic regression” (Jean-Jacques and Loeber, 2007: 299). The educational effects of teenage pregnancy are that these teenage mothers run a risk of not obtaining the educational skills needed to become self-supporting, economically productive
citizens, something which often results in their children entering the educational system with economic and developmental disadvantages.

2.4.2 Drug Abuse

A drug is any chemical substance that if taken has a biological and physical effect on a person, and it causes one’s body to function differently. It may be legal or illegal, natural or man-made. Drug abuse means using a chemical substance a great deal. Drug refers to a substance that acts on the nervous system such as stimulants or narcotics that may cause addiction (Gillis, 1992: 107). This has a negative effect on the person’s physical, mental or emotional well-being. An addict is a person whose life is controlled by drugs. Drug use and abuse is a worldwide problem. It is a well-known fact that younger people are using drugs such as glue, thinners, cooking sprays, petrol and so on (Euvrard, Findlay and Nduna, 2006: 75).

Many of the social problems such as drug addiction are also linked to gangsterism in the community (Reckson and Becker, 2005: 114). Drug use and abuse by learners is not a new phenomenon as it has prevailed for more than decades, worldwide and especially in South Africa. Drug use and abuse by high school learners has brought about many problems in schools and society at large (Hewana, 1999: 164). The World Health Organisation maintains that drug use and abuse has all over the world been identified as a problem through all ages. Alcohol is the most commonly used drug by adolescents of the world, and is followed by cigarettes. Adolescents at a very young age (12 to 13 years) were reported to be using drugs such as alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana (World Health Organisation, 1999: 102).

Drug use and abuse by learners at schools is a worldwide phenomenon and has negative consequences on school performance and learning, as well as the general well-being of those who abused them. In South Africa, the consumption of alcohol and dagga smoking amongst adolescents are very high (Edmonds and Wilcocks, 1995: 144). These have negative consequences that include poor school performance, high number of dropouts and social misfits. These are publicised on television and radio education programmes, as well as academic publications. Yet learners continue to use and abuse drugs. Amongst the consequences of drug abuse is that these adolescents are more likely to end up dropping out of school,
while some may end up being patients suffering from psychological problems that will last a lifetime (Edmonds and Wilcocks, 1995: 145).

2.4.3 HIV and AIDS Infection or Affection
According to Coetzee, Hawksley and Louw (2002: 92), the Human Immune Virus (HIV) affects different people in different ways. Coetzee, Hawksley and Louw (2002: 95) state that most young people living with HIV and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in South Africa contracted the virus through sexual intercourse. It is estimated there are 1.9 million AIDS orphans where one or both parents are deceased in South Africa (Coetzee, Hawksley and Louw 2002: 96). Another estimate puts the proportion of maternal orphans (those who have lost their mother, orphaned by AIDS) as over 70 percent (Coetzee, Hawksley and Louw, 2002: 97). As Broadus and Bryan, (2008: 166) point out, orphans may put pressure on older relatives who become their primary carers. They may have to relocate from their familiar neighbourhood; and siblings may be split apart, all of which can harm their development. National surveys of sexual behaviours of the youth showed that the 15-24 age group is a vulnerable group in terms of HIV and AIDS risk (Shisana & Simbayi, 2002: 122). An individual’s ideas about themselves and their health could be instrumental in effecting behaviour change. The objective of the health intervention or training programme could be that of identifying individuals’ conceptions about themselves and how they protect themselves from diseases such as HIV and AIDS. Intervention programmes could identify risk factors and incorporate them into HIV and AIDS risk reduction programmes (Shisana & Simbayi, 2002: 123).

2.4.4 Gangsterism and Bullism
Sociologists tend to concentrate on deviant behaviour as the cause of crime. When prescribed goals are sought by all members of society, certain means to achieve those goals become institutionalised as right and proper. However, when certain groups are constantly denied access to those means, these groups may reject the goals or turn to deviant behaviour to achieve those goals, by causing crime as well as joining gangs (Montero and McDowell, 1986: 381). According to Kinnes (1995: 2), when the Group Areas Act was implemented in 1950, non-White people were forcibly removed from their homes and relocated throughout the Cape Flats area of
Cape Town in the Western Cape, as was explained above. Arguing along similar lines, MacMaster (2007: 278) indicates that gangsterism has been a part of the communities of the Cape Flats since the establishment of townships under apartheid laws. Pinnock and Schärf (1984: 99) mention that the main reason for the formation of gangs is the fact that there was stark poverty in an equally impoverished environment.

However, even today gangsterism in South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape, remains an insidious problem. Marais (2001: 112) suggests that South Africa remains one of the most violent countries in the world. It is estimated that between 40 to 60% of crime is related to gang activity in the Western Cape (Nott, Shapiro and Theron, 1990:1; Kinnes, 1995: 3). Kagee and Frank (2005: 5) point out that gang activity has been identified as one of the main causes of serious violent crimes in the Western Cape. This is also confirmed by Standing (2006: 256) who reports that gangs cause up to 70% of all crime on the Cape Flats. The Department of Community Safety (2005: 12) reveals that gang members are becoming younger and start from around ages twelve and thirteen. This correlates with the findings from the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2006: 3), which indicates that gang activity has filtered into schools with the result that there is now an increase of gang membership among learners and gang-related incidents on school grounds.

Many of the social problems such as drug addiction are also linked to gangsterism in the community (Reckson and Becker, 2005: 114). The Western Cape has been estimated to have about 100,000 gang members (Reckson and Becker, 2005: 107) and every year there are more murders in Cape Town alone than in the whole of Britain (Nott, Shapiro and Theron, 1990: 1). Merton (2002: 196) states that gang members are responsible for most of the crime such as house breaking, car break-ins and thefts. They terrorise communities with drive-by shootings, rape (which could lead to teenage pregnancy) and intimidation (Merton, 2002: 196). In an interview conducted by Nott, Shapiro and Theron’s study on gangsterism, one Grade six learner recounts; “They (gang members) sell drugs in front of children and tell innocent teenagers to sell it for them. They influence teenagers to try it and then children feel high and then they tell them to break into houses then they steal video machines, jewellery and other things” (Nott, Shapiro and Theron, 1990: 5).
According to Reckson and Becker (2005:109), gangsterism results from wider social, political and historical contexts. This problem is exacerbated by factors such as unemployment, poverty, lack of community concern, poor school policies and inadequate social services (Reckson and Becker, 2005: 109). These factors can cause learners to drop out of school, which can further lead them to a life of crime. MacMaster (2007:278) believes that gangsterism is rooted in multiple socio-economic and political causes, and it affects the lives of individuals, families and whole communities. However, Bezuidenhout’s (2006: 74) argument is closely linked to both the social disorganisation perspective and the deviant behaviour perspective as he points out that teenagers join gangs because of poor parenting, peer pressure and poverty. As such, these teenagers may engage in other risky behaviours such as taking and selling drugs, which are characteristics of the gang culture (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 74).

2.4.5 Learning Barriers
Barriers to learning and development are defined as “those factors which lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, which lead to learning breakdown or which prevent learners accessing educational provision” (DoE, 2001: 66). Barriers arising from impairments include physical, cognitive, sensory, developmental and learning impairments lead to dropout of learners (Terhoeven 2009: 35). Learners experience the most severe forms of learning difficulties leading them to dropout at school (Education White Paper 6 of 2001: 26). The most important way of addressing barriers arising from the curriculum is to make sure that the process of learning and teaching is flexible enough to accommodate different learning needs and styles. The curriculum must therefore be made more flexible across all bands of education so that it is accessible to all learners, irrespective of their learning needs (Education White Paper 6 of 2001: 20).

2.5 FACTORS THAT PUT LEARNERS AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT
According to Terhoeven (2009: 14), factors that put learners at risk of dropping out include retention, academic performance and engagement, transition from primary
school to high school, lack of motivation, suspension and expulsion, and poverty. For clarification purposes a brief explanation of these factors is essential.

2.5.1 Retention
Retention refers to the practice of having a learner repeat a grade level because of low academic performance (Roderick, 1995: 133). Retention is one of the most common factors that put learners at risk of dropping out, because the learner might become an overage learner in that particular grade. The grade retention in South Africa is higher in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase than in the General Education and Training (GET) phase (DoE, 2007: 35). Grade retention is one of the most powerful predictors of dropping out. Learners who are retained are 2-11 times are more likely to drop out during High School than non-retained.

2.5.2 Academic Performance and Engagement
Terhoeven (2009: 15) states that academic performance and school engagement are some of the indicators that might lead to school dropout. Academic performance of those learners who struggle in a classroom and fall behind academically, and to school engagement, turn to be disengaged from the school and develop disciplinary problems, such as high rates of absenteeism and truancy, show poor classroom behaviour, learners who participate less in extramural activities and have bad relationships with teachers and peers.

2.5.3 Transition from Primary to High school
The transition from Primary School to High School can be a difficult adaptation for learners to make and it is a critical stage for learners to break through. It offers critical, yet neglected, opportunities for intervention and for the formation of significant social attachments, including peer and family relationships (Lan and Lanthier, 2003: 121). Peer and family relationships play a big role in reducing the likelihood of dropping out (Marcus and Sanders-Reio, 2001: 134).

2.5.4 Lack of Motivation
Motivation of learners can be characterised by their willingness to initiate learning activities, their continued involvement in a learning task, and their long-term commitment to learning. Learners need to be motivated both in the home and school
environment. Teachers and parents should be aware that motivation in the home environment and school is an important factor to encourage learners to continue with their studies. When learners are motivated, they manage stress and are also eager to initiate learning activities, they are willing to take risks, they remain involved in a learning task and they show a commitment (Coetzee, Louw and Hawksley, 2002: 139).

This statement emphasises that motivation encourages learners to achieve their goals which can be intrinsically and extrinsically stimulated. When learners are motivated at home they take part in learning and teaching environment in totality for a better quality of education. Teachers who exhibit a strong sense of professional commitment usually influence their learners towards higher levels of engagement in their learning process and, more significantly, tend to have much higher classroom on-time attendance rates than teachers who do not display the stated (Whitbourne, 2002:125).

2.5.5 Suspension and Expulsion
According to the South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), (9) (1), the Governing Body of a public school may, after a fair hearing, suspend a learner from attending school as a correctional measure for a period not longer than a week. Section (2) of Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) states that subject to any applicable provincial law, a learner at a public school may be expelled only by the Head of Department if found guilty of serious misconduct after a fair hearing. According to Terhoeven (2009: 17), learners are usually expelled from school as a punishment for bad behaviour. Expulsion can be viewed as an asset to the teacher, but it does not help the learner. In South Africa, only the Governing Body has the right to suspend a learner from attending school.

2.5.6 Poverty
Poverty in South Africa manifests in ill health, under nourishment, deprivation of privileges, unsupportive environments in informal settlements and squatter camps, language deficiencies, limited social status and a negative view of the future. Other factors which contribute to poverty in South Africa are the backlog in technology, conflict and violence, crime and substance abuse (Prinsloo, 2005: 451). Poverty has
been identified as a major risk factor for learners to drop out of school. That is why the Department of Education has started a nutrition programme (feeding scheme) at schools, which seeks to alleviate hunger among learners coming from poverty-stricken communities.

2.6 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM IN PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL DROPOUT OF LEARNERS

According to Terhoeven (2009: 6), Teacher Support Teams (TST) are school-based, problem-solving groups which function to support learners indirectly through teacher collaboration. The primary function of the TST is to put in place properly coordinated learner and educator support services that will support the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs. The Education White Paper 6 (2001:6) stipulates the Ministry of Education’s commitment to the provision of educational opportunities, in particular for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate their learning needs. The Education White Paper 6 (2001: 8) stipulates that the development of an inclusive education and training system will take into account the incidence and the impact of the spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, and other infectious diseases. For planning purposes the Ministry of Education will ascertain, in particular, the consequences for the curriculum, the expected enrolment and drop-out rates, and the funding implications for both the short and long term.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Preventing learners from dropping out of school is a difficult task and it needs a multi-disciplinary prevention and intervention strategy to address it effectively. Early identification of learners, who are at risk of dropping out of school, is important to ensure appropriate support and intervention. The success of any Dropout Prevention Programme can be determined by the context in which the support and intervention as well as monitoring take place. It also illustrates that the social factors that lead to dropout need to be addressed in the context in which the learner is experiencing it. The school, as an institution established to educate, has a responsibility to support
learners who are at risk of dropping out. The systems need to function as a whole, to build resilience in learners and to ensure that they reach their maximum potential.

Providing support to learners is one way of attempting to make learning contexts and lessons accessible to all learners. Support is also given when a school reviews its cultures, policies and practises to determine support for the individual educator, parent and learner needs. Support is provided when educators plan lessons in such a way that they accommodate all learners. All staff members must be involved in support activities. This will lead to effective support that will focus on the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, educators and institutional needs. The phenomenon of young people dropping out of school affects government, individuals, societies and the labour market. The effects of dropping out are not only financial but also social. Dropping out challenges self-sufficiency, self-esteem and the ability to make educated choices (knowing what options an individual has). The government always invests in education in South Africa. There has to be a return on investment so that re-investment can take place. When a young person drops out of school, employability becomes a challenge for the individual, and thus less economic participation occurs. At the end this affects the taxes that the individual might have had to contribute to the state and intimately represents no return on the government’s investment. The next chapter focuses on the overview of the South African regulatory framework, in the form of legislation and policies that impact on the topic of the study.
CHAPTER THREE

3. THE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK ON PROMOTION OF LEARNER RETENTION.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Investigating factors contributing to the dropout rate of learners cannot be understood without looking at the policy and legislative framework, which seek to promote learning and the retention of learners in the classroom. The constitution of the Republic of South Africa, in particular, guarantees every person the right to basic education, including adult basic education.

Since the first democratic elections in 1994, South Africans have been promised a better life. Consequent to this promise, the policy and legislative framework strive to fulfil this undertaking. Against this background this chapter therefore explores relevant Acts and policies that have a bearing in the promotion of learning and retention of learners in schools.

3.2 BACKGROUND TO POLICY LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to Burger (2011: 172), during the 1993/94 fiscal year, the South African government earmarked 23.5% of the national budget for education in anticipation of rising education costs. It subsequently established new education offices, tasked with specific responsibilities within the reorganisation plan. When the school year began in January of 1995, all the primary and secondary schools that were managed by the government were officially integrated. The first phase of transformation in education virtually began without violence. However, the new education policies were difficult to implement and there were many details that still needed to be worked out (Burger, 2011: 173). In November of 1996, education experts held a National Education and Training Forum in order to formulate a policy framework for restructuring education (The Department of Education, 1996:2).
The Department of Education (DoE) (2000:2) states that education continues to receive the majority share of the national budget, with R165 billion being allocated to the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training during the fiscal year of 2010/11. This was R17 billion more than the budget that was allocated during the 2009/10 financial year. In February of 2010, President Jacob Zuma announced the introduction of new measures for improving the South African education system. Thus, since 2010, all Grade 3, Grade 6 and some Grade 9 learners, now write annual national assessments, which are independently moderated. In 2011, more than 19 000 schools participated in these assessments. At the July 2010 Cabinet Lekgotla, the government announced its plans to enrol over 200 000 children between the ages of seven and fifteen in school by 2014. This will be done by increasing the number of “no-fee” schools and widening feeding schemes. The government is also conducting a drive to ensure that teachers are in class and are teaching for the allocated school time (Sohnge, 2002:262).

The DoE (2000a:5) notes that the core mission of schools is to improve the educational achievements of all learners. Therefore, all members of a school should take responsibility for the quality of their performance. Many education systems, parents and the public at large, use learner achievement as a measure to judge the quality of schools (Sohnge, 2003: 170). It is the duty of the School Management Team to attend to the management tasks of policy making, planning, organising, leadership and control at the school level (Sohnge, 2003: 183). Furthermore, the Whole School Evaluation Policy process was introduced by the DoE as a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process that is also participatory and provides schools with an opportunity for improvement (Sohnge, 2003:180).

Sohnge (2003:282) believes that disempowered and uninvolved parents, demotivated and unqualified teachers, indifferent learners and poorly equipped schools, have all contributed to the negative school experiences of youth. The school system is still plagued by regular school absenteeism, high dropout rates, high failure rates, and a lack of employment for school leavers at all levels of schooling.

According to Sohnge (2003:186), Curriculum 2005, which guides the new South African education system, is outcomes-based and requires teachers and learners to
focus their attention and efforts on the desired results of education. In order to
ensure that learners gain the skills, knowledge and values that will allow them to
contribute to both their own success and the success of the nation as whole, critical
outcomes were adopted for Curriculum 2005 (Government Gazette, 1997: 13).

Currently, schooling is compulsory for children between the ages of seven and
fifteen. Learners have a choice between two types of schools, namely; independent
(private) schools and public schools. At public schools, parents get to vote regarding
the cost of tuition. In certain cases, a parent or guardian of a learner can apply for
exemption from paying school fees. The following section will expand on the
legislations governing the South African education system.

3.3 LEGISLATIONS
There are various legislations that preside over the South African education system.
The succeeding subsections will discuss those that are relevant to this study.

3.3.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996
According to Section 29(1) (a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa
everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education; and to
further education, which the State, through reasonable measures, must make
progressively available and accessible. Section 29(2) of the Constitution of the
Republic of South Africa stipulates that everyone has the right to receive education
in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions
where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effectiveness
and implementation of this right, the State must consider all reasonable educational
alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account equity,
practicability and the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws
and practices.

3.3.2 The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996
The objectives of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (National Education
Policy) are to provide for:
• The determination of national education policy by the Minister of Education in accordance with certain principles;
• The consultations to be undertaken prior to the determination of policy, and the establishment of certain bodies for the purpose of consultation;
• The publication and implementation of national education policy;
• The monitoring and evaluation of education.

Section 3(1) of the National Education Policy specifies that the Minister of Education shall determine national education policy in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the National Education Policy. Section 2 of the National Education Policy requires the Minister of Education to take into account the competence of provincial legislatures, in terms of section 126 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, and the relevant provisions of any provincial law relating to education when determining national policy for education at education institutions. According to Section 3 of the National Education Policy, whenever the Minister of Education wishes a particular national policy to prevail over the whole or a part of any provincial law on education, the Minister of Education shall inform the provincial Political Heads of Education accordingly, and make a specific declaration in the policy instrument to that effect. Section 4 of the National Policy stipulates that the Minister shall determine the national policy for the planning, provision, financing, staffing, co-ordination, management, governance, programmes, monitoring, evaluation and wellbeing of the education system, without derogating from the generality of this section.

Section 4(h) of the National Education Policy promotes compulsory school education. Furthermore, the minimum number of hours per day and days per year during which education shall be provided for different phases of education in education institutions is indicated in Section 4(j) of the National Education Policy.

3.3.3 The White Paper 6 of 2001
The White Paper 6 of 2001 is concerned with Inclusive Education and Training, which focuses on the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs that are equally valued. Inclusive Education and Training acknowledges and respects differences in learners, whether due to age, gender,
ethnicity, language, class, disability or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) status. It also seeks to maximise the participation of all learners in the culture and curricula of educational institutions and to uncover and minimise barriers to learning (White Paper 6, 2001:16). The White Paper 6 (2001:16) postulates that some learners may require more intensive and specialised forms of support in order to be able to develop to their full potential. An inclusive education and training system is organised in such a way that it can provide various types and levels of support to learners.

The objectives of the White Paper 6 (2001:10) include provisions on how the inclusive education and training system will:

- Systematically move away from using segregation according to categories of disabilities as an organising principle for educational institutions.
- Base the provision of education for learners with disabilities on the intensity of support needed to overcome the debilitating impact of those disabilities.
- Place an emphasis on supporting learners through full-service schools that will have a bias towards particular disabilities, depending on need and support.
- Direct how the initial facilities will be set-up and how the additional resources required will be accessed.
- Indicate how learners with disabilities will be identified, assessed and incorporated into special, full-service and ordinary schools in an incremental manner.
- Introduce strategies and interventions that will assist educators to cope with a diversity of learning and teaching needs to ensure that transitory learning difficulties are ameliorated.
- Give direction for the Education Support System needed.
- Provide clear signals regarding how current special schools will serve identified disabled learners on site, and how these schools will also serve as a resource to educators and schools in an area.

According to the White Paper 6 (2001: 5), specialised education and support have predominantly been provided for a small percentage of learners with disabilities within ‘special’ schools and classes. Moreover, specialised education and support provisions were determined according to race, with the best human, physical and
material resources reserved for white learners. The White Paper 6 (2001:5) also mentions that most learners with disabilities have either fallen outside of the system or have been mainstreamed by default. Generally, the curriculum and the education system have failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, resulting in massive numbers of dropouts, push-outs and failures. While some attention has been given to the schooling phase with regard to ‘special needs and support’, the other levels or bands of education have been seriously neglected. The White Paper 6 (2001:5) emphasises that the education and training system should promote education for all learners and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning which would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process. Thus, learners would be enabled to develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society.

The White Paper 6 (2001:6) outlines the commitment of the Ministry of Education to provide educational opportunities, particularly for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the Education and Training System to accommodate their learning needs. The vision of an inclusive education and training system can only be developed over the long term. The short to medium term actions provide models for future system-wide application. Additionally, they clarify the required capital, material and human resource development, and consequently the funding requirements of building an Inclusive Education and Training System (White Paper 6, 2001:6).

According to Section 1(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the South African democracy and common citizenship is founded on the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms (White Paper 6, 2001:11). These values call upon all citizens to take up the responsibility and challenge of building a humane and caring society for all South Africans. In establishing an education and training system for the 21st century, the DoE is tasked with the special responsibility of implementing these values and ensuring that all learners, with and without disabilities, pursue their learning potential to the fullest. In building the education and training system, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa especially challenges South African citizens to give effect to
the fundamental right to basic education for all South Africans. Moreover, Section 9(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa commits the State to the achievement of equality, while Sections 9(3), (4) and (5) commit the State to non-discrimination. These clauses provide for the protection of all learners, whether disabled or not.

3.3.4 The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 aims to:

- Redress past injustices in educational provision.
- Provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and, in so doing, lay a strong foundation for the development of all the talents and capabilities of South Africans.
- Advance the democratic transformation of society.
- Eradicate racism, sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance.
- Contribute to the eradication of poverty.
- Contribute to the economic well-being of society.
- Protect and advance the diverse cultures and languages of South Africa,
- Uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State.

It is necessary to set uniform norms and standards for the education of learners at schools and for the organisation, governance and funding of schools throughout the Republic of South Africa (SASA, 1996:1). According to Section 3(1) of the SASA of 1996, every parent must encourage every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year on which such a learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year on which such a learner reaches the age of fifteen years or Grade 9, whichever occurs first. Additionally, Section 3(2) of the SASA of 1996 states that the Minister of Education must, by notice in the Government Gazette, determine the ages of compulsory school attendance for learners with special educational needs. Section 3(3) of the SASA of 1996 stipulates that every Member of the Executive Council must ensure
that there are enough schools so that every child can attend school in his or her province as required by subsections (1) and (2) of the SASA of 1996. Also, Section 8(1) of SASA of 1996 specifies that subject to any applicable provincial law, a governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for learners after consultation with learners, parents and educators of the school. Section 8(2) of the SASA of 1996 requires this code of conduct to be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment that is dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process.

According to Section 8(3) of the SASA of 1996 the Minister of Education may, after consultation with the Council of Ministers of Education, determine guidelines for the consideration of governing bodies in adopting a code of conduct for learners. In addition, Section 8(4) asserts that nothing contained in the SASA of 1996 exempts a learner from the obligation to comply with the code of conduct of his or her school. Also, Section 8(5) of the SASA of 1996 affirms that a code of conduct must contain provisions of due process for safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party that is involved in disciplinary proceedings. The suspension and expulsion of learners from public schools are contributing factors in learner dropout.

Section 9(1) of the SASA of 1996 declares that subject to the SASA of 1996 and any applicable provincial law, the governing body of a public school may, after a fair hearing, suspend a learner from attending the school as a correctional measure for a period not longer than one week; or pending a decision as to whether the learner is to be expelled from the school by the Head of Department. Section 9(2) of the SASA of 1996 states that subject to any applicable provincial law, a learner at a public school, if found guilty of serious misconduct after a fair hearing, may be expelled only by the Head of Department. Section 9(3) of the SASA of 1996 specifies that a Member of the Executive Council must determine, by notice in the Provincial Gazette, the behaviour by a learner at a public school, which may constitute serious misconduct; the disciplinary proceedings to be followed in such cases; and the provisions of due process safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings. Furthermore, Section 9(4) of the SASA of 1996 mentions that a learner or the parent of a learner who has been expelled from a public school may appeal against the decision of the Head of Department to the
Member of the Executive Council. In addition, Section 9(5) of SASA of 1996 notes that if a learner who is subject to compulsory attendance in terms of Section 3(1) is expelled from a public school, the Head of Department must make an alternative arrangement for his or her placement at a public school. Section 10(1) of the SASA of 1996 prohibits corporal punishment and declares that no person may administer corporal punishment to a learner at a school because it encourages learner dropout.

3.3.5 The Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010.

The Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010 aims to promote punctual and regular school attendance and provides standardised procedures for recording and monitoring learner attendance. It also ensures that learners and their parents will be treated equitably across provinces. The Policy on Learner Attendance (2010:7) stipulates that it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the learner attends school daily. The SASA (1996) provides for actions to be taken if a learner who is within the age of compulsory school attendance abstains from school without providing an explanation. Permissible reasons for learner absenteeism are outlined in the Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010.

The Policy on Learner Attendance (2010: 8) requires the school timetable to indicate the time during which the class register will be marked (the registration period). The class register must be marked at the start of the morning session. However, if it is a historical practice for a school to mark the class register at ten o’clock in the morning, there is no particular need to change its practice. The school must do its utmost to promote and monitor punctual attendance at the start of the school day. Furthermore, learners are expected to attend school on time and must be required to do so.

Learners should be made aware that if they are not present during the registration period they will be marked as absent. The Policy on Learner Attendance (2010:10) notes that only the information recorded in the class register is used to obtain data about learner absentee rates. The class register is used by the class teacher and principal to monitor learner attendance and to follow up on the non-attendance of learners (The Policy on Learner Attendance 2010, Section 19). Schools also provide
the School Governing Body (SGB) and District Offices with quarterly reports on learner absentee rates. The SGB and District Offices must identify problem areas and determine the appropriate action. The SGB members are also expected to support and promote punctual and regular attendance. They should at least inform the principal if a learner is observed out of school during school hours. If there is reason to believe that the absence may be without valid reason, the principal must notify the parent accordingly and request that the learner return to school with an explanation for absence.

Section 20 of the Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010 states that a learner is deemed to be present at school when the learner is present in class or is participating in a school activity (official educational, cultural, recreational or social activity of a school within or outside the school premises) when the class register is marked. However, Section 21 of the Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010 does not specify how long the learner must be at school in order to be marked as present, it only indicates that the learner is considered present if the learner is in class when the class register is marked. The class register is thus the official record of learner attendance and absence. The period register is used to monitor attendance during the school day.

According to Section 33 of the Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010, learners abstain from school for various invalid reasons, which include:

- Family holidays that are taken during the school term.
- Staying at home before and after examinations.
- Staying at home on non-examination days (in terms of the Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010, this is a valid reason for absenteeism only if a learner is a National Curriculum Statement (NCS) candidate on authorised study leave).

If a learner is absent due to an invalid reason, normal disciplinary processes will apply because the school code of conduct must state that invalid absenteeism is a disciplinary offence (The Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010, Section 34). Section 35 of the Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010 specifies that it is the duty of the school to have programmes that assist learners who are absent to catch up with
school work. This should be reflected in the policy of the school on learner attendance. The school policy must indicate how the school will support a learner who has been absent in order to help the learner make up for lost time or assessments that a learner may have missed. According to Section 36 of the Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010 in certain cases (such as chronic illness) absenteeism may be deemed valid whereas in other cases, the learner may just be skipping school for no reason. A policy on learner attendance at a school should take into account both possibilities. The school is responsible for following up on cases of invalid absenteeism and should work together with the parent of the learner to find a solution. The school should also engage with social agencies if circumstances warrant such action. If the learner code of conduct is being breached, disciplinary action must follow.

3.4 CONCLUSION
The main focus of the South African legislation governing education should be accessibility, affordability and capable of retaining learners in the classroom. The accessibility and affordability of education is a major challenge in South Africa mainly because of past injustices, which left whites better off than other race groups such as blacks and coloureds. Thus, when the democratic government came into power, one of its tasks was to improve and balance the education system for all South Africans.

Education policies and legislation are often linked with social interventions such as feeding schemes to make school attendance for learners easier. Furthermore, education policies and legislation attempt to assign and clarify the roles of key stakeholder groups within education, such as, educators, parents and learners. These stakeholders need to work together in achieving the education goals of the country as set out in key legislation, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Without relevant stakeholder co-operation, there will not be effective implementation of education policies and legislation.

Learners need both access to education, as well as the necessary support from relevant stakeholders in order to successfully exercise their constitutional right to education. Inaccessibility of education, lack of support from the relevant people, and
negative social factors, can contribute to learner dropout. Thus, learners do not only need to be given access to education, but they need to be kept in school. Hence, the introduction of education policies and legislation such as the Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010, promotes punctual and regular school attendance. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology that was used in conducting the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was about the policies which serve as initiatives that the government has initiated to promote education and prevent the dropout rate of learners. This chapter is about the research methodology used, and how the research process unfolded. The chapter explains the research paradigm, research methods and designs used, which also includes ethical considerations, selection of participants, data analysis, and data collection to ensure confidentiality, or anonymity and trustworthiness of the investigation. The study was based within a qualitative research framework with an interpretative approach. This process helped the researcher to have an insight on how the School Management Team and educators deal with the school dropout phenomenon. The quantitative data loses sight of the individual reasons why learners dropout of school, this put emphasis on why the researcher decided to use qualitative research method.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Terhoeven (2009:45), defines paradigm as a world view that includes certain philosophical assumptions about the nature of knowledge. The interpretive paradigm is used in this study to contextualise it within the qualitative paradigm. This means that the research paradigm governs the research process of this study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133), in qualitative research, numerous forms of data is collected and examined from various angles to construct a rich and meaningful picture of a complex, multi-faceted situation. Qualitative approaches have two things in common. Firstly, they focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings, that is, the real world. Secondly, they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity. Qualitative researchers rarely try to simplify what they observe (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:133). Qualitative method is concerned with investigation of small groups (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:375), and aims to generate the information that is useful in certain contexts (Kelly, Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2006:287), than the information which can be generalised to the whole population.
Qualitative research method gave the researcher an opportunity to seek and discover the meaning that learners attach to their behaviour of dropping out at school. It is also a relevant approach to respond to the questions of this study.

4.3 METHODOLOGY
Methodology implies the science of method or of arranging in due order (Funk and Wagnalls, 1946: 898). There are numerous approaches, auxiliaries and methods from which the researcher can choose to meet his or her particular circumstances. Sampling is a tool which is successfully used in many research projects.

4.3.1 Sampling
Sampling can be described as a smaller set of cases a researcher selects from a larger pool and generalise to the population (Neuman, 2006:219). Sampling is divided into probability and non-probability sampling. Under probability sampling there are many types of sampling designs, which include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling and random digit dialling sampling (Neuman, 2006:227). Under non-probability sampling, there are also many sampling designs, which include haphazard or convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, deviant case sampling, sequential sampling and theoretical sampling (Neuman, 2006:220). The researcher chose to make use of non-probability sampling because it can be regarded as the only sampling method that makes possible representative sampling design (Jakuja, 2009: 72). Purposive sampling was used for the research, because it was convenient for the researcher in terms of time. By using purposive sampling the researcher was able to include participants according to the relevant criteria based on the emerging research questions. The Principal, one educator and 18 learners in each of the two high schools were chosen as participants of the study. These participants were coming from two high schools, which is located in King William's Town District. Learners who participated in the study were chosen from grade 10, 11 and 12. There were six learners chosen per grade. The sampling method used to select learners from grade 10 to 12 and educators was purposive sampling. This type of sampling was used because the researcher wanted rich information from participants.
and individuals who can express themselves very well about the reasons of learners dropping out at school and also who met the sampling criterion of having had the experience of dropping out of school.

The average age of learners as participants was 17 years. Educators at the two schools assisted in identifying these learners as participants in the study. Participants in both gender categories were represented. According to Jakuja (2009:72), the purposive sampling strategy is a non-probability sampling strategy which is consistent with the interpretive paradigm on which the research is based.

4.3.2 Access to Participants
The data was collected from two high schools in King William’s Town District. To avoid revealing the identity of these schools, the labels school A and school B has been used to refer to these schools, respectively. To gain access to the research sites and participants, the researcher sought permission from the District Department of Education. A letter was written to the District Education Office to inform them about the research and to request permission to access the schools. Permission was granted for the research to take place. At the school level, the school principal took the responsibility of introducing the researcher to educators. The educators assisted the researcher to select learners who participated in the study. In the process of soliciting permission to do the research, the purpose of the investigation was fully explained to all participants. Educators and the principals were given consent forms to sign, whereas the learners were given consent forms for their parents to sign them, because they are still minors and they are below the age of 18. The researcher visited both schools to make an appointment, first as to when to conduct the interviews with the principal and the educator, and the date when the learners would be filling the questionnaires.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS
The researcher, according to Mouton, Johann and Marais (1990:15), is required to inter alia make a decision on which measuring instruments and data collecting methods will be the most appropriate for investigating a given subject. Methodology can for instance be defined as the logic of the application of scientific methods for
the investigation of phenomena. In other words, methodology refers to the logic of the decision-making process in scientific research. It is therefore essential that attention also be given to the research instruments.

4.4.1 Research Instruments
In contemporary society, more information is available than can be used (Terry, 1977:179). The computer can yield reams of data relating to products, services, costs and prices. Libraries, the internet, etcetera are fruitful sources for the collection of information. The government offers statistics, numerous studies, reports and booklets on a variety of subjects. In other words, a literature study of the available sources may provide useful information. The key consideration is to acquire information that is useful to decision-making and problem-solving. The information must therefore be relevant and correct. Instruments such as interviews, questionnaires, etcetera, will have to be considered.

4.4.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews and Questionnaires
In an endeavour to find an answer on the question of the available tools that would be the most appropriate for investigating the subject for this study, it was decided that apart from the literature study, interviews and questionnaires will be used to obtain the required information. A semi-structured interview was used for the principals and educators to gather facts or attitudes, rather than analysing them in great detail. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994:46, 82), the most useful method of data collection in qualitative research is an interview, especially when the researcher wants to gain perspectives about participants and their construction of meaning of a phenomenon. The interview is flexible and adaptable, thus involving direct interaction between the participants and the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:254).

According to Kiewiets (2005:27), the interview method has advantages and is always selected for the following reasons:

- It reduces interview bias and leads to easier analysis.
- It is context dependent and free from the influence of the interviewer so that a more objective view of the social world of the respondent emerges.
- It is done individually.
A questionnaire is basically a list of questions that a researcher compiles to glean information (Mqulwana, 2010:52). Questionnaires were designed to gather information on reasons that cause the learner dropout in high schools and how can this be stopped and encourage those who have dropped out to re-enrol. With regard to the design of the questionnaire, the researcher used both open ended questions and closed questions. The response to open-ended questions can be used to find reasons for opinions or attitudes of a specific participant. Questions were fully and well structured. According to Kiewiets (2005:24), a self-administered questionnaire has advantages, which include the following:

- As all questionnaires are identical, it provides a homogeneous stimulus to the potential respondent and eliminates the possibility of the impersonal effect encountered in both the telephone survey and postal survey.

- In a relatively short time, data may be obtained from a large number of people.

4.4.1.2 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher in this study was the primary instrument of data collection. Many methods were used to collect the data for this study, which are:

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews with principals and educators, 36 questionnaires for grade 10, 11 and 12 learners of the two high schools, a tape recorder, documents such as class registers and admission register. To make arrangement for the interviews, the researcher visited the schools and explained the purpose of the research and requested permission of interviewees prior to the conduct of the interview to use a tape recorder. Principals and educators of the two schools agreed for the use of the tape recorder during the interview process as they were assured about anonymity and confidentiality as it is said in the consent form.

There was a good atmosphere between the researcher and the participants throughout the interview process. Interviews with the participants were conducted at the school during school working hours. Each interview lasted about 25 minutes. The filling in of questionnaires by learners as participants lasted about an hour per grade because the researcher had to explain each question. Principals in both schools gave the researcher a special permission for learners to fill in the questionnaires.
during teaching time. The interview with the principals of the two schools was conducted during their working hours. The interviews were conducted in the English language, but for more clarity the vernacular language (isiXhosa) was used.

4.4.1.3 Documents
Documents can be used to trace a history of some current status. The strength of documents as data source lies with the fact that they already exist in the situation where they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator might (Terhoeven 2009:52). The researcher requested the admission register to check the enrolment of the two schools from 2009, 2010 and 2011. This ensures that the school records are kept safely. The researcher also requested class attendance registers for grade 10, 11 and 12 to determine learners’ school attendance.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS
A tape recorder was used to record interviews of the principals and educators. The required permission for using a recorder was granted by them. The researcher transcribed each interview. In order to really study the content, it had to be in the written form. This involved having to write everything down. Jakuja (2009:75) explains that analysis focuses upon identifying recurrent themes across transcripts.

Recurrent themes are similar and consistent ideas, thoughts, images and accounts shared. Being phenomenological, the emphasis in the analysis was on the essence and structures of the phenomenon, that is, the experience. Neuman (2006:322) explains data analysis as a technique for the gathering and analysing the content of the text. It also refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes or any message that can be communicated. Data collected were structured to address the main questions of this study, which reflect on what learners considered as factors that cause them to dropout at high school and how this behaviour can be discouraged. Data produced was analysed using thematic content analysis and it involved identifying common themes that emerged out of the data.
The language used and the content were examined. Repetition, explanation, justification, vernacular terms, implicit and explicit assumptions and new phrases were highlighted. The themes were then compared and consolidated. Repetition in the themes across participants, that is, the principals, educators and learners was taken as shared understandings. The collection of data and analysing helped the researcher to make adjustments and test emerging concepts, themes, and categories against the subsequent data. It also enabled the researcher to build a coherent interpretation of the data that was collected and it provided an opportunity for the researcher to generate insight into the data.

4.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY
Meaningful information must comply with the criteria for validity and reliability. In other words, to judge qualitative research it must have the following qualities: transferability, dependability, credibility and confirmability (Mqulwana, 2010:61).

4.6.1 Transferability
Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective, transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalising. Herein the researcher has enhanced transferability by describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research (Mqulwana, 2010:61).

4.6.2 Dependability
This is concerned with whether the same results would be obtained if one could observe the same thing twice. The idea of dependability emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The research is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the researcher approached the study (Mqulwana, 2010:61).

4.6.3 Credibility
The credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. Since from this perspective the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand
the phenomena of interest from the participant’s eyes, participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Mqulwana 2010:61).

4.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. There are a number of strategies of enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. The researcher can actively search for and describe negative instances that contradict prior observations. After a study one can conduct a data audit that examines the data collection and analysis procedures and make judgements about the potential for bias or distortion (Mqulwana, 2010:62).

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical measures adhered to as guiding principles throughout the study, were as follows:

4.7.1 Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

Principals, educators and learners were used in the research. Learners were minors and as such, their parents consented to their participation. In other words, the researcher had to get consent from their parents to participate in the study. Therefore, the researcher provided every learner with a letter to show their parents or guardians that the research was for study purposes. Permission of parents was requested for learners as participants because they were under the age of 18 years. Participants were provided with sufficient information about the study to allow them to decide for or against participation. The principals and educators were given consent forms as participants in the study. This was done after they had been provided with all the information regarding the research and expressed their willingness to voluntarily participate in the research. The respondents were informed that they had a choice to participate in the research voluntarily or to decline as they were not being forced to participate unwillingly. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from participating in the research should they so desire.
4.7.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality of participants was guaranteed during the interview and filling in of questionnaires by the learners. The researcher kept the recordings and notes from participants strictly confidential. Since the research deals with human beings, the names, identity of the participants, and the research sites were not revealed in the reporting of the findings. Codes were used to conceal the names of participants. For example, they were addressed as participants from school A and participants from school B. The use of codes was done to ensure that any person who reads the research report will be unable to link the response to a particular participant even though the researcher will be able to link the responses to individual participants. This ensures that personal details of participants remain anonymous.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Qualitative approach has been adopted in this study by the researcher in the process of investigating contributory factors to learner dropout in schools. The reason for using qualitative approach is probably the most reliable method, provided it is properly conducted so that the researcher does not influence participants to elicit a desired reply. Sampling of this study included learners, educators and principal of each school in order to elicit the ideas of all stakeholders in the education system. During the process of the interview, anonymity and confidentiality have been complied with in adherence with ethical consideration requirements. The next chapter focuses on the interpretation and analysis of empirical findings.
CHAPTER FIVE

5. INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study focused specifically on school principals, high school educators and learners from Grades 10, 11 and 12. The sample consisted of two principals, two educators and 36 high school learners in two public schools in the King Williams Town District in the Province of the Eastern Cape. For research purposes and to ensure confidentiality, all participants have been coded as follows:

- Principals are coded as Principal 1 for school A and Principal 2 for school B.
- Educators are coded as Educator 1 for school A and Educator 2 for school B.
- Thirty six learners are coded as Learner 1 to Learner 36.

The focus of this chapter is on the interpretation of data that was collected using questionnaires in the form of closed and open-ended questions, which were administered to learners. Interviews were only used for principals and educators of the two schools in order to gain a more qualitative understanding of their perceptions. Although the interview method has both advantages and disadvantages, it enables the interviewer to follow up on incomplete or unclear responses by asking additional probing questions (Gay, 1990:203). Furthermore, the interview is the most appropriate method for asking participants personal questions (Gay, 1990:203). In conducting this study, the interview method allowed the researcher to obtain data that participants would not ordinarily disclose in a questionnaire, thus enabling the researcher to adapt to the level of communication that suits the participant.
5.2 ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS AND EDUCATORS

Enrolment and withdrawal data was collected from school A and school B for the period starting in the year 2009 to 2011. This data is presented in the following tables.

Table 5.2.1 Statistics of Learner Dropouts for School A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>Total enrolled</th>
<th>Withdrawals</th>
<th>Total withdrawals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
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### Table 5.2.2 Statistics of Learner Dropouts for School B

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<td><strong>112</strong></td>
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Based on the above data, it appears that many male learners are dropping out at school more than female learners. The following sub-sections correspond to the main questions that were posed to participants during the interviews and the corresponding responses.

### 5.2.3 Challenges Learners Face in Dealing with the New Curriculum

Principal 1, Principal 2, Educator 1 and Educator 2 all indicated that learners do not get enough information because of lack of resources and facilities such as computers with internet and libraries. They further pointed out that in rural areas there is always a shortage of textbooks. There are also no libraries and no computers for learners to be able to get information from the internet. Principal 2
added that educators are not knowledgeable enough to effectively teach their learners. It is common practise that, if the school is under Section 21, that means the government provides funds for that particular school and thus the School Management Team (SMT) should ensure that all the resources that learners need are provided, such as computers with internet and relevant textbooks.

5.2.4 Solutions to Challenges

Principal 1 stated that stakeholders like the School Governing Body (SGB) and the School Management Team (SMT) should be fully involved in schools in order to promote quality education and the development of the schools. Principal 2 indicated that more workshops should be organised in order to develop educators. Principal 2 said that; “I am trying by all means to ask for help in private companies and, as a result, one of the companies has responded positively to offer us computers with free internet for three weeks and, thereafter, the school will have to pay monthly for internet rental”.

The school needs to adopt an Inclusive Education Policy with change and restructuring as its main focus. Such a policy must ensure that all educators, SMT members and other stakeholders, share the notion that the needs of all learners are important and need to be addressed and met wherever possible (Terhoeven, 2009: 63).

5.2.5 Contributing Factors to Poor Attendance

Principal 1, Principal 2, Educator 1 and Educator 2 gave the same response to this question. They all concurred that poor attendance is caused by the fact that most learners stay alone without any parental supervision, or they live with their grandparents. Other reasons that were cited for poor attendance were laziness, poverty, poor social backgrounds, demotivation, lack of role models for learners to emulate, and lack of discipline. Principal 2 revealed that the most contributing factor is the distance between the school and the community because the school is a stand-alone school, which is very far from the community. The argument by Principal 2 was that remoteness of the school affects the attendance of learners because
sometimes it is too hot for them to walk, and sometimes it is raining for them to come to school. Poverty, unemployment and severe stress have a hugely negative impact on school attendance (Knipe, Van der Waldt, Van Niekerk, Burger and Nell 2002: 372).

5.2.6 Measures Taken to Deal with Poor Attendance of Classes.

Principal 1, Principal 2 and Educator 1 pointed out that the parents of learners with poor attendance get called in by the school and are given a verbal warning, followed by a written warning. Educator 2 for school B mentioned that there is an Institutional-Based Learner Support Team (IBLST) which is responsible for the discipline of learners with poor attendance. They indicated that the IBLST is composed of five members, namely; a language educator, a Life Orientation educator, a Head of Department and two parents. They also pointed out that the IBLST meets with learners and motivate them to see the value of education. The Policy on Learner Attendance (2010:7) stipulates that it is the responsibility of parents to ensure that learners attend school daily. Section 9(1) of the South African Schools Act of 1996 stipulates that the governing body of a public school may, after a fair hearing, suspend a learner from school as a correctional measure for a period not longer than one week, or pending a decision by the Head of Department, as to whether the learner is to be expelled from the school.

5.2.7 Grade in which Learners are Allowed to Follow their Career Choice

Principal 1, Principal 2, Educator 1 and Educator 2 indicated that learners need to get career guidance from Grade 9 because in Grade 10 they have to choose subjects that are aligned with their chosen careers. Their argument was that Grade 9 is the final year of compulsory schooling in the South African education system, implying at this stage a learner is faced with the very important choice of whether to stay in school and enter the Further Education and Training (FET) band, or leave school to enter “the world of work”. According to Hawksley, Coetzee and Louw (2002: 34), this choice critically affects the life of a learner in many ways. Hence, learners have to consider their options very carefully. If a learner decides to continue with the FET band, the subject choice for
Grade 10 is very important because it gives direction to the life of the learner. Therefore, Life Orientation educators have to guide learners whilst they are in Grade 9 (Hawksley, Coetzee and Louw, 2002: 35).

5.2.8 The Term in which Learner Dropout is Experienced Most.

Principal 1 and Educator 1 stated that learners in school A mostly drop out during the second term, which is in winter. On the other hand, Principal 2 and Educator 2 pointed out the learners in School B drop out in the third term. All responses seem to indicate that learners are mostly affected by the winter season due to long distance, as well as laziness.

5.2.9 The Trend of Dropout

Principal 1, Principal 2, Educator 1 and Educator 2 in both school A and school B pointed out that learners normally drop out of school after approximately 30 days of being absent from school. They mentioned that one of the rules of the attendance register is that the class teacher has to withdraw a learner from the class attendance register once he or she is absent from school for two weeks, which is 14 consecutive days. In view of the researcher, it is very important for the class teacher to ensure and confirm with parents of the learner that the learner has really dropped out before he or she is withdrawn from the class attendance register. This means that efforts of bringing the learner back to school have to be done prior to withdrawing the learner from the class attendance register.

5.2.10 Measures Taken to Deal with Learners who are Caught Using Drugs at School

School A and school B both have high rates of drug abuse amongst its learners, which poses a big challenge for the educators. Principal 1 and Educator 1 reported that if a learner is caught using drugs, his or her parents and the disciplinary committee are called to deal with the case. They also pointed out that the learner is then warned and suspended for five consecutive days. Principal 1 and Educator 1
also indicated that they were aware that Section 29(1) (a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) stipulates that everyone has the right to be educated, but they maintained that they have to discipline a learner that misbehaved as a lesson to other learners. Principal 2 and Educator 2 added that since drug abuse is prevalent in school B, they have made a deal with the South African Police Service Crime Prevention Unit in East London to conduct random drug searches at the school. Consequently, the police come twice a month to the school to search for drugs. Considering the high rate of drug abuse, Principal 2 and Educator 2 indicated that the Crime Prevention Unit conducts two crime awareness campaigns each year, especially in school B. Hawksley et.al. (2002: 120) state that it is vital for South Africans, inside and outside government, to concentrate their efforts in stopping crime by any means necessary. Drug abuse may lead to murder, rape, violent assault, kidnapping, hijacking, robbery and burglary.

5.2.11 Classification of Schools

Principal 1 and Educator 1 stated that school A is a Section 21 school, which is extremely poor and is fully supported by the government. Hence, in school A, the tuition is free. Principal 2 and Educator 2 revealed that school B is also under Section 21, but learners do pay school fees. The fees are used for the extra-mural activities of the school, namely athletics, sport, debates, music and so on. Section 21 of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) provides for the establishment of self-managing schools by permitting schools to apply for the provision of some of the functions that were traditionally carried out by the State. These functions include maintaining school property, purchasing learning support materials (LSMs) and equipment, paying for services and determining the extra-mural curriculum. However, as one of the principles of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), efficiency needs to be considered since funds allocated to the school always match with the financial needs of the school (Jeevanantham and Ntshoe, 2004: 96).

5.2.12 Management of HIV and AIDS in Schools

Principal 1, Principal 2, Educator 1 and Educator 2 concurred that no learner in their schools has ever disclosed his or her Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and
Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) status. Based on this response, it could be argued that school A and B work hand-in-hand with the Department of Health in conducting health awareness campaigns about HIV and AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Infections, dangers of early circumcision, pregnancy, drug abuse and many health issues that affect learners. Principal 2 pointed out that Life Orientation educators play a key role in this issue, because even though learners themselves do not disclose, some of their relatives become sick and learners become responsible for them. Principal 2 continued by saying that this affects the performance of learners at school. Coetzee, Hawksley and Louw, (2002: 92) state that it is therefore necessary to educate learners about HIV and AIDS and to make them aware that some people who contract HIV can live healthy and normal lives for many years. Life Orientation educators have to educate the learners that a person cannot know his or her HIV and AIDS status without going for a blood test. The School Governing Body (SGB) may be trained in the management of HIV and AIDS in schools (Jeevanantham and Ntshoe, 2004: 126)

5.2.13 Measures Undertaken to Deal with Pregnant Girls

Principal 1 stated that it is a must that all pregnant learners should be allowed to attend school fully until they receive maternity leave, and after giving birth they are free to come back again. Moreover, all educators have to give respect to the pregnant learner and female educators must give guidance also. Principal 2 reported that parents are called to school to make them aware of the learner’s pregnancy and are instructed to come and fetch the learner’s work once she starts maternity leave to ensure that the learner is not left behind. These responses seem to indicate that pregnant learners are being cared for in both school A and school B. They are allowed to take maternity leave and are welcome to continue with their studies after giving birth.

5.2.14 Prevention of Learner Dropouts

Principal 1, Principal 2, Educator 1 and Educator 2 both in school A and school B indicated that when a learner starts to show a sign of dropping out, the parent is called to the school to enquire about the reasons behind non-attendance of the
learner. Principal 1 disclosed that a motivational speaker is usually organised to motivate learners in order to see the value of education, and encourage them to learn. Furthermore, Principal 2 pointed out that motivating learners for good behaviour and supporting them prevent dropouts and extra-mural activities always keep learners at school. Based on the above responses, it could be deduced that motivating learners to study helps them fulfil their life goals. It is important to identify the values and needs of a learner. It is also important to discern what the learner wants or needs from life as that will determine the career choice of the learner.

5.2.15 Support for Learners who are Orphans and Performing Well in their Studies

According to Principal 1 and Principal 2, the Department of Social Development provides support to school A and school B to assist learners who are orphans by providing them with foster care grants, social grants, food parcels and uniform to make sure that these learners are fully supported. Educator 2 stated that she does not concentrate only on orphans, but all learners who are faced with poverty and those who do not afford to buy school uniform. Educator 2 also pointed out that she organises financial assistance for learners. As a result, African Scholars’ Fund is assisting all the learners who are not affording. Principal 2 pointed out that he normally writes a letter to recommend the poor learner to receive assistance from the Department of Social Development. Principal 2 added that educators are also very kind and subsequently every month they support poor learners with clothes, pocket money for lunch, groceries and school uniforms. Euvrard, Findlay and Nduna, (2006: 126) state that bursaries are usually given to the best applicants and they empower disadvantaged learners.

5.2.16 Contributing Factors to Early Learner Dropout at School

Principal 1, Principal 2, Educator 1 and Educator 2 mentioned that teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, peer pressure, poverty, unemployment of parents and poor family backgrounds, play a significant role in the early dropout of learners at school. Principal 2 indicated that learners are walking long distances to come to school because there is no scholar transport for them and their parents are very
poor, unemployed and cannot afford to pay private transports. Consequently, many
female learners are targets of rape. According to Principal 1, there are so many
shebeens (taverns) in the community, which influence learners not to come to
school, which is a matter of serious concern. Principal 2 reported that many learners
are forced to look for employment at an early age because of the poor family
background, poverty and irresponsible parents who are heavy drinkers. Thus, it
seems that a wide range of social experiences contribute to learners dropping out of
school. According to the findings, factors which compel learners to drop out of school
stem from previous unpleasant social experiences that they have had.

5.2.17 Measures to Lure Learners Back to School

Principal 1 stated that the remedy is to first communicate with parents through
general meetings organised by the school, showing them the enrolment of the school
and the number of withdrawals per year so that school educators and community
stakeholders can be able to work together and encourage those who have already
dropped out to re-register again. Educator 2 mentioned that the school feeding
scheme would be introduced in January 2012, which would alleviate the issue of
learners who come to school with empty stomachs. According to Principal 2, all
learners who once failed Grade 12, even if they never studied at the school, but were
interested to re-enrol, would be welcome to the school, and would even register as
private candidates. Principal 2 added that there would be a computer class starting
in January of 2012. These classes were meant to motivate more learners to be
computer literate. They would be offered free of charge in order to improve the
quality of learning and teaching in school B. It appears that the school principal
anticipated that learners who dropped out of school would want to return and carry
on as normal. The school principal assumed that what dropout learners really
needed was motivational talks and support with academic work or leadership roles.
5.2 ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS BASED ON THE RESPONSES OF LEARNERS ON QUESTIONNAIRES

5.3.1 Challenges of Learning that Learners are Facing in the New Curriculum

Learners in school A and school B pointed out that they have all noticed that learners were repeating classes as from the year 2009 to 2011. Furthermore, they revealed that there were many learners who dropped out of school in Grades 10 to Grade 12 in the year 2010. These learners indicated that the challenges they had to deal with the most, were the fact that in both school A and school B, they struggled to do their activities well because they did not have computers and libraries to conduct research as required for their schoolwork. They ended up asking those learners with mobile phones, which had internet to assist them in this regard.

Learner 16 stated that some educators assist them by making copies of the relevant information for them, which is then distributed to each learner in order for them to obtain good marks for a specific project. According to Learner 19, the methods that educators were using when teaching learners were very difficult. Learner 19 pointed out that it was not easy sometimes to follow educators and some subjects were not easy. Learner 20, Learner 31 and Learner 33 also complained that a lot of work had to be done within a short period of time and there was no time for them to rest. Learner 27 and Learner 35 pointed out that new educator for the same subject in every class or grade every year was a big challenge for them and unfortunately learners could not do anything about it, instead they had to get used to the situation although it causes confusion to them.

Educators should meet and integrate their plans for learner activities such as; assignments, projects and research to avoid giving learners big projects to be submitted at the same time. It is also important to retain the same educators in subjects where learners are performing well, unless there is a problem in that particular subject.

5.3.2 The Grade in which Learners Dropout the Most
Nineteen learners reported that many learners are dropping out of school in Grade 11 and 16 learners pointed out that many learners drop out when they are in Grade 10. The reasons highlighted were that many learners become pregnant, while some abused alcohol and drugs. Learner 27 and Learner 33 highlighted that Grade 11 was not an easy class, and as a result, many learners failed when they were in this grade. Learner 3 claimed that many learners repeat grade 11 yearly. Based on the above responses, it is of fundamental importance to refer a learner who is not coping at school to Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges. The referral system should apply to learners who are not coping well in their studies. Parents of the learner should be informed in order to avoid learner dropout.

5.3.3 The Distance Between the School and the Community

Learner 1 to Learner 18 from school A indicated that the distance between their community and the school was less than 3 kilometres, which was manageable and therefore there was no need for them to use transport to go to school. Learner 19 to Learner 36 from school B reported that the distance between their school and community was very long. As such, learners whose parents could afford to organise private transport for them, arranged themselves.

Most learners from school B noted that the distance from their community to school was approximately 10 to 15 kilometres, which affected their school attendance when the weather was too hot, too cold or when it was raining. Most of the learners from school B stated that the principal and their educators were doing nothing to rectify this problem, even though it caused poor learner attendance at school everyday. Deducing from the responses of the learners above it is critical for every school to arrange scholar transport for learners when they are staying 5 kilometres away from school because one of the reasons that cause learners to dropout is the distance between the community and the school.

5.3.4 Measures Taken for a Learner Caught Using Drugs at School

Learners from school A and B stated that they have noticed that many learners in their school are using drugs. Learner 5 from school A pointed that a learner who is caught using drugs gets suspended for two weeks. Twelve learners reported that
parents, police officers and School Governing Body (SGB) get involved when such misbehaviour occurs. They indicated that the learner concerned gets an initial warning and if he or she continues misbehaving, he or she gets suspended for a week. Moreover, they pointed out that if this behaviour continued it might lead to expulsion. Furthermore, Learner 19 raised a concern that educators also drink alcohol with learners and smoke cigarettes, hence these learners could not be punished.

5.3.5 The Rate of Pregnancy and Measures Taken Against it

Learners from school A and school B noted that many learners become pregnant as early as Grade 9 in their schools. Eighteen learners from both school A and school B shared the same sentiment that Grade 10 had a high pregnancy rate and no measure could be taken against them because they have the right to study like any other learner. This is supported by Section 29(1) (a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), which stipulates that everyone has the right to basic education. The following statements are some of the responses given by the learners regarding pregnancy:

- “Learners are allowed to continue with their studies until they deliver and thereafter come back again” [Learner 20].
- “Nothing is done to them, they attend normally as others” [Learner 22].
- “Female educators always talk to them” [Learner 27].
- “The number of girls who are becoming pregnant is increasing because nothing is done to them” [Learner 31].
- “Every learner has a right to learn whether she is pregnant or not” [Learner 35].
- “Every learner has a right to be educated” [Learner 36].
5.3.6 The Impact of HIV and AIDS to Learners who are Infected or Affected by it

The majority of learners claimed that they did not know any learners who were infected with HIV or AIDS because no one had ever revealed his or her status. The ensuing statements are some of the responses from learners in school B regarding the HIV and AIDS status of other learners:

- “I do not know because learners do not disclose their status” [Learner 26].
- “I do not want to answer this one” [Learner 34].
- “It is a secret I do not know” [Learner 35].
- “I do not know because it is kept as a secret” [Learner 36].

HIV and AIDS cause serious disruptions in all aspects of the South African society and result in widespread losses of valuable human resources. The underlying factors of unsafe conditions, dynamic pressures and hazards are deep-rooted phenomena, which together form and maintain vulnerability (Knipe et.al. 2002: 366).

5.3.7 Support Being Received by Orphans at Schools

Learners from school A and school B indicated that orphans the Department of Social Development assisted of funds through the provision of school uniform, food, social grants and foster care grants. Moreover, these learners also pointed out that educators generally organised bursaries for orphans to further their studies. Learner19, Learner 20, Learner 22, Learner 23, Learner 29, Learner 34, Learner 35 and Learner 36 responded that educators assisted orphans by buying clothes, school uniform and by providing for their lunch money, as well as any other school needs that they might have. Learners at school have diverse needs that impact on their functioning at school (Terhoeven, 2009:67). The observation by the researcher was that educators offered learners assistance in order to prevent them from dropping out of school when they had the potential to study.
5.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LEARNERS DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL EARLY

Learners from school A and school B indicated that there are many reasons for leaving school early, includes:

- Poverty which results in learners dropping out in order to look for a job so as to support their families.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Teenage pregnancy with no one at home to look after the child.
- Peer pressure.
- Failing the same grade yearly and being afraid of being ridiculed by others.
- Living without parents.
- A lack of guidance, motivation and support at home because parents are illiterate.
- Financial challenges which lead to a lack of money for buying school uniform and other school resources.
- Sexual abuse which leads to stress.
- Learners being involved in crime.
- Having to travel long distances to school.

Eight learners expressed their views as follows:

- “I will say that it is teenage pregnancy. Teenagers become pregnant at a very young age whilst they are still at school, so I have to say it is the reason for them to dropout” [Learner 9].
- “Some learners do not see the reason for them to study, they just dropout and look for jobs” [Learner 19].
• “The situation at home causes so many learners to dropout because you find yourself different from other learners while you are part of them” [Learner 20].

• “Some learners dropout of school because they become involved in love relationships at a very young age, which disturb them in their studies” [Learner 24].

• “Some learners are suffering, they need money as a result they are involved in human trafficking and at the end they get diseases” [Learner 25].

• “Financial problems at home cause poverty [which] leads other learners to dropout [of] school and look for a job” [Learner 28].

• “Repeating the same class every year makes one to lose hope and decide to dropout” [Learner 30].

• “Every day the long distance is killing us when we are going to school and when we are coming back” [Learner 35].

According to Terhoeven (2009: 72), in South Africa teachers perform many different roles at schools. These roles include being a counsellor, Minister, parent and social worker. The reality is that the majority of teachers in South Africa were never trained for these roles. Other factors that have an impact on the ability of teachers to deliver effective support and teaching are class sizes, workload, physical layout of classrooms, learning support materials, equipment and administrative duties (Terhoeven (2009: 72).

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
The following constraints complicated the gathering of data for the study:

• The time span that was available for the completion of the study posed a limitation to the data gathering, implying that time constraints within the confines of this study did not allow for the exploration of relevant information that fall within the ambit of the study.
The study was limited to only two high schools of the King Williams Town District in the Province of the Eastern Cape in order to save and costs. The participants per school were only the principal and one educator interviewed, and 18 learners were given questionnaires.

At the time when the research was conducted, students were preparing for the semester examinations. This led to participants being under pressure with preparations and revision for the examinations, which could compromise the validity of answers they provided.

Some of the students had a language problem and could not express themselves and understand the questions because they were written in English, which could pose questions to reliability of the information provided.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

On the basis of the experience gathered in this study a number of recommendations can be suggested concerning future research in this field. Replication and possible enlargement of the study to incorporate parents and learners who have dropped out of school would highly desirable. A comparative study could be conducted between private schools and public schools in order to see how the results compare.

5.6 CONCLUSION

It emerged from the empirical findings that high school principals and educators are experiencing learner dropout due to social problems affecting learners. The researcher believes that both schools are trying their best to decrease the number of learner dropouts. However, the role played by the SMT and SGB is not sufficient or effective in rendering support to the learners. The schools need a structure called the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST), which could work together with the District-Based Support Team (DBST). This would make the support offered to schools more effective and would ensure that the needs of learners are addressed accordingly and to the best ability of the team. With a proper structure in place, more learners can be easily prevented from dropping out of school and they would be able to get support when needed.
In this study it emerged from the empirical findings that learner dropout is *inter alia* caused by social factors such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, HIV or AIDS infection, gangsterism and learning barriers. These factors are complex issues which should be handled by skilled people. As learners spend a great deal of their time in the school environment, the educator has become an important role-player to assist learners in alleviating their social problems. It is essential that learners with social problems must at an early stage get professional help. The educators who are, due to circumstances, obliged to help these learners, are not necessarily equipped to give the required assistance. Based on the research findings discussed in this chapter, recommendations and concluding remarks are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SIX

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has explained factors contributing to dropout rate of learners in selected high schools in the King William’s Town District. The analysis and assessment of empirical research findings made reference to the theories espoused in the literature review. This final chapter therefore provides a conclusion of the major findings and finished with some final thoughts about the research.

Dropping out implies that a learner exits the education system before completing the programme for which he or she was registered. In this study, it emerged from the empirical findings that learner dropout is inter alia caused by social factors such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, HIV or AIDS infection, gangsterism and learning barriers. These factors are complex issues, which should be handled by skilled people. As learners spend a great deal of their time in the school environment, the educator has become an important role-player to assist learners to alleviate social problems. It is essential that learners with social problems must at an early stage get professional help. Educators who are, due to circumstances, obliged to help these learners, are not necessarily equipped to give the required assistance.

From this study, it is evident that learners and educators need to be supported, motivated and capacitated to ensure progress with the implementation of the new curriculum. The school, as an institution established to educate, has a responsibility to support learners who are at risk of dropping out. The phenomenon of young people dropping out of school affects the government, individuals, societies and the labour market. The effects of dropping out do not only have financial implications, but also social implications. Dropping out of school poses challenges regarding self-sufficiency, self-esteem and the ability to make education choices.

The Department of Education has policies in place, which address the phenomenon of learners dropping out of school. These policies should consciously and continuously be monitored to ensure that educators are adequately supported. Teacher-training and continuous in-service training programmes should ensure that
educators are exposed to current policies and new skills that can assist them in dealing with learners’ social problems in alleviation of this phenomenon.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are in order:

**6.1 Lack of Resources**

The empirical findings of this study revealed that learners are faced with challenges regarding the new curriculum, which contribute, to learner dropout in schools. It was established that learners were repeating grades because they struggled to succeed with the new curriculum due to lack of resources. Learners did not have computers and libraries to assist them to conduct research as required by the new curriculum.

Based on the findings above it could be suggested that each school supported by the government financially should ensure that every learner has access to the minimum set of textbooks and workbooks required by the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The school should increase access for learners to a wider range of media, including computers in order to enrich their education. The School Management Team (SMT) should ensure that schools utilise funds that are allocated for resources responsibly in a transparent and efficient manner so that all the facilities needed for learners would be available for use. This, in turn, will ensure improvement in the quality of learning and teaching at schools.

**6.2 The Distance Between the School and the Community**

The findings of this study has shown that the distance between the school and the community has a direct effect on learner dropout. Most learners travelled a distance of approximately 10 to 15 kilometres to school, which affected their school attendance when the weather was too hot, too cold or when it was raining. These learners were also victims of sexual abuse while walking to school. It has been brought to light that principals and educators were not sensitive to this problem, even though it had adverse consequences with regard to poor attendance of learners.
To remedy this state of affairs, it could be recommended that the principal of the school should write a letter of motivation to the Department of Education, requesting scholar transport for learners who travel long distances in order to alleviate this situation. If learners are assisted with transport to and from school, the attendance rate might improve, sexual abuse could be eradicated which in turn could reduce the phenomenon of dropout.

6.3 Measures Taken Against Substance Abuse in Schools

The study has established that the use of drugs by learners contributes to learner dropout. Furthermore, the study has revealed that educators turned to be in the company of learners in substance abuse at school, hence these learners do not get punished by educators.

It is proposed that the Department of Education should ensure that all schools are implementing the rules of SASA 84 of 1996 to make sure that educators and principals are playing a leadership role that is exemplary to learners. This will ensure that educators are able to discipline learners when they misbehave. Learners and parents need to be informed about the contents of the Act so that they are aware of rules and consequences of misbehaviour in school. The Department of Education should make sure that the South African Council for Educators effectively regulates behaviour by all educators to promote discipline in schools.

6.4 Pregnancy and HIV and AIDS prevalence in schools

It has emerged from the findings of this study that the high prevalence of pregnancy and HIV and AIDS among learners contributes significantly to dropout. It has been established that learners become pregnant as early as Grade 9. It has also been revealed that Grade 10 has the highest pregnancy rate.

It would be of much benefit if the government could provide schools with nurses who could provide education awareness programmes about the dangers of early pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and HIV and AIDS. These programmes
would focus on preventive measures, contraceptives and be encouraged to abstain from sexual activities. If learners are made aware of the consequences of unsafe sexual indulgence they will be better equipped to make informed decisions regarding their life styles.

6.5 Orphans at Schools

The findings of this study has established that orphaned learners contribute to the dropout rate of learners. It was also revealed that orphaned learners seek employment, rather than remaining in school in order to provide financial assistance to their families.

It is recommended that principals of schools should inform the Department of Social Development about the predicament in which these learners find themselves in, so that the necessary assistance could be provided. The Department of Social Development could also assist schools by providing information about benefits available to learners in need of help.

6.6 The effect of Poverty

This study has established that poverty amongst learners contributes to learner dropout. It has emerged that learners are unable to successfully complete their school careers due to lack of basic school needs and hunger. The families of these learners are unable to provide them with basic school needs such as school uniform and stationery. The families of these learners are also unable to provide food to them, resulting in learners spending the whole school day hungry and unable to concentrate. Considering that access to nutrition in schools in the form of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) has proven that it encourages concentration and good attendance in class.

It is recommended that the School Management Team and the SGB should make the proper assessment of the social profile of learners so that the necessary intervention regarding classification of such a school as in dire need of social assistance can be undertaken. If the school is already having access to the National
School Nutrition Programme, measures proper implementation of this programme should be strengthen to deter maladministration and corruption in the process of the implementation of the feeding scheme.

7. FINAL CONCLUSION
This study has discussed factors that contribute to dropout rate of learners in selected high schools in the King William’s Town District. The analysis and assessment of empirical research findings made reference to the theories espoused in the literature review. This study has established that various factors do indeed contribute to dropout rate of learners. It has been revealed that these are not solely attributed to the school environment, but to learners’ living conditions and life styles.

In this study it has emerged from the empirical findings that learner dropout is inter alia caused by social factors such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, HIV or AIDS infection, gangsterism and learning barriers. These factors are complex issues which should be handled by skilled people. As learners spend a great deal of their time in the school environment, the educator has become an important role-player to assist learners in alleviating their social problems. It is essential that learners with social problems must at an early stage get professional help. The educators who are, due to circumstances, obliged to help these learners, are not necessarily equipped to give the required assistance. Based on the challenges of dropout a number of suggestions and recommendations have been espoused in this study.
8. REFERENCES


Toni, M. N. 2002. Factors Influencing the Academic Performance of Black Students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Port Elizabeth. Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Magister Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Port Elizabeth. Port Elizabeth: University of Port Elizabeth Library.


### 8.1 Legislations


8.2 Internet sources


8.3 Journals


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE SCHEDULED FOR LEARNERS

Study of the factors contributing to the dropout rate of learners.

This study is conducted by Ntombikazi Gloria Dekeza-Tsomo, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master’s Degree in Public Administration at Nelson Mandela Metro University. The aim of the study is to determine the reasons that cause learner dropout in schools and address the challenges that affect them. It also aims to establish the principles of the new curriculum for retaining learners are being implemented by the Department of Education.

All responses to all questions are completely confidential. To ensure adherence to the rights to privacy and confidentiality, participation is voluntary and anonymous; that is, a portion for the filling of names has been deliberately omitted. None of the questionnaires, once they are filled out, will ever be seen by anyone except the researcher.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The questionnaire will be administered by the researcher.
2. The questions will be asked using the indigenous language spoken by the particular community that is being investigated.
3. Some of the questions require a respondent to choose a YES or NO, he or she has to tick in the appropriate box next to the answer opted for.
4. Any explanations or comments may be written in the space provided and on the back of the questionnaire.
5. Note Well: The answers given by respondents will be completely confidential. It is important to emphasize to respondents that they be as honest as they can in answering this questionnaire.
Questionnaire

1. How many years have you been in this school?

________________________________________________________________

2. In which year was your first registration in this school?

________________________________________________________________

3. Were there any failures in your school for Grade 10 in the year 2009?

________________________________________________________________

4. Are there any learners in your class who were registered for Grade 10 in 2009 who managed to reach Grade 12 in 2011?

________________________________________________________________

5. Have you noticed any learners dropping out of Grades 10 to 12 in 2010?

________________________________________________________________

6. What challenges do you face as learners with the new curriculum?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________
7. What has the school done so far to address these challenges?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

8. In which Grade are learners allowed to follow their career choice?

__________________________________________________________________________

9. Looking at the year of 2010 as a whole, from which Grade did learners withdraw from school the most?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
10. Are there any learners who repeat the same Grade several times? Tick next to the appropriate box.

Yes [ ] No [ ]

11. If the answer is yes to the previous question, how does the school’s management handle the learning challenges of learners?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

12. How many kilometres do learners have to travel to school?

________________________________________________________________

13. Are there any means of transport that the learners use to come to school?

________________________________________________________________

14. What measures are taken when a learner is caught using drugs in the school premises?

________________________________________________________________
15. Are there any girls who have ever been pregnant in your school starting from 2009?

________________________________________________________________

16. If the answer is yes to the previous question, which Grade is affected the most by learners becoming pregnancy?

________________________________________________________________

17. What measures are taken to deal with pregnant girls?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________
18. Are there any learners who have been affected or infected with the HIV/AIDS pandemic at the school?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

19. Are there any learners who are orphans in your school?

__________________________________________________________________

20. If the answer is yes to the previous question, what support are they receiving to help them do well in their studies?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

21. In your view, what are the causes of learners dropping out of school early?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Sample:
School Principals and Educators of the Two High Schools in King Williams Town

Interview Discussion Guide

Moderator’s Instructions:

- I will introduce myself and clarify to each participant I interview the reasons for conducting the interviews.

- I will read the “Subject Information Sheet for Participants”;

- I will inform the group that the interview or discussion will be kept confidential;

- I will inform the group that I would like to record their interview or discussion and request their permission to use a tape recorder or any other audio or audio-visual recording instrument;

- I will inform the participants that they may withdraw from the interview or discussion at any point, should they wish to do so;

- I will obtain verbal consent from each participant for their participation; and

- I will obtain written consent from each participant for their participation.

I will read the following to each participant:
“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview/discussion today. Before we begin, I would like to confirm that you have given your voluntary consent to participate. Do you agree to participate freely?”

Upon their agreement I will then follow with, “Okay, then I would like to start with the instructions.”

I will then proceed as follows:

- I will start with the instructions;

- I will go through the process of introducing each participant; and

- I will make a comment to break the ice and set the tone for the interview.

Questions for the Face-to-Face Interviews:

1. What challenges do learners face in dealing with the new curriculum?

2. How can you solve these challenges as the Principal or educator?

3. In your view, what are the contributing factors to poor attendance?

4. According to your school policy, what measures are taken to deal with those who attend classes poorly?

5. In which Grade are learners allowed to follow their career choice?

6. Looking at the year as a whole, in which term do you experience learner dropout the most?

7. After how many days of absenteeism do learners dropout?
8. Can you elaborate on the measures taken to deal with learners who are caught using drugs in your school?

9. Is the school under Section 21, under no fee or both?

10. How does the school handle the issue of learners who are affected or infected by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) pandemic?

11. What measures do you undertake to deal with pregnant girls?

12. What does the school do to prevent learner dropouts?

13. How do you support the learners who are orphans, but are doing well in their studies?

14. What could be the causes of early learner dropout at school, especially at high school level?

15. What contribution can the school make towards encouraging the learners who have already dropped out of school to re-register?

Thank you for your participation in this study.