

**EXPLORING THE CAUSES OF LOW GRADE 12 PASS RATE IN TWO UMLAZI
DISTRICT SCHOOLS, KWAZULU-NATAL**

By

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DECLARATION

STUDENT NUMBER: 8858187

I, PIUSON HLUPHANI MUNTU NGCONGO, declare that this dissertation is a product of my original work; and sources used have been indicated as such in the text. It has not been previously submitted to any university for a degree or any other qualification.

PHM NGCONGO

DATE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi District Schools, KwaZulu-Natal. It is hoped that the study would contribute to the understanding of the causes and factors of low Grade 12 pass rate and provide solutions of improving learners' performance.

This is qualitative study conducted in the area of Umbumbulu focusing on exploring the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi District Schools, KwaZulu-Natal. The methodology used was qualitative. A case study method was adopted. Data was gathered through focus group interviews with two principals, twelve Grade12 learners aged between 18 and 21, and six teachers between 15 and 22 years teaching experience in secondary schools. Drawing from the findings of the interviews conducted, the study highlights the factors that have negative impact to low Grade 12 pass rate, and it revealed the possible solutions to alleviate the trend of low performance.

The data reveals that there are numerous factors that affect the performance of Grade 12 learners such as poverty, child headed families, sporadic absenteeism, questionable assessment methods, overcrowded classes, lack of discipline in schools, corporal punishment, violence in schools, teenage pregnancy, curriculum reforms, lack of parental involvement, and cultural background.

In this study I argue that the trend of low Grade 12 pass rate is not only limited to Umbumbulu Circuit in Umlazi District, but is the overall trend in most rural schools in South Africa. Therefore, the study recommended that all stakeholders should play their roles to overcome the crises of low Grade 12 performance. Again, it was recommended that the introduction of an advanced integrative approach in training programmes of future teachers is needed in which attention to rural -FET band schools will be considered as an integral part of the training, whereby teachers will be trained to teach inclusive education.

Keywords:

Pass Rate; Discipline; Drug Abuse; Parental Involvement; Absenteeism

CHAPTER 1

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is based in KwaZulu-Natal Province. South Africa has nine provinces¹, and a population of approximately 49,320,000. There are eleven official languages: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Swazi, Tswana, Tsonga, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu. In each province there are public schools which are known as Government schools and private schools which are known as multiracial schools. This study will focus on two government schools that are of different background and development in Umlazi district. These schools are Isisusa High School and Ndonyela Secondary School which are located in Umbumbulu, South coast in KwaZulu-Natal. The focus will be on the Grade 12 pass rate, I will investigate on the effects of the low pass rate in Grade 12.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In South Africa Grade 12 results become the main public interest and scrutiny because they determine the learner's entrance into the tertiary institutions such as universities and Further Education and Training (FET) colleges Department of Basic Education (2010).

As a teacher who has been teaching in different schools in Umlazi District, I have observed the trend of high Grade 12 failure rate over the past five years. Education of the youth is a universal human phenomenon – it has always been important and will continue to be so for the rest of human existence Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:43).

In this regard I needed to understand why grade12 results are low. Furthermore I needed to investigate the causes and factors that may help to provide solutions to improve grade 12 results.

¹ Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, Western Cape.

Therefore, in this chapter, I highlight the statement of the problem, main objectives of the study, specific research questions, rationale for the study and significance of the study.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009:77) one of the reasons for the high failure rates in the Grade 12 among other things is that teachers who have to cope with very large number of learners in classes, which make it difficult to give all learners individual attention.

However, South African Grade 12 learners are mostly expected to learn through a second language. He therefore, recommended that learners have to practice literary skills beyond the school day in order to become fluent and automatic with their literacy Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009: 91).

As a teacher of Grade 12 in several Umlazi schools, I observed in the schools a high failure rate in Umlazi district over the past five years. Hence, I intend to investigate the causes of the high failure rate in the Grade 12 learners of Umlazi district.

1.4 MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to determine the factors that caused low Grade 12 pass rate in Umlazi district, KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, in order to accomplish this objective, the research will be:

- 1.4.1 To examine the trend in the Grade 12 results of two schools in Umlazi district over the last five years.
- 1.4.2 To identify reasons for the trend of high failure rate.
- 1.4.3 To identify possible strategies for improvement.

1.5 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question of this study is as follows: What are the reasons for the poor Grade 12 results in two schools concerned in Umlazi district? Against this background the following questions need to be answered:

1.5.1 What are the trends in the Grade 12 results of the two selected schools over the last five years?

1.5.2 Why are such trends occurring?

1.5.3 How can the trends in the observed results be improved?

1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

I have taught grade 12 in a school in Umlazi for five years. In that period I have observed a decline in the Grade 12 pass rate and which is a source of concern for me as a teacher. The Grade 12 pass rate has also been subject to much controversy in the media (Daily News, (2012, January 5, pp.5, 5). Umalusi, which is the body that oversees the standards for examinations, has been criticized for lowering the minimum percentage required to pass such Grade (30%). This has confounded the issue by promoting a drop in standards. Both universities and corporates have raised their voices about this as Grade 12 entering tertiary institution have insufficient skills, are unprepared and lack sufficient academic rigour to pursue tertiary studies. It has been estimated that only 15% of all students entering university in South Africa actually graduate Department of Basic Education (2010:8).

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

I suggest that the following benefits will ensue from such a study:

The study will enable an identification of particular trends in Grade 12 results in the selected schools which will have implications for further research in other schools.

Further, the study will provide further input on the controversies that surround Grade 12 pass rates, and inform education policy and strategies from a managerial and departmental level. The positive ramifications for teachers would be the understanding of the background of their learners and their specific problems, which would enrich how they interact, teach and engage the learners.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Jacobs et al. (2007:13) one of the factors that may contribute to high matric pass rate is that Grade 12 learners must be able to demonstrate of their language usage by lucidly communicating their thoughts and views to others and

must be able to use skills from other disciplines for effective communication. Grade 12 learners will only be able to do this if, during their learning, they are given assignments by teachers to make oral presentations to their classes, and they are provided with suitable media to make their presentations as effective as possible Jacobs et al. (2007:13). In order to achieve high pass rate, small discussion groups and cooperative teaching strategies should, if used properly, eventually help learners to develop social skills that will enable them to work effectively with others in a team, group, organization and community at large Jacobs et al. (2007:13).

In February 1995, Professor S. Bhengu, the South African Minister of Education announced how the system of Education should be established with which everyone in the country can identify because it meets everyone's needs and serves their interests. It shall respect diversity and strive for learning and excellence. That paradigm shift of education is never easy for teachers as it involves a process that takes time up to several years rather than single occurrence. Such paradigm shift involves more learning programs, resources, technology or equipment. It is primarily about individuals in an established system. It highly affects different stakeholders more particularly teachers who are expected to produce good Grade 12 results National Department of Education (1996).

According to Nieman and Monyai (2012:74) Grade 12 learners are continually confronted with problems and challenges, and they deal with this according to what they have learnt from previous experiences. Hence most learners have built up a wealth of experiences, and each one has unique experiences. These experiences could be used in the best way possible in the teaching situation and as the basis for formal teaching and learning. This is in line with a constructivist perspective on learning Nieman and Monyai (2012: 74). Thus may contribute to high Grade 12 pass rate. The South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996 makes a provision for all learners learning in public schools to be provided with relevant support services. In order to accomplish these teachers need to have knowledge and skills to be linked to a positive emotional attitude towards learners. Furthermore, teachers should be motivated by receiving in-service training in order to get necessary knowledge, skills, and values to cope with different learner's experiences, backgrounds and their milieu South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996.

The effective and the impact of learning depends on the way in which that which was learnt is used and applied in new learning situations, problems in life and the work place. The ability to transfer learning implies that meaningful learning takes place. Therefore, Grade 12 learners become particularly motivated when they see that what they learn can be used in practice, and be able to solve new problems, to answer new questions and to facilitate learning new subject matter Nieman and Monyai (2012: 19-20).

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The study adopted the qualitative design. Denzin and Lincoln (2011:681-684) defined qualitative research as the study of things in their natural settings, trying to interpret “phenomena” in terms of meanings people bring to them. Therefore, qualitative design was the most suitable to the study in the sense that it looked at views of the different stakeholders entailed talking to people with the purpose of getting in depth information regarding the grade 12 low pass rate. This was a multi-site case study of two secondary schools in Umlazi district, KwaZulu-Natal. These schools were selected because of certain commonalities within them. Firstly, they are accessible. Secondly, they start from Grade 8 to 12. Therefore, their performance is assessed by the Grade 12 results. Lastly, these schools experience common challenges regarding achieving below 60% Grade 12 pass rate. The data was collected by means of focus group interviews, field notes and observation of different stakeholders.

Henning, Van Ransburg and Smith (2004:41) define qualitative inquiry as a research approach that has the potential to convert raw empirical data to a thick description that give an account of the phenomenon. To expand, the above authors refer to qualitative inquiry as a research strategy that fits in the ideas of the researched in an open way and to gain an in depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:26) qualitative research designs use methods that are distinct from those used in quantitative designs. To be sure, qualitative designs are just as systematic as quantitative designs, but they emphasize gathering data on naturally occurring phenomena. They expatiated

further that most these data are the form of words thus makes the researcher easily search and explore with a variety of methods until a deep understanding is achieved. According to Kobus (2007: 51) qualitative research can be described as an “attempt to collect rich descriptive data with the aim of developing an understanding of what has been observed or studied.” Lastly, qualitative design can initially be classified as interactive or non-interactive McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 26).

1.10 POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SUBJECT

Purposive sampling of participants included two schools that obtained less than 60% pass rate in Umlazi District. These schools were chosen because of the recurring poor Grade 12 results (obtaining below than 60% pass rate). Secondly, they are knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon the researcher investigated. The selected schools included one semi-urban school and a school in a deep rural area. These schools have a recurring below 60% pass results. The participants were representatives of the KwaZulu-Natal community in Umlazi district, South of Durban, and are important stakeholders in Education. The sample will consist of:

1.10.1 Learners

Twelve Grade 12 learners were randomly selected from each two schools in Umlazi District. Twelve learners per school were engaged in a focus group interview whereby open ended questions regarding Grade 12 poor performance was used to gather their opinions. Participants were selected because they have certain characteristics in common Krueger and Casey (2009: 2).

1.10.2 Teachers

Focus group interviews and observation were conducted with teachers from the two schools (one interview at each school). The focus group interviews were conducted with six teachers per school, all selected randomly.

1.10.3 Principals

Focus group interviews with field notes were conducted with principals of two selected schools. Focus group interviews allowed the researcher to develop in-depth

accounts of experiences and perceptions with individuals Cousin (2009: 71). The researcher created a tolerant environment in the focus group that encourages participants to share perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns, without pressuring participants to vote or reach consensus Krueger and Casey (2009: 4).

1.11 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

This was a qualitative case study exploring and understanding the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi district schools, KwaZulu-Natal. In order to acquire an in depth understanding, various strategies of data collection were used. Strategies included the focus group interview, field notes and observation Cohen et al. (2011). Whilst the study involved exploring the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi district schools, Burton (2005), Robson (2002) and Kobus (2007) clearly state that employing many types of data collection methods increases and provides credibility, and trustworthiness of the case study. It further allows the researcher to study important aspects without collecting a large sample from a national frame Burton, (2005). With that in mind, multiple data collection instruments used in this cross-case provided the researcher with the opportunity to investigate, explore and report the real life situation in order to unpack the interactions, events and other factors unique to each case study.

Depending on the places of residence for my respondents and their nature, each interview may take one hour and the whole interview process can take four to six weeks. Henning, Van Ransburg and Smith (2004) claim that interview can progress well only if the interviewer has planned in advance the logistics of the interview journey. The authors mentioned above argue that a participant has to feel comfortable with whatever mode of recording that is being used. So, in this study, to ensure comfort ability of the respondents, it is planned to negotiate the intentions to tape the voices of the respondents for easy transcription and analysis. Another form of co-recording the interview is by means of written notes that aim to harness some of the contextual factors that are not in the talk such as facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and body language McMillan and Schumacher (2006), Henning et al. (2004). The authors point out that those cues might provide necessary data which may be unnoticeable during the conversation. In this regard, permission for notes

taking will be sought. But the interviews were planned to be conducted with the participants during the weekend to avoid disruption of effective teaching and learning.

1.11.1 Focus group interviews (twelve participants)

Before the actual interview took place, I did a mock interview (which is also known as dry run or trial run). This was done to identify problems that might emanate during the actual interview process. This helped me to check if my instruments were effective or not. For example, if there is no electricity power to mention one example, I would provide backup appliance such as generator.

A focus group interview was necessary in this study to explore the causes and factors of low Grade 12 pass rate. Therefore, such focus group interview consisted of closed and open-ended questions. Closed questions gathered only straight forward information about each teacher while open-ended questions were necessary for explanations by the participants. Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2007) recommend mixing the type of questions used for accessing teacher's views regarding aspects pertaining to low Grade 12 pass rates. Durrheim (2004) explains focus group interview as way of collecting data in an inter-subjective experience. The inter-subjective experience is an experience that is shared by people living in the same area.

The focus group interviews were used to collect data among the Grade 12 learners, teachers and principals of school A and school B. The focus group interviews were conducted with the above mentioned stakeholders to share perceptions and points of view without pressuring them to vote or reach consensus. Participants were selected because they had certain characteristics in common Krueger, and Casey (2009:2-4).

I used focus group interviews with six teachers because they were from the same two schools, had more or less the same experiences, strategies and challenges for low Grade 12 pass rate. It will be a waste of time to interview them one by one when they could discuss it together. In focus group discussions with participants working in the same institution, one is likely to get one and the same information. Focus group research appeals to many higher education researchers because its data gathering process extends the academic practice of exploratory discussion (in seminars,

conferences, etc.) Focus group research is based on the principle that rich data can be elicited from group interactivity Cousin (2009:51).

I used focus group interviews in order to create a relaxed atmosphere so that they will feel free to discuss and raise their concerns, if any. As School Management Team (SMT) member of the neighbouring school, I wanted to be at their level. I did not want them to look at me as a person who was there to interrogate them. I became part of the group discussion. I made sure that the seating is informal. I designed my focus group interview questions in more or less the same way with the questions for the principals. The group discussion started from general to specific questions. The purpose of doing this was to break the ice before getting to serious discussion. Moulton (2001), as cited in Stevens (2009), defines empirical questions as questions that the researchers use to enquire about real life. Stevens (2009), was for the idea that empirical question seeks for causal and effect since I wanted to explore the causes and effects of low Grade 12 pass rate in two schools at Umlazi district. The focus of the focus group interviews was on the causes of the low Grade 12 pass rate. Other questions focused on the challenges that teachers faced when teaching Grade 12 learners. Focus group interviews with six teachers in school A and school B lasted for approximately around one hour. I asked permission from the participants to record our discussion so that an accurate account of the contents of the interviews is kept. Lastly, I thanked them for their time and their contribution towards this study.

1.11.2 Field notes and Observations

In order to strengthen the focus group strategy, it was important to observe teachers and writing some important points (field notes) in order to gain a deeper insight and understanding of their practices. The field notes were taken by the researcher as written summary during observation. This constituted of a non-participation observation undertaken for this study.

A non-participating observation for this study refers to the “systematic process of recording the behavioral patterns of participants, without necessarily questioning or communicating with them” Kobus (2007:84). This method was chosen with the purpose of helping the research to be more unbiased and objective.

During the observation of six teachers, I sat at the back of the class in order to minimize distraction. Sitting at the back of the class also helped me to observe the learning environment in which teaching took place. Furthermore, I had an opportunity to record non-verbal behaviour and discovered things that the participants might not have been free to talk about during the interview (Cohen et al., 2007).

1.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis refers to a systematic way of selecting, categorizing, comparing, synthesizing and interpreting data to provide explanation of a single phenomenon of interest McMillan and Schumacher (2010). Henning (2004) further presented qualitative content analysis as a tool for reduced, condensed and grouped content. This allows qualitative analysis to convert or transcribe data collected into final patterns to serve the purpose of the study.

In this study, I grouped common responses together under the research question or theme. Opposite responses were also significant in developing the argument. I analysed the responses and integrated them with information reviewed from the literature.

Data collected was condensed into themes that address major research questions. Document analysis informed subsequent data collection from the interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

1.13 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study interrogated the ways in which the results and lives of the Grade 12 learners were shaped in the society and attempts to provide an understanding on how such causes and factors can be understood in trying to address issues for the improvement of pass rate in the two schools involved.

Since the research sought to explore causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi district schools, KwaZulu-Natal, the research was framed within participatory theory, Strydom et al. (2007). Participatory theory aims to produce knowledge in an active partnership with those affected by that knowledge, for the express purpose of improving their social, educational and material conditions. Participatory theory

focuses on the involvement and participation of all the role players in the particular research study (Strydom et al. 2007:430). Therefore, the involvement of teachers and Grade 12 learners (stakeholders) was necessary in this study to understand their experiences with regards to the causes of low Grade 12 pass rates that may help towards the effectiveness of this study.

1.14 PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is located in the constructivist paradigm. Constructivist holds that inquiry cannot be separated from the influence of real world factors and human practices. The fact that the study focuses on the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two schools located in semi-urban and deep rural areas in Umlazi district (their world or milieu), constructivism may be suitable in this regard. In this study I interacted with the research participants using my knowledge of relevant cultural context and experience to channel them towards the answers.

According to Bustson (2008), all knowledge is contingent upon interactions between human beings and their world and, as such, it emphasises the role of culture, context and experience in the creation of truth, reality and values.”

As I have stated in the introduction that each and every culture wants their children to have education as a key to success. The influence from the past is the reason for all the inhabitants to attend school and have degrees from tertiary institution. The minimum requirement for tertiary institution is 60% thus; this study is focusing on the causes of low pass rate in Grade 12.

With my observations at Lugobe high school and nearby high schools in the South coast of Umlazi District, I noticed that there are many challenges that are faced by the Government schools that private schools do not experience. The teacher’s ethnic group, as well as the dominant language that is constantly used in Government schools is IsiZulu. This has huge influence in the low pass rate.

Another reason for the low pass rate is the shortage of learning materials, example: computers with internet access, libraries with current learner’s books to mention the few. In my observation teachers play a big role in contributing to the low pass rate for the Grade 12 learners. However, this adequate point might be proven otherwise, in

the above discussion I state that I interviewed participants from two schools which are under the Umlazi district.

1.15 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the study utilised the qualitative approach credibility and trustworthiness was important. According to Terre-Blanche et al. (2007) the research can be evaluated according to its credibility. In this regard credibility produced findings that are convincing and believable. The credibility of qualitative research is established while the research is undertaken (Terre-Blanche et al., 2007:90-91). As the researcher I continually looked for discrepant evidence to low Grade 12 pass rate in two schools at Umlazi district as a means of producing a rich and credible account.

I tackled the issue of trustworthiness by following aspects of trustworthiness such as value **truth-, consistency and neutrality** (Terre-Blanche et al., 2007).

Truth-value: When dealing with the experience of teachers whose schools Grade 12 pass rate is below 60%, the data was collected and presented accurately so that others who share the same experience may be accustomed with it immediately.

I went back to the participants so they can test the accuracy of the interpretation. By so doing the criteria of impartiality and uniformity in this study was fulfilled.

Consistency: I sought to understand the individual teachers' experience when teaching in the classroom. By using four different kinds of teachers the emphasis was on variation of their experiences rather than identical repetition.

Neutrality: According to Terre-Blanche et al. (2007), the findings of the research must be solely of participants and the conditions of the research.

A thorough account was made available by me on the research process to generate a clear audit trail for anyone who may like to proceed with the process in the future. I took back the transcribed interview to the participants to check if their ideas were suitably presented.

In my study I tried to achieve trustworthiness by trusting and accepting what the teachers were relating to me about their experiences and accepted it as valid. Ethical clearance became very necessary for this study, which I now will discuss.

1.16 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

To be ethical is to be aware that participants have their privacy and sensitivity which are to be protected if information about their personal interests sets off from them (Henning, Van Ransburg & Smith, 2004). So in this study, the ethical issues of anonymity, confidentiality and freedom of participation were guaranteed in the consent letter (that will be included as Appendix H).

Care was taken to make sure that all ethical considerations are met, at all times during the study. All the participants were assured that their names will not be used in the transcription, thus; protecting their privacy if they so wish. Further, they were assured that all the notes would be destroyed when the information has been examined and the research is completed. The participants were assured that they are under no obligation to participate and could terminate their participation in the interview at any time they please should they feel uncomfortable. The procedure, time requirement and type of participation expected were explained to them at the outset of the interviews. The participants were assured that the findings of the study would be shared with them upon conclusion of the study if they so wish.

Doing research not only implies that the researcher enters the scientific community or the field, but also involves the acceptance of a code of conduct of ethical principles. Thus, in order to engage in scientific research the researcher is required a moral commitment to the search for truth and knowledge concerning the educational reality. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:142-144) ethics generally are considered to deal with beliefs about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) further stated that the American Educational Research Association and the American Psychological Association stipulate the following code of ethics that needs to be adhered to when conducting research: Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to participants through a

letter of consent, spelled out that they can withdraw from participating if they wish to do so. The participants' privacy and interests were respected. Participants had a right to insist that the data collected from them will be treated with confidentiality. The primary investigator of a study is responsible for the ethical standards to which the study adheres. The researcher should comply with the professional standards governing the conduct of the research.

1.17 LIMITATIONS

Firstly, one of the limitations of this study may be that the sample consisted of only two schools. Therefore, with these findings it may be not possible to make generalisations from this study. The two selected schools may not represent the caliber of all the teachers in KwaZulu-Natal since they will be selected in Umlazi district area, hence the results would be limited to these schools. Furthermore, the context of the school may represent one of the differing teaching contexts in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa. This means while the interpretation of the causes of the pass rate in Grade 12 by the teachers could be hindered (or not) by the type of context of the teachers in this study, the situation could be different in other contexts. As a result of this, no generalisability can be made on what I actually causing low pass rate in Grade 12, from the findings of the study alone.

Secondly, the researcher is a full time worker thus; it could not be possible to have a broader sample. Moreover, the participants may also be busy with their own work, so at times it may not even possible to honour the set appointments. Thirdly, the fact that the participants had the right to withdraw at any time and at the any stage, thus this may cause a delay on the part of the researcher who will to start all over again looking for a replacement. Furthermore, people can be cautious when giving information especially if such information portrays bad images about their schools or institutions.

1.18 Definition of terms/concepts

1.18.1 Teacher

Teacher “means a person currently employed whether temporarily or permanently, in a provincial or the national department of education, the meaning of teacher as defined in the Act” South African Schools’ Act 84 of 1996.

1.18.2 School

The Essential English Dictionary, (2007:1444) defines school as an institution or building at which children and young people usually under 19 receive education. It is also a place or sphere of activity that instructs as a body of people or pupils adhering to a certain set of principles, doctrines, or methods. It is a teaching-learning organization which was primarily conceived as necessary skills.

1.18.3 FET

In this study FET Band is defined as senior phase of the school grading Department of Education (2012:23). This Band is the continuation of GET Band. This refers to the high or secondary school level and commonly starts from Grade 10 to 12.

1.18.4 Society

It is important, for the purpose of this study, to distinguish between society and community, because these concepts are usually used interchangeably. A society, like the South African society, the American society or the Brazilian society consists of a number of communities which often share the common interest.

The Essential English Dictionary (2007:1530) defines a society as “the totality of social relationship among organized groups of human beings.”

1.18.5 Community

According to the Essential English Dictionary (2007:344), a community is “a group of people with shared origins of interests. These people living in one locality, having common cultural, religious, ethnic, or other characteristics.”

1.18.6 Barriers to matric low pass rate

Barriers to matriculation low pass rate within the context of this study are factors that can make it difficult for the learners to pass at a higher expected standard (Department of Education, 2002:134). It elaborates that there are some learners who are placed at risk of learning breakdown due to the physical, emotional or sexual abuse situations in which they find themselves. Lemmer and Wyk (2009:130) further describe particular factors that might contribute to matric failure, namely, poorly

resourced schools, poverty and illiteracy within the community. Therefore, teachers would benefit from understanding the background of their learners and the problems they encounter. Teachers will benefit from gaining knowledge about and use of community resources to enrich the curriculum and instruction. They may also develop new skills in working with mentors, business partners, community volunteers and others to assist the learners.

Teachers may also gain knowledge of referral processes for families and learners with need for special services Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009:119).

1.19 CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights the importance of Grade 12 results since it determines the learner's acceptance into tertiary institutions. Therefore, learners should do well in their exams so that they can have a bright future.

Both teachers and the government are the culpability of the Grade 12 learner's results. As a matter of fact the teacher's involvement in the learner's family background encourages learners to do well in their exams.

The next chapter will look at the literature review regarding the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi District schools, KwaZulu-Natal.

CHAPTER 2

LOW GRADE 12 PASS RATE IN UMLAZI DISTRICT SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As was indicated in chapter 1, this chapter presents a literature review to explore the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi District schools, KwaZulu-Natal. The two schools in Umbumbulu circuit in Umlazi district have had a very low Grade 12 pass rate for more than two years. The two schools are situated in the rural area and the aim of the study is to explore the causes of low pass rate in Grade 12 and to find the intervention strategies in order to improve the results.

There are numerous factors that can affect the performance of learners. However, the trend of high Grade 12 failure rate is not only limited to Umbumbulu circuit in Umlazi district but is the overall trend in most rural schools in South Africa. Rural areas characterized by poverty, child headed families as most adults are working and living in urban areas. According to Taylor (2009:12) there are disparities in performance between schools within South African education system to a large extent structured by a history of poverty and deprivation with African schools overwhelmingly represented in the poor performing category. He further stated that more than four out of five children in former white schools are reading at the appropriate level as defined by national curriculum. In a former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools only four children in a hundred read at grade level. This shows the challenge of poor performance in these schools is not only at Grade 12 level but it goes back to the lower grades.

The focus of this chapter is to discuss the factors that could contribute to such high failure rate and then compare it with developed countries such as United States of America (USA) and developing countries such as Zimbabwe.

2.2 GRADE 12 FAILURE RATE

Education is one of the most important aspect of human and resource development. Every child should have an opportunity to achieve his or her potential. It generally noticed that at least 20% of children get poor marks.

They are scholastically backward. Poor performance should be seen as a “symptom” reflecting a larger underlying problem Karande and Kulkan (2005:261).

According to Schleicher (2007:1) education is top of the agenda of almost every country in the world. Yet despite massive increase in spending and ambitions attempt at reforms, the performance many school systems have barely improved in decades.

2.2.1 Grade 12 failure rate in USA

Balanskat, Blamire and Kefala (2006:8) in the Impact Report reported that by 2005 the class sizes in the United States nation’s public school were the smallest they have ever been. However, the students or learners outcome as measured by the Department of Education own National assessment program stayed almost the same. In 2007, just 32% of 8th graders in public and private schools in the United States performed at or above the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) proficiency standards in mathematics and 31% performed at or above that level in reading. More than two-third of learners failed to reach a proficiency bar Peterson, Woessmann, Hanushek and Lastra-Anadon, (2011:4)

There are some debates about where control of education actually lies. Education is not in the Constitution of the United States. Many cities have their own boards everywhere in the United States. The U.S federal government exercises its control through the U.S Department of Education. Secondary educational accreditation decisions are made by voluntary regional associations. For example senior high schools in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands, teach in English while senior high schools in the commonwealth of Puerto Rico teach in Spain.

However, this may create communication barriers for Grade 12 learners whose language is not their mother tongue (first language speakers) which may turn to influence results negatively U.S Department of Education (2007). According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia (2007) nearly 6.2 million high school learners between the age of 16 and 24 in 2007 failed. The issue of senior high school failure rates and dropouts is considered important to address as the incarceration for

African American male high school failure rates and dropouts is about fifty times the national average. The U.S Department of Education (2013) reported that States do not require reporting from their school districts to allow analysis of efficiency in Grade 12 results. The United States is not the only country which has trouble improving its school system, also the developing countries such as Zimbabwe.

2.2.2 Grade 12 failure rate in Zimbabwe

World Development Indicators (2002) depicts Zimbabwe as one of the countries that experience high Grade12 failure rate. The progression to Advanced Level ('A' Level) cycle which is equivalent to Grade 12 is based on pass grades at 'O' Level. The duration for 'A' Level is two years and comprises Lower and Upper Sixth Forms (Forms 5 and 6). 'A' Level is a prerequisite for university entry in Zimbabwe (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2002). Amongst the factors which contribute to high 'A' Level failure rate in Zimbabwe include the high rate of enrolment, generally shortage of physical infrastructure (school buildings and classrooms) and shortage of teachers. The number of secondary school teachers in 2001 to 2005 in Zimbabwe was 28% graduates while 72% were no-graduate. This had a negative impact in producing well 'A' Level performance (Education Statistics Report, 2006).

UNICEF (2009) estimates that about 94 percent of rural, serving the majority of population were closed in 2009 and 66 of 70 schools abandoned. Learning only resumed in urban cases where teachers 'salaries were covered in US dollars by parent, creating a widening gap between rural and urban schools, and further incensed by a mass fleeing of teachers to neighbouring countries. Urban "type A" schools continue to be better equipped than their rural mission and government sponsored counterparts causing discrepancies in matric performance. In 2007 Secondary Education in Zimbabwe crashed from 72 percent to 11 percent Grade 12 pass rates. This culminated in the cancelling of the school year in 2008. Teachers had gone on strike in recent years over low salaries, poor working conditions, political violence and election results, further exasperating the situation World Development Indicators (2009).

According to the country analysis Report for Zimbabwe 2010, the deterioration of Zimbabwe's economy during the past ten years has had serious impacts on the

delivery of education services and this is reflected in a number of key education indicators. The 2006 Education Management Information System (EMIS) data as well as data generated from the 2009 MIMS show that there has been a decline in access to primary and secondary education. Similar data collected in 2009 reflects that, between 2007 and 2009, Grade 12 ('A' level) results declined substantially, thus; reflect a decline in the quality of education.

The challenges which caused the decline of Grade 12 performance involved inter alia, declining access rates, greater wasted consequent upon declining efficiently, declining quality and relevance of education, and persistent gender inequalities at all secondary school levels. All four resulted from the shortage of human, financial and material resources which has eroded the capacity of the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and culture (MoESAC), Ministry of Higher and Technical Education (MoHTE) and Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenization and Empowerment (MoYDIE), communities and their partners for the delivery of education services of a good quality to all children. The poor level performance of the economy and the attendant rise in levels of poverty have exacerbated in the impact of epidemics such as cholera, and natural disasters. Negative cultural, religious and gender related values and practices have also had an impact on access to education by specific social groups that were already vulnerable, among them OVC, girls and woman, and children in marginalized communities Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), (2006).

Another contributory factor to poor Grade 12 pass rates is the distance of the secondary schools from home which remains a problem for 14 percent of learners (for this study Grade 12) nationally. The worst affected Provinces are Mashonaland Central, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South where more than 20 percent of Grade 12 live more than 5 kilometres from their school. In this regard the level of concentration may be negatively affected due to exhaustion. The problem also exists in resentment areas whereby due to the harsh macroeconomic environment prevailing in the country, some Grade 12 learners performed poorly due to unemployment. Their parent could hardly pay for their school fees and other related educational facilities that will assist their children to perform better in Grade 12.

Some learners dropped out in school in search of employment in the neighbouring countries, when they come back home they will have less concentration in focusing in school work UNICEF (2009).

Orphan-hood also posed a major threat to learners' access to secondary education. Zimbabwe has orphan rates of between 17, 5 and 26 percent (GoZ, 2009: 86, CSO/ UNICEF, 2009: 27) which is higher than the continental average. Around 25% of orphaned learners lost their parents to AIDS. Thus; by 1998, Zimbabwe had over a million orphaned learners. Given that 35000 households were headed by children, the implication is that 1 in 70 households in Zimbabwe was child headed. However, orphan hood reduces the chances of learners gaining access to and staying in school with expected concentration in terms of higher performance because of inability to afford school fees, uniforms and other requisites.

Rural learners are more likely to drop out, probably because of the demands for labour in most rural families. Therefore, rural matriculants' performance is lower than the urban in this regard. The 2003 Grade 12 pass rates conducted by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MoPSLW) showed that 48% of families were very poor while 63% were below the Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL).

The country analysis Report for Zimbabwe (2010) states that there was a notable deterioration of the quality and relevance of education over the period 2000 to 2009. This was witnessed by the high failure rates of Grade 12 due to the shortage of teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, stationery and equipment has adversely affected the quality of education as a whole. Chakanyuka, Chung and Stevenson (2009:42) established that in the sample of rural school survey, the proportion of children sharing textbooks on a 1:9 textbook/ pupil ratio ranged between 41.3 percent and 56.6 percent with some of the schools having only a teacher's copy or no textbook at all.

School and Higher and Tertiary Education Institution (HTEI) have not been able to maintain their infrastructure and equipment. A large proportion of this is now in the state of disrepair and most equipment in HTEIs is obsolete. The shortage of equipment resulted in serious decline of Grade 12 performance. The shortage of appropriately trained teachers, lecturers and other specialized staff has had a

negative impact on Grade 12 results, thus weakened the quality of education. The education sector has lost a considerable portion of its most highly qualified and experienced staff through a massive brain drain (Chakanyuka, Chung and Stevenson, 2009, MOHTE, 2009). They further stated that the shortage of learning and teaching materials, unattractive working conditions, poor remuneration, and low morale among teachers, result in poor teaching and poor implementation of the school curriculum.

Low morale and brain drain have also weakened the professional leadership and supervision of the schools. Supervisory services in particular have suffered as a result of the lack of transport (vehicles and fuel) and communication facilities. Supervision is crucial to supervise and monitor teachers' work and provide support when necessary for the quality Grade 12 results and smooth running of education system. Meanwhile there are reports of an increase in the use of corporal punishment in schools, which makes teachers unfriendly to learners. Arnove and Torres (139,357-359: 2007) assert that poor learners (for this study Grade 12) are less likely to survive educationally than are well- to- do learners; that learners born in rural areas are likely to survive educationally than urban learners; that repetition and drop outs rates are higher among girls than among boys. These reasons for the decline of Grade 12 results appear to affect rural Grade 12 learners and education efficiency more than urban ones. School feeding programs by the local community have gone a long way towards stabilizing secondary school results and promoting school attendance, but such school programs cover only a small proportion of secondary schools. By the late twentieth century, crisis in education system had become the norm. Rural schools in many African countries including Zimbabwe and South Africa to mention the few had no teachers' guides, no textbooks and not even chairs.

The above mentioned authors further stated that Zimbabwe is a heavily reliant on a foreign aid USA to support education innovation and reform has accompanied by transition, from understanding education as a human right and general good to viewing it primarily in terms of its contribution to national growth and well- being through the development of knowledge and skills (Arnove & Torres, 2007).

Therefore, when there was economic decline, Zimbabwe could not be able to supply educational facilities such as textbooks, furniture to mention the few which are prerequisites of improving Grade 12 results and the quality education at large. While the decline in numbers of teachers is not consistent with the decline in enrolments, a closer look at vacancy rates portrays the picture of the system in stress. The vacancy rates in primary and secondary schools are 24.2% and 24.6% respectively; with the rates for Matabeleland South (primary) and Matabeleland Central (secondary), being as high as 44.9 percent and 45 percent respectively (MoESAC, 2010).

Although no data are available on the training status of teachers, it is likely that untrained teachers will fill most of the vacant posts. This is my concern that Grade 12 pass rates will be unexpected to be high under the above mentioned background or conditions. The shortage of suitably skilled curriculum developers has resulted in most syllabuses not being revised over the past ten to twenty six years when ideally, they should be reviewed every five to seven years. The school curriculum is therefore out dated, and has increasingly been unable to respond to the needs of the learners, the economy and society in general.

The education sector has for many years been sustained largely through the participation of parents. Because of growing poverty, parents have not been able to continue to provide the requisite support to schools, particularly against the decline in Government funding levels. The demands of schools on already burdened parents have strained the relationship between the school and the community, resulting in the weakening of school governance systems. At outcome level, pass rates at Grade 12 declined between 2000 and 2005. The worst year of Grade 12 pass rates decline was 2008. While data for 2006 to 2009 are not available, Grade 12 pass rates most probably declined much further (Zimbabwe Department of Education, 2010).

2.2.3 Teacher-pupil ratio in Zimbabwe

The recommended teacher-learner ratio differs with each level at secondary school level as follows; the teacher-learner ratio was 24 in 1991, reached a pick of 28 in 1991, 1992, 1996 and 1997. It stabilized in 1998 and 1999 before dropping to 25 in 2000 and further to 24 in 2001. However, there was improvement in the quality of Grade 12 ('A' Level) results as given by this indicator in 2000 and 2001 as compared to the base year (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Report, 2005).

Education Statistics Report (2012) shows that the teacher-learner ratio was 40:1 in 2011 due to the high rate of enrolment and the shortage of teachers in Zimbabwe. However, in reality learners are overcrowded in the most of the classes including "A" level. Hence the rate of 'A' Level pass performance became very low. Taylor (2009:26) adds that South African children receive schooling of a significantly poorer quality than pupils in many of our much poorer neighbouring countries. South Africa is outperformed by eight surrounding countries, many of which including Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are much poorer with gross domestic products in order of one-tenth to one fifth of South Africa. This is a demonstration of the lesson that while in general poverty is strongly associated with performance, many schools systems achieve higher quality with far fewer resources than South Africa has.

Based on the above background, the attempt to indicate similarities between Zimbabwean and South African systems of education is now briefly discussed.

2.2.4 Grade 12 failure rate in South Africa

According to Booyse (2012:162) educational systems varies from country to country due to the mere fact that African countries were colonized by different groups of people and that lead to the many educational systems that are used in the continent and it is the result why all learners(for this study Grade 12) pass rate differs. The Dutch people started at the Cape and the educational system was not the same as the system that was used in other provinces in South Africa. The history of South African schooling system was different from the system that is currently used.

From the school governing board to the principals and the teachers there had to be a proper section of all the positions in the school.

Booyse (2012) also stated that vacancies in schools had to be advertised in the Government Gazette. In consultation with the schools committee or governing body and as far as possible in accordance with the letters recommendation, the school board had to recommend to the director one or more applicants for each vacancy, for appointment. Looking at what is happening in what most people call “New South Africa”, there is so much corruption which is caused by the grid as well as poverty where an unqualified person is given a teaching position in a senior phase level. This may lead in the low pass rate not only in Grade 12 but all the grades.

According to Sorto (2010:15) South African student score at lower levels in Mathematics and language tests even when compared with students in other African countries. Further, the South African government own evaluation of 10 years of democracy show little improvement in education al outcomes despite significant policy changes, (DoE, 2006). While some reasons for this poor performance may be evident and there is widespread agreement that the main challenge in South Africa is the quality of education, there is little empirical analysis that helps policy makers to understand the reason for the low level of student performance in South African school or how to improve it.

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:28) specify that “the complexities of comparing education across cultures always need to be in social, political and economic context”. The Umlazi Districts falls under the South Coast schools in Durban, where you find more African schools or what is normally called black schools than the multi-racial schools what is called white schools. There are few white schools in the Umlazi district schools than Black schools. These white schools have adequate learning facilities such as libraries, laboratories to mention the few which makes it easy for effective teaching and learning to take place. However, poverty might be the reason why Black African learners cannot afford to pay school fees to study in white schools. In this regard if they could be able to learn in these white schools as stated by (a South African system of education that open the doors of learning and culture),

they might achieve high Grade 12 pass rate White Paper on Education and Training (1995:22).

From the above discussion it is evident that the education of the child is dependent on three stakeholders namely, the school including teachers, the parents as well as the child involved.

2.2.5 School and classroom challenges

According to Ross-Fisher (2008:161-162) teachers across the USA are held accountable for their learners learning and subsequent performance on high stakes tests. Teachers and administrators must be able to identify clearly what techniques are effective at improving learner learning which ones are not, and how to develop a set of successful instructional practices based on that knowledge. He stated that problems occur every day at school. An teacher does not have to look far to find them for the purpose of this study school and classroom challenges will be classified and clarified as the impact of shortage of teachers and class size on performance, curriculum reform, discipline in schools, impact of assessment on Grade 12 performance and teacher perceptions and expectations.

2.2.5.1 Shortage of teachers and class size on performance

South Africa is regarded as the country with the fastest growing HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world with over four million people(about one in eight adults) infected with the virus (UNAIDS as cited by RSA, (2001b:21). According to the recent estimates publicized in the media, one in eight teachers in South Africa is HIV-positive. Supplying teachers in the future as well as dealing with HIV orphans and HIV-positive learners and parents will have dire consequences for the education system. However, the above mentioned percent of dying teachers includes those who were doing scarce subjects like mathematics and physical sciences to mention the few. In this regard the adequate supply of teachers to close the gaps remains the area of concern, thus may contribute to the high Grade 12 failure rates in Umlazi district, KwaZulu-Natal. The study by Lauw, Shisana, Peltzer and Zungu (2009:6) showed that there is a high HIV/AIDS prevalence among teachers in South Africa.

An HIV/AIDS prevalence of 12% was found among teachers and approximately 4000 teachers had died in 2004 of AIDS related complications. Data on mortality among teachers suggested an increase in the number of death especially among the young teachers 25-45 years. As the result of illness or death of their colleagues, teachers find themselves with large class sizes resulting in an inability to attend to all learners.

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:83-84) postulate that teachers believe that the quality of their teaching and their interactions with learners decline with an increase in the size of the class. He further stated that in South Africa the optimum pupil-teacher ratio in primary schools has been set at 40:1 and in secondary schools at 35:1. However, in practice, the real ratio is higher as a number of teachers such as principals, deputy principal, heads of departments and librarians, all of whom have limited duties, are included in the equation. This may cause heavy load on teachers who are expected to produce better matric results. Another contributory factor is that nationally Grade 8, 11 and 12 are also over-enrolled with over-age learners due to high failure rate.

Murtin (2013:7) found that there is a severe shortage of teachers in South Africa. The lack of strong teachers is primarily a long lasting consequence of the historical context which has not been addressed successfully by the reform of teachers' education. The number of teachers who graduate is around 6000 well below the replacement needs of approximately 20 000. This critical situation is aggravated by the fact that about one fourth of newly qualified teachers especially white teachers plan to leave the country to educate abroad and about half of new teachers have recently considered leaving the profession (OECD, 2008:7).

Modisaotsile (2012:4) claims that the study of demand and supply of teachers in South African public schools in 2005 estimated between 18 000-22 000 teachers leave the profession every year that need to be replaced by the equal number teachers. Poor teachers qualified has been a serious problem especially in rural areas where teachers have been reluctant to be redeployed and as a result many of the best qualified teachers have left the profession and have joined fee-paying schools in affluent communities Murtin (2013:23). In other words the above mentioned factors may contribute towards high matric failure rates in Umlazi district

schools and may influence the entire KwaZulu-Natal schools because learners could not receive educative teaching and learning under such circumstances. In the following I will briefly highlight how curriculum reform may negatively influence Grade 12 performance.

2.2.5.2 Curriculum reform on learners' performance

The introduction of curriculum 2005 which was based on Outcome-Based Education was to prepare all learners to become effective in the work place, focus on the results or outcomes that are expected at the end of each learning process and integrate knowledge so that learning is relevant and related to real-life situations to mention the few. However, it (curriculum) experienced many challenges such as unqualified teachers and other resources needed for the successful implementation Department of Education (DoE), (2006). The introduction in 1997 of a new transformational curriculum in South African schools, the outcomes-based Curriculum 2005, indicated that teachers struggled to implement this curriculum to such an extent that the Minister of Education in 1999 and in 2009 commissioned reviews of the school curriculum (DoE, 2000; DoE, 2009). As a result this might contributed in poor Grade 12 performance. The above reports revealed that the implementation of the written school curriculum was falling way short and the quality of South Africa school education has been questioned in many quarters. In addition to that; the South African Grade 12 learners' poor performance in critical areas was reported in international studies, such as Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2003 (Reddy, 2006) and Progress in Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 (Howie et al., 2007).

According to the Natal Mercury (January 27, 2014:1-2) the impact of a new government Education Policy that says no pupil may fail more than once during the last three years of school and must be allowed to write matric, will be felt for the first time by the class of 2014. Principals, academics and teachers unions have expressed incredulity at the policy and call called for it to be scrapped. Some have gone as far to call it "crazy", saying floundering learners (for this study Grade 12) will suffer and increase the high failure rates. The move by the National Department of Basic Education (2009) was implemented last year 2013 and is part of broader

guidelines that stipulate that no child may repeat a grade more than once during a schooling phase. The phases are Grade R to 3; Grade 4 to 6; grade 7 to 9; and Grade 10 to 12 which the latter is known as the Further Education and training (FET band or Phase). Based on the above policy, learners who haven't passed Grade 11 are allowed to progress to Grade 12 which could have a negative impact on Grade 12 pass rates (The Mercury January 27, 2014). The policy had a negative effect on teachers and matriculants in the sense that this made them (Grade 12 learners) disinterested in working hard and they would not put more energy into passing. On the other hand, teachers became demotivated to impart their skills and to learners. The Mercury's sister paper, the Cape Times, recently reported on the push – through policy in the Western Cape Province where 3269 pupils advanced to Grade 12 this year 2014 despite having failed Grade 11. It further stated that some had obtained only 6 percent for certain subjects as a result there may be an underperformance in matric pass rates.

Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe (2012:311) proclaim that the persistent results of national school examinations at various grade levels added to the criticism of National Curriculum Statement (NCS), (2008). They stated that there was a lack of appropriate and sufficient Learner Teacher Support Materials (LTSMs) and no assessment policy was developed to support the NCS. Subject-specific training for teachers and all support staff was inadequate. This resulted in the development of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), (2010) which is now in progress. As an teacher I have a strong concern with these curriculum reforms that they might contribute to Grade12 low pass rate in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa at large.

2.2.5.3 Assessment on grade 12 performance

Continuous assessment is the main method by which assessment takes place in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Within this method, the choice of assessment is made by individual teachers and therefore unique to each teacher, grade and school Department of Basic Education (2010). However, the availability of space and resources influences this decision.

Assessment strategies must be appropriate to the assessment standards to be assessed, and the purpose of the assessment must be clearly understood by all learners and teachers involved.

The major difficulty associated with learner assessment in multi-cultural secondary schools in Umlazi district is that most traditional tests are cultural biased against minority-group learners because of the language used or their lack of familiarity with the subject matter. Thus, minority groups are often perceived to be poor achievers and may be the reason for the declining Grade 12 results and standards of quality education. It is also believed that many disciplinary problem and high Grade 12 failure rates that may arise in multi-cultural schools in Umlazi district are the result of intense hostility experienced by cultural different learners and teachers, stemming from improper assessment strategies and teachers' low expectations. It is for this reason that the Department of Basic Education (2010) has recently declared that all secondary schools should implement the common tests system which is standardized, more flexible, creative and innovative approach to assessment.

The Department further stated that teachers should use variety of strategies that include written and oral tests as well as observation. Furthermore, written tests should have an appropriate reading level in terms of the complexity of the sentences, vocabulary and concepts. The language of tests must be sensitive to the language diversity and needs of the Grade12 learners. Test items should also reflect diversity of cultures and take into consideration the learners' life worlds and should be continually monitored to avoid teacher's subjectivity and negative impact to learner's performance.

2.2.5.4 Discipline in school

Norman and Monyai (2012:167) proclaim that the latest research and literature shows that parental involvement is becoming one of the most important measures of discipline both within and outside the school. Katola and Nyabware (2013:8) stated that discipline and academic performance have a relationship. Learners with good tend to perform better than those who are ill- disciplined. Indeed academic performance is pegged on discipline as no study time is wasted in punishing deviant

learners. Discipline must be maintained at all times for the learners to perform in examinations. The causes of ill-discipline among learners' are peer pressure, inadequate parenting, learning disabilities, personal stress and poor health. Before 1994 the most common form of school discipline was corporal punishment but now things have changed. South African schools' Act 84 of 1996 (Section 10) prohibits the administration of corporal punishment. Since the banning of corporal punishment most schools have unable to manage discipline. Creating and maintaining a safe disciplined school environment is one of the important challenges facing principals, teachers and parents in schools Squelch, (2000: iii).

Maphosa and Shumba (2010:387-397) say that teachers feel that alternative disciplinary measures to corporal punishment are not effective. Some teachers are not aware that there are alternative to corporal punishment provided for them to employ due to minimal and sporadic training on alternative to corporal punishment.

2.2.5.4.1 Corporal punishment on performance

The South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996, states that corporal punishment is illegal and is an offence punishable by dismissal. Although the country (South Africa) now has a democratically elected government, violence is still prevalent.

Even teachers at times are guilty of violence whereby children are continued to be caned or physically abused in spite of the fact that corporal punishment has been abolished for a number of years, Department of Basic Education (2014). According to the Daily News February 5, 2014:1 and March 25, 2014:1 (a Ntuzuma Township north of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal) teacher of Senzokwethu High School has been charged of hitting 35 Grade 12 pupils with a plastic pipe over a period of three days. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education has suspended him and was waiting for the police to finish their investigation before it took action against him. The teacher had also referred to the pupils as "Satanists". In addition, Kwazulu-Natal Education Head, Nkosinathi Sishi was addressing teachers and grade 12 learners at Lugobe Secondary School in Umbumbulu rural area, after a Maths teacher had been beaten by a plastic pipe at least 40 learners for arriving late or failing tests as a result such learners were afraid to attend the school. Grade 12 learners are anyway, expected to perform well at the end of the year and Grade 12 results to improve in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa at large.

2.2.5.5 Teacher perceptions and expectations

Wolhuter (2007:178) says the expectations of teachers have a significant influence on Grade 12 learners' performance and progress. This is called Pygmalion effect, defined by Brehm and Kassim (1997:14) "the process by which one's expectations about a person eventually lead that person to behave in ways that confirms the expectation". In South Africa few studies have been done on the effect of teachers perceptions on a variety of cultural groups in multi-cultural secondary schools. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes are formed among other things by their personal experiences and professional education. The individual teacher's perceptions are located in his or her psyche (for example, beliefs, values, biases and generalizations that generate from personal experiences). It follows, therefore that teachers' perceptions, attitudes and personal experiences may be fundamentally at odd with those of Grade 12 learners a variety of background formed by class, religion, gender and culture. Moreover, teachers' perceptions are shaped by a complex and extended process of socialization which is informed by teacher's education, practical teaching experience in teaching practice.

Meier, Lemmer and Swanepoel (1999:23-42), found that student teachers projected strong group identities and related perceptions that influenced their attitudes towards Grade 12 learners other than those of their own groups. Thus; as a result of prior conditioning, teachers tend to perceive other groups as the "other" and retain their own ideas about justice and the appropriate social system. The fact that the rural secondary schools in South Africa have disadvantaged as compared to former white secondary schools in urban areas, Grade 12 learners often had a limited proficiency in English, which is the preferred language of learning in many former white schools, thus tend to have a negative influence in their performance in Umlazi district schools.

Consequently, these rural African Grade 12 learners in Umlazi district underachieved, thus confirming intentional and unintentional negative bias towards and stereotyping. In terms of The South African Constitution, Section 30 requires that the language and culture of learners be recognized and protected (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996b). Teachers' perceptions and expectations may have a negative influence or contribution to Grade 12 pass rate.

However, the diversity as stated by the South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996 makes it clear that ten values of education which are democracy, social justice and, equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, Ubuntu (human dignity), sustaining, an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation should be applied and respected by everyone in this country (RSA) not only for the improvement of Grade 12 pass rates in Umlazi district, but for the quality education for all (South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996).

2.2.6 Learner issues

Ross-Fisher (2008:161-162) asserts that among the problems that hinder learner performance include poor attendance, writing skills that does not meet grade- level expectations, reading comprehension skills that prevent a learner or a group of learners from passing content areas assessments, bullying or aggressive behaviour, teenage pregnancy and drugs or substance abuse. For the purpose of this study learner issues are categorized into the impact of violence in schools, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, absenteeism and truancy, English as second language, and parental involvement.

2.2.6.1 Violence in schools

Weir (2005:1291) explains school violence as any situation where a member of the school community (teacher, student, other education worker, parent or visitor) is intimidated, abused, threatened or assaulted, or their property deliberately damaged by another member of that community or the public, arising out of their activities in a school and which occurs within normally accepted school hours and within normally accepted school boundaries and situations.

Ncontsa and Shumba (2013:1) maintain research shows that school violence is escalating despite the measures put in place to address the problem by the Department of Education and schools themselves. This implies that teachers spend most of the time focusing on solving problems associated with school violence instead of focusing on effective teaching learning. Prinsloo (2008:27) stated that apart from the serious incidents of violence that have received wide media coverage, there is general concern regarding the increase in incidents of school violence in

South Africa. Due to the high incidents of school violence, schools are no longer viewed as safe and secured environment where children can learn, enjoy themselves and feel protected. Reports on television and in the print media highlight the escalation of school violence such as learner assaulting and stabbing other learners or teachers. The finding by Ncontsa et al. (2013:10) shows that school violence affect teaching and learning negatively and as a result the educational goal of schools cannot be attained. The rate of violence in South African schools appears in the written and electronic media about high levels of violence physical and sexual abuse and gang related activities in our schools. Carrying knives and guns and other weapons has become part of daily school life. These incidents underline the extent of violence and crime we experience in our communities which generally impacts negatively on education and what happens in the school in particular Burton and Leoschut, (2013:3).

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:89) further agree that school violence in a real sense mirrors the violence of the society which shapes the schools. Some students growing up in a violent society tend to perceive violence as a legitimate vehicle for conflict resolution. This may result in bringing weapons to schools, joining gangs for protection, thus hindering the learning process which may affect matric performance in this regard.

Booyse, Le Roux and Wolhuter (2012:251-252) admit that both violent incidents and threats of violence at schools affect learners (for this study matriculants), teachers and the educational process negatively. In an atmosphere heavy with the threat of personal injury, Grade 12 learners cannot learn and teachers cannot teach. Teachers who are concerned for their safety are less able to focus on teaching and likewise learners on learning. Grade 12 learners who are exposed to violence are not eager to attend school because of the occurrence or threat of violence. It is difficult for them to concentrate on academic school subjects when they are constantly worrying about when they will next be harassed, what they can do to take revenge on their tormentor, or if they will become the next victim.

The above mentioned authors further stated that Grade 12 learners may become withdrawn, isolated or inattentive in class. These effects will impact negatively on their motivation and ability to learn, on their socialization with peers, the quality of

their relationships with adults at their school and eventually on Grade 12 results. In this regard it may happen that learners are missing school lessons because they fear for their personal safety. Teachers are leaving the profession because they are tired of dealing with discipline problems, thus education quality is diminishing in a climate of violence and fear. Moreover, Grade 12 learners are expected to have been completed the prescribed formal tasks to be assessed at the end of the year.

Daily News (January 24, 2014:1) published that a Grade 12 pupil had died and another was fighting for his life in hospital after two separate incidents of stabbing in KwaZulu Natal, just days into the new academic year. In Umzinto South coast of Durban Thobani Philani Shezi 21, was stabbed by robbers outside Roseville Secondary School, where he was in Grade 12, on Wednesday. Police said he was killed for his cell phone.

Daily News (January 24, 2014) further indicates that in another incident, in Newlands East North of Durban, a faction or gang fight is believed to have been a cause of a sixteen year old Grade 12 learner being stabbed outside the Hill view High school gates on Tuesday. The boy, who apparently also armed with a knife, was stabbed in the chest as a large group of learners watched. He sustained critical injuries his liver, lungs and spleen had been punctured and was in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Landsberg, Kruger and Swart (2012:43) acknowledge that the schools and all its activities should be organized and be conducive to the protection of the integrity of learners. The school must be a place where they can feel safe and where they will have access to people (adults and other people in authority) whom they trust. Further, they assert that the statistics reveal that between 87 and 95 per cent of perpetrators are male, 94 per cent of them are no strangers to learner concerned, thus; having negative impact on learner's performance.

Christie (2008:203) maintains that an important is the outreach for well-functioning schools where learners can learn in a protective environment is that institutional supports are required to back up the work of teachers and learners in classrooms. The provision of safe and secured environment, predictable rhythms of learning, adequate resourcing and learning materials, structures for time on task, effective leadership and management, sound governance and relationships across the

boundaries of the school to allow for outside influences and resources should be a priority for the Department of Education for the betterment of learners' performance. The school the previous day ordered its learners to stay home for their own safety, telling parents in a note that the "on-going feud" involving residents from different sections of the neighbourhood had spilt over into the school, endangering life of teachers and learners. However, the above incidents of school violence are the proof that learners in KwaZulu-Natal schools have challenges that might disturb or hinder their good performance to achieve high pass rates. This is just the tip of ice bag compared to the number of incidents of violence in schools. Unfortunately, all this affect the learners concerned as well as other learners negatively.

2.2.6.2 Teenage pregnancy on performance

Teenage pregnancy is a global problem. Among the developed countries the United States of America has the highest teenage birth rate (Crosson-Tower, 2007:280). In sub-Saharan African countries girls and women are losing the battle for equal access to secondary education. In many developing countries teenage pregnancy has been one of the major hindrances to the educational success of girls.

As more young women remain in school past puberty, more learners are exposed to the risk of becoming pregnant (Eloundou-Eryegue, 2004:509). Runhare and Vandeyer (2011:105) concede that due to democratization of education in South Africa, there are indications the population of pregnant and former pregnant learners in formal schools is increasing. In 2001 KwaZulu-Natal had 32 percent of 14 -19 year old who have been pregnant still attending school Grant and Hallmark, (2006:3). Teenage pregnancy affects school or performance in many ways.

Malhotra (2008:89) maintain that early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy are also associated with pain and suffering from broken relationships, a sense of betrayal and abandonment altered self-esteem and depression. All these psychological distresses can prevent the learner from performing to his or her potential at school. Abe and Zane (1990:37) in Malahlela (2012:15) asserts this and further states that stigma during and after pregnancy can lead to depression, social exclusion, low self-esteem and poor academic performance. Depression and anxiety in pregnancy can be linked to struggles such as school problem.

According to Bridge and Alford (2010:2) Teenage pregnancy lead to worry and emotional distress painful symptoms emanating from STIS and trips doctors or clinic for treatments all of which impact negatively on school attendance concentration and performance. Mpanza (2006:25) maintains that once the baby is born, the teenage mother needs more time parenting the baby and much of the responsibility is carried out during the night, which leaves the teenage with less time to study and do homework. The ultimate consequence of being a teenage mother is failing to concentrate in the class because she would be feeling drowsy and exhausted thus; leading to poor performance in school subjects and failure.

Macmanis and Sorensen (2000:27) asserts this when they state that teen parents are likely to do more poorly in the school and repeat grades more often than teen that are not parents. A study by Malahlela (2012:47) revealed that teenage pregnancy and parenting a major role in school absenteeism. This centred on ante-natal clinic consultations and pregnancy related sickness and is more so in rural communities in South Africa.

Landsberg (2011:73) indicates that the problem with teenage include inter alia learners being infected by HIV and AIDS. As the infection progresses, the learners may experience ear, chest, throat and urinary-tract infection as well as mouth problems (for example bleeding gums, and candida or thrush infection. Learners experience multi problems with general health such as chronic fatigue, wheezing and shortness of breath, Tuberculosis (TB), malnutrition, chronic diarrhea and skin problem as well as brain disturbance. As a result of this brain involvement learners may present with a wide spectrum of problems affecting behaviour and intellectual function such as learning disabilities, hyperactivity, speech problems or motor problems (which could include toe walking, in-toeing and increased tone or spasticity) that are necessary for effective learning. He therefore, insisted that teachers must ensure that they are familiar with the educational legislation regarding HIV/AIDS which could be available in each school, and under these unhealthy conditions learners could not perform according their potential capability, thus may contribute to the high failure rates.

The following graphs depict the high statistics of teenage pregnancy from Umbumbulu Clinic, the area which is situation nearby the two sampled schools in South of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

Health

UMBUMBULU CLINIC

Department:

P.O Umbumbulu, 4105

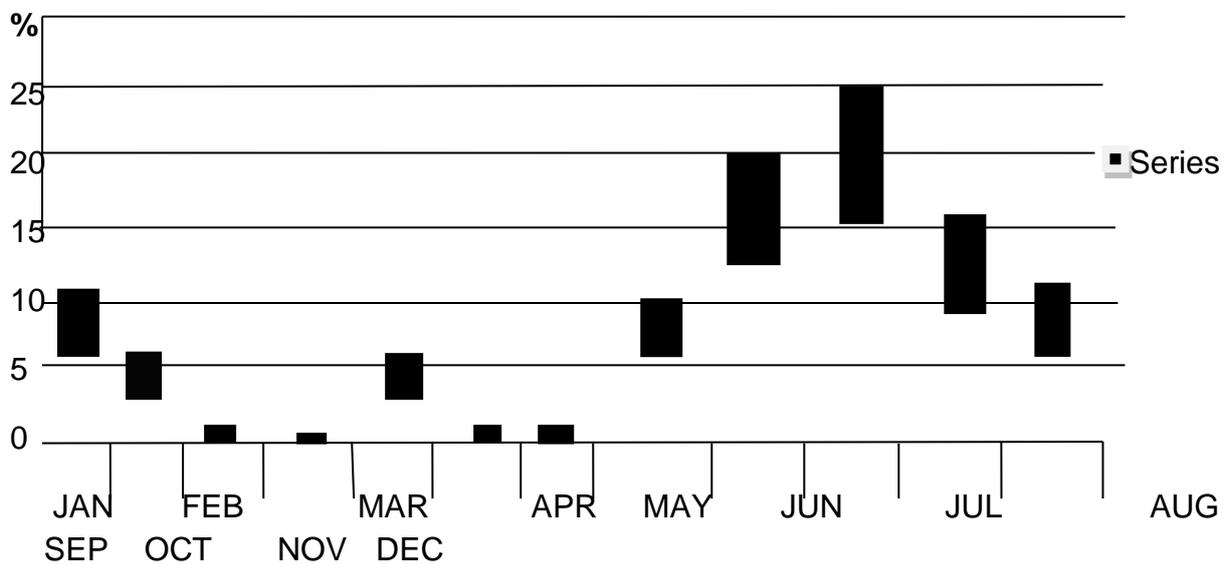
Health

Tel: 031 9150174, Fax: 031 9150174

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

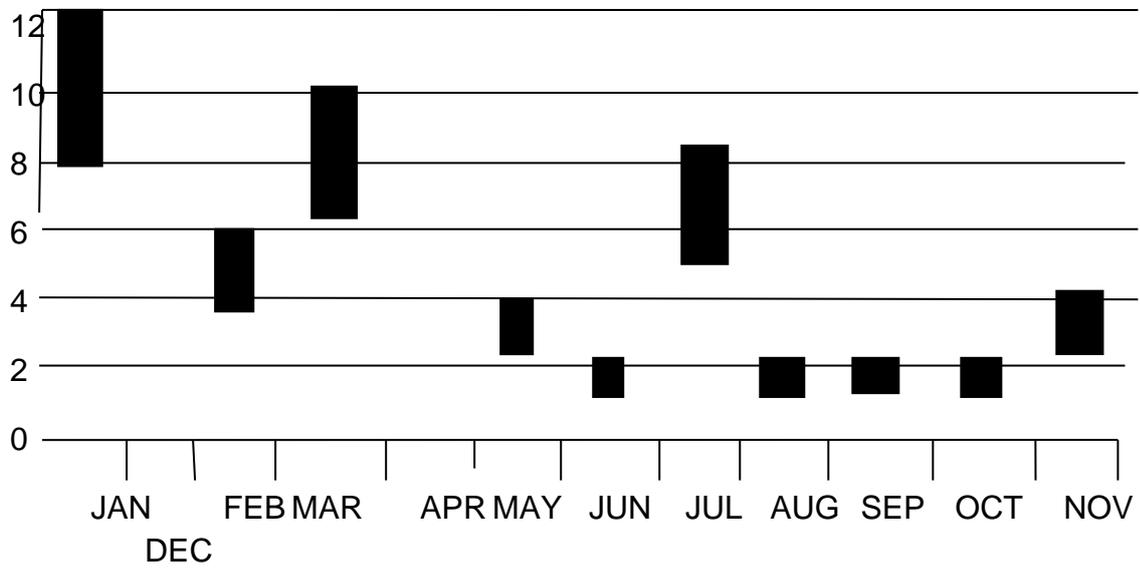
ANTENATAL CLINIC VISIT UNDER18 YEARS 2011

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
11%	9%	2%	1%	10%	1%	2%	13%	21%	14%	9%	7%	90%



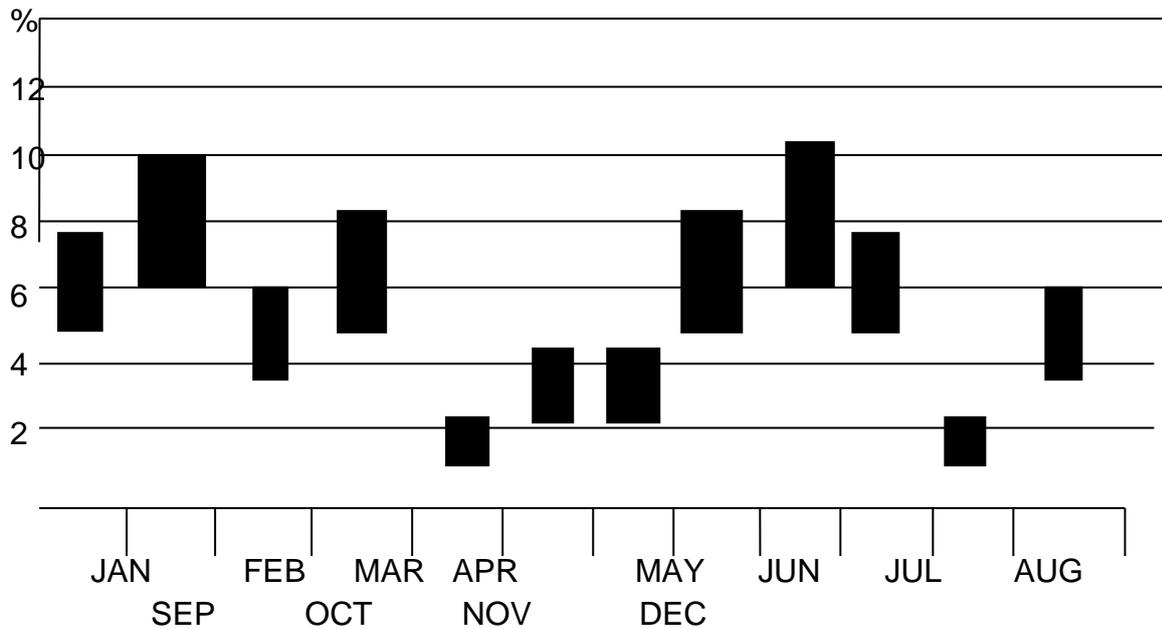
ANTENATAL FIRST VISIT UNDER 18 YEARS 2012

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	
									TOTAL			
12	1	6	11	0	4	3	9	3	3	3	5	60



ANTENATAL FIRST VISIT UNDER 18 YEAR 2013

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
7%	10%	6%	9%	3%	5%	5%	9%	11%	7%	5%	6%	83%



2.2.6.2.1 Graph on teenage pregnancy

2.2.6.3 Drug abuse on performance

National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2006:46) suggests that there is a relationship between poor academic performance and teenage substance use. Learners who use alcohol or drugs has been shown to be greater risk for performing poorly in school and a vice versa. Henry, Smith and Caldwell (2007:372-384) continues that the study on deterioration of academic achievement and marijuana use onset among rural adolescents confirm the similar findings. They further state that adolescent’s drug use is related to many negative outcomes in both short and long term. The study by Joseph, Ambekeh, Ulwanede and Veronica (2012:413) on students at tertiary institution assets this when they state that poor academic performance among students on tertiary institution may be associated with substance abuse contributed to students missing classes, failing tests, and dropping out due to poor grades.

According to the United Nations' office on Drugs and crime (UNODC) report (2005) some 200 million people or 5% of the world's population age 15-64 have used drugs at least once in 12 months. This is about 15 million more than the previous year's estimates.

World Drug Report (2005) adds that the use illicit drug in all nations has increased in recent years. Drug abuse has a negative impact on the education of secondary school learners including Grade 12. They are particularly at risk given that they are in the formative years. According to Louw in Ekpenyang (2012: 264) drugs also affect the brain resulting in a major decline in its functions. Drugs affect a learner's concentration and interest in school activities. This leads to increased absenteeism and drop outs. Most psycho-arcitic drugs affect decision process of the learner, their creative thinking and the development of necessary life and social skills. He further stated that drugs also interfere with an individual's awareness of their unique potential and their interest in their career development.

Graemer, Fields, Stutsman, Anderson and Barthwel (2008:2) state that there is significant number in American schools with great potential who are under-performing because they are drug users. They maintain that drug use impacts individual learners, fellow learners and the school's performance. Drug abuse impairs learning memory, abstract thinking and problem solving and it can lead to poor performance, attendance, dropping out of school delinquency and behavioural problem. They firmly assert that there is a clear correlation between drug use and declining academic performance.

2.2.6.4 Learners' absenteeism on performance

Absenteeism can be defined as persistent, habitual and unexplained absence from school and is said to be chronic when a learner is absent without valid reason Gupta and Lata (2014:11). Balfanz and Byrnes (2012: 8) argue that chronic absenteeism is missing 10 percent or more of school days including both excused and unexcused absence. Absence is a major factor responsible for the falling standard in school education system today. They reported that being in school leads to succeeding in school. They also found that there is a clear relationship that does not emerge is strong correlation between poverty and chronic absenteeism.

Absent sale were found to be three times higher among economically disadvantaged learners in middle and high schools and at least twice as high in elementary schools learners who live in poverty attend school less frequently than those who do not.

The study by Chiwaula (2008:3) also revealed differences in absenteeism between rural and urban school learners with rural learners being more absent than urban. The future of the nation always takes place in school. School absenteeism has far-reaching impact on a child's academic progress and future. Absenteeism create a dead, fire some and unpleasant classroom environment that makes learners who are to come to class uncomfortable and teacher irritable Marburger (2007:14). It disturbs the dynamic teaching-learning environment and adversely affects the overall wellbeing of class (Segel, 2008: 794).

William (2001:25) affirms that in quality terms, absenteeism is a waste of educational resources, time and human potential. Learners who have absenteeism problem generally suffer academically and socially. The study by Chiwaula (2008:2) found that the negative impact of the loss of days in schooling due to absenteeism has being universally acknowledged and it has been linked to poor performance, repetition and eventually dropout. The study by Duran (2011:1) showed that absences from school are dragging down learner achievement. Even a child with good attendance suffers a small loss academically when the school has a high absentee rate, suggesting that excessive absences across the board can undermine the quality of instruction for all learners by creating classroom churn and leaving teachers mired in review and remediation. He further showed that raising attendance rates can boast test scores for individuals and schools. In fact the annual predicted scores gained from simply improving a child's attendance equals and exceed the annual gain expected when a child attends a privileged school.

2.2.6.5 English as second language on grade 12 pass rate

Socially, the black African children have a different lifestyle than of those from different cultures. South Africa has eleven official languages but there is one language that is used in non- language subjects. African families only use English as a communicating language if the parents are educated. In those families where parents never went to tertiary institutions, they only use their native language

(Landsberg (2011). According to Landsberg (2011:168) in South Africa where there are eleven official languages of which English is the main language of teaching and learning in most of the schools, teachers in general are not adequately trained and equipped to cater specifically for the needs of learners learning in their second, third or even fourth language. This could be ascribed to inadequate provision of English as Second Language (ESL) learning and teaching in their training as teachers. However, Grade 12 learners in Umlazi district schools use English language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The sad party is in rural areas whereby these learners have a little exposure to English outside the classroom and they have little opportunity to learn it, yet by the end of the year they are expected to excel in achieving high Grade 12 pass rate. English is the mother tongue of only 8, 2 per cent of the population. However, it is the language widely understood, and the second language most widely understood by the majority of South Africans. Also the Revised National Curriculum Statement enhances multilingualism, diversity and respect for different language tradition in a national context and departments of education are obliged to make necessary arrangements to ensure that language requirements are met at local level (Department of Education, 2006).

Fleischer (2008:105-136) indicates that less than one in ten matriculants in South Africa speaks English as his or her first language, yet by the end of the year they have to be assessed in English. Straight for English (subtractive bilingualism) policies and early exit from mother tongue tuition (transitional bilingualism) are the primary reasons for the systematic underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics, which ultimately leads to high Grade 12 failure rates. Other South African Grade 12 whose home language is neither English nor Afrikaans does not have success in mastering the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy. In secondary schools more particularly include the early shift from mother to the second language; the learner never masters the knowledge and the skills needed in school. Language teachers find it very stressful to teach through the medium of English as the additional language. For example code switching (where teachers revert to the mother tongue if they are not successful in teaching a concept in English) takes place. Although code switching helps Grade 12 to understand such concept, they (learners) may feel that teachers should teach the rest of the content using mother tongue, yet they will be assessed in English during the final assessment. Home

language is embedded in social relations with particular class values attached, that are not transferred to the LoLT and very little time is spent on instruction because teachers focus on teaching English. Therefore, Fleischer feels that learners do not communicate freely in the LoLT, thus may contribute a lot to low Grade 12 pass rates.

Department of Education (2008) says that it is important that the learners acquire proficiency levels which includes abstract cognitive academic language skills necessary for thinking and learning and which will enable them to learn effectively across the curriculum. Whatever their backgrounds, learners must have access to the curriculum and learn the content of the subject matter while learning English (Shin, 2008). Uys and Leech (2008:77) continues that the fact that teachers real teaching happens via code switching which is an added burden on the teachers, the Grade 12 learners never being equipped with the language knowledge in the language of assessment, which ultimately leads to academic failure. Uys and Leech (2008) offered the following reasons for teachers being unable to meet the multilingual demands of their learners and their educational needs better Grade12 performance. Firstly, teachers are unable to teach their learners academic literacy, teachers are not aware that they unable to meet the language needs of their learners, they lack the competence to teach the four language skills which are speaking, writing, listening and reading, they are not familiar with the strategies needed to promote a second language medium of instruction (L2MI), they lack language proficiency to support Grade 12 learners in acquiring academic literacy as per the South African Department of Education policy requirement, they do not know or ignore the importance of methodological skills, and lastly, they were not trained to teach, through the medium of English.

Economically, to give another example, looking at how the technology is used in Africa, English is still the main language that is used in computers, cell phones and appliances. It is only when one had purchased a product that they need someone who understands English, to change the language into any native language of the person, who purchased the product. White children have access to the internet and they travel to learn about history as well as other people's cultures.

Some Black African children do not have access to the internet and they cannot afford to travel to other places to learn about other cultures (Department of Education, 2013). Politically, this happens mostly in black African children in the continent. It has not been proven that white African children do not undergo this emotional, physical and psychological abuse but it is stated that it happens mostly in African families. This goes back to the 19th century where Black African children were overcrowded in one class and did not have enough learning material. Based on the above mentioned background Grade 12 performance in Umlazi district schools could not be expected to be impressive as compared to the former Model 'C' schools (urban White Schools) in this regard (Department of Education, 2013).

2.2.6.6 Parental involvement

Everybody will agree that of the child depends on the three stakeholders involved namely, the teacher, learner and the parents. If anyone of these stakeholders is not properly involved the education of the child may suffer hence performance becomes poor. Although inequality in education remains one of the most vexing issues, wealthier parents are able to maintain relative privilege in schools through higher school fees yet poorer parents cannot do likewise (Department of Education, 2013).

Nieman and Monyai (2012:167) declare that the latest research and literature show that parental involvement is becoming one of the most important measures of discipline both within and outside the school. As a matter of fact, the teacher's involvement in the learner's family background encourages Grade 12 learners to do well in their exams. However, this can only be proven if the learner's family is also involved in the learner's education.

Booyse, Le Roux and Wolhuter (2012:200-205) complement that learners are more successful students at all grade levels if their parents participate in school activities and encourage education and learning at home, regardless of the parents' educational background or social class. Loucks (1992:19) makes the same observation that research on parent or family involvement leaves little room for debate and students who are academically successful tend to receive consistent support from their parents and their adult in the home.

Parent involvement programmes, particularly those that train low-income parents to work with their children, are effective in improving children's language skills, their performance in tests and behaviour in the school. Learners' attitudes about themselves and their control over the environment are critical to achievement, whereas school inputs such as class size or teacher education have little effect. These attitudes are formed at home and are the product of myriad interactions between parents, children and surrounding community. In other words, when parents show an interest in their learners and have high expectations regarding their performance, they promote attitudes that are keys to achievement (Booyse, Le Roux and Wolhuter, 2012).

When teachers make parents involvement part of their regular teaching practice, parents increase their interaction with their children at home and feel more positive about their own abilities to help their children. Parents also benefit by being alerted to different and more effective ways of creating or developing opportunities and stimulating experiences for their children through parenting programmes.

Booyse, Le Roux and Wolhuter (2012) agree that most parents need help to know how to be productively involved in their children education at each grade level. Parents' benefits when they become involved in Grade 12 education including greater appreciation of their own important roles strengthen social networks, access to information and materials and personal efficacy and motivation to continue their own education. The contact with other parents experiencing comparable problems often has very positive results. Moreover, by understanding their adolescents better, parents are in a position to work with schools in resolving other school related issues. Collaboration between parents and teachers reduces the characteristic isolation of their roles. Parents are assured to know that teachers share their concerns about their children. In turn, it is comforting for teachers to know that parents recognize the complexity of their role in the classroom. Increased parent and community involvement can also bring multiple benefits to teachers and schools as follows: The teacher's work can be manageable; parents who are involved have more positive views of the teacher and the school; and the parents and others who participate are likely to be more supportive of the schools.

Moreover, teachers come to know and understand better. This obviously increases the teachers' understanding of the children in the family and provides information which may be of value in dealing with specific children (for this study Grade 12). Teachers also report more positive feelings about teaching and about the progress of learners when there is more parent involvement in the school. Teachers who frequently involve parents in their learner's education rate all parents- including less educated and single parents as helpful. Collaboration between the school and the parent's also increases the resources available to the school, for example parents may contribute to schools as volunteers or paid assistants, thus helping to individualize and enrich student work (Booyse, Le Roux and Wolhuter, 2012).

Parents' expertise may help a school in the development or maintenance of the school buildings and grounds, thus or creating a conducive learning and teaching atmosphere for Grade 12 learners for better performance and enhancement of pass rates. The increase link between school and community has been shown to have multiple positive results. For example, when the community involved as parents of the schools, the problems of crime is minimized, thus making it possible for the Grade 12 learners to have afternoon study classes in the safety environment. An organized parent leadership group can also bring additional resources into the schools and improve the school's physical environment and extra-curricular activities. This is especially true if the sense of ownership is instilled (Lemmer, 2010).

Lemmer (2010:158-160) contends that parental involvement with education is nothing new. That this can lead to more effective learning has been apparent for sometimes (Ebersole (1979: v) wrote as follows:

The ring of respect, encircles students, teachers, and in an essential relationship for effective learning. A break anywhere in the circle results in a breakdown in student performance. If there is close communication, co-operation, sincere caring, however, there seems to be no limit to what might happen- students learn more, teachers feel more fulfilled, and parents feel better about their children (for this study Grade 12 learners) and themselves.

According to Macgregor (2005:15) parents and teachers have a different understanding of what constitutes parent involvement. He reports that parents are eager to play all roles at schools from tutors to classroom assistants to decision makers. He further states that professional teachers tend to consider only the most traditional roles appropriate for parents, such as supporters of school programmes or the audience at school functions. This means that teachers tend to relegate parents to the less substantial and insignificant roles, leaving them feeling frustrated, belittled and left out. In this regard, these notable gaps may continue to have negative impact to Grade 12 low pass rates in two sampled schools.

According to De Wet, Lemmer and Wolhuter (2007:202-205) involving families in schools has become a major goal of education professionals, particularly those working with at-risk students.

In most cases, however, collaboration among the home, the school and the community remains a reality. They also assert that the following factors limit or impede parental involvement and may have a negative impact to matric pass rate in Umlazi district:

- limited knowledge and experience of parents involved,
- time constraints,
- family structures,
- cultural and social barriers, and
- uneducated parents and caregivers.

2.2.6.6.1 Parents' limited knowledge and experience

South African Schools' Act 84 Of 1996 stipulates that parents have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that their children are at school and their homework is done. Unfortunately, many parents have never attended school themselves or have left school or dropped out of school themselves and so do not know how to read, write or count properly (illiterate). Most parents in the area where two schools are located are illiterate and they seemed have not learnt the habit of helping their children.

Mji and Makgato (2006:263) maintain that many parents are seriously handicapped in supporting their learners' education because of their own limited education or lack of proficiency in English.

This creates inferiority complex and results in parents reluctant in involving themselves with school work. They also stressed that although parental involvement undeniable critical, according to these authors many fall short because in general they do not possess necessary education and therefore find it difficult to determine and understand what is done at school.

In South Africa, teachers often cite the lack of education of parents as a barrier to parent involvement. Desforges and Abouchar (2003:42) quote that there are three reasons why parents who are not well educated may not be involved in their children's schooling:

- Firstly, they come from a culture of poverty in which parents place less value on education, some parents have less social capital in terms of social networks and skills.
- They do not know the "right sort of people". As a consequence, they feel less equipped to meet or negotiate on the demands of schooling, and
- Lastly, schools are seen as middle-class institutions that accept involvement only on their own terms.
- However, the above mentioned authors insisted that this tendency of pointing fingers to each other between parents and teachers may open some relationship gaps, which may have a negative impact on Grade 12 pass rates.

2.2.6.6.2 Time constraints on performance

Department of Basic Education (2013:3) indicates that parents are expected to regularly control and monitor learner's tasks or homework, preparation for projects and readiness for tests or examinations, attend meetings as requested by School Management Teams, regularly visit the school to enquire about the progress of their children, should arrange additional tuition in identified subjects based on the performance of the learner and ensure that learners complete remedial programmes successfully. Mji and Makgato (2006:264) state that one of the critical variables that might prevent parents from participating fully in their children's education is socio-economic status and work related demands.

Parents leave very early work; come back late and exhausted which results in schooling activities of their children being the last thing they would practically consider participating. This is even more so in the sampled schools where the work places are very far. Some working parents are not leaving with their children so that they will be closer to their place work. Some or most learners are staying with their grandparents and some are the head of their families. For many families both parents are work outside the home, thus making it difficult to help their children with homework and impossible to attend school conferences and meetings even during the day.

2.2.6.6.3 Cultural background on performance

According to Macdonald (1998:99-100) parents from cultural diverse backgrounds have their own priorities and attach different values to teachers and schools. The circumstances of parents' lives such as marital status, socioeconomic circumstances and personal factors affect their relationships with teachers and the school.

Redding (2005:481) emphasise that most parents express a strong interest in their children's education. Many of them talk about the importance of schools and how they would like to be involved in helping children. He also states that parents characteristics such as an interest in their children's education, a positive attitude towards education in general, and belief in the value of schooling have been found to be more important than the actual material circumstances of their home.

Department of Basic Education (2009) says that teachers and parents may both be victims of cultural barriers caused by differences in languages, values, goals, methods of education, and the definition of appropriate roles. Many teachers express negative views of low-income families and their communities. However, suspicion and misunderstanding may affect both parents and teaching staff. The staff may periodically feel overwhelmed by the sense of futility regarding the limitations of disadvantaged parents. The parents, in turn, may resent schools for depriving their children of a quality education. Banks (2010:59) states that every teacher and learner is unique individual and cultural being who brings into the classroom a distinct set of beliefs, values and experiences which influences attitude, behaviours and perceptions.

Lemmer, Meier and Van Wyk (2012:26-29) declare that there is dual relationship between education and culture. On the other hand it is influenced and shaped by culture, while on the other it is powerful agent of cultural transmission and preservation. Traditionally, such relationship has been primarily responsible for transmitting the values, norms and heritage of the dominant group. Nowadays South Africa does not accept that since diverse cultural background should be met. In KwaZulu-Natal for example, most learners share histories and experiences that differ dramatically from other learners and teachers. Learners in more homogeneous rural areas will also grow up and seek employment in the society and an economy that had been reshaped by demographic changes. As a result, teachers and schools are struggling to find ways to bring success to new and diverse learner populations. The teachers should therefore transmit and interpret the knowledge of both the dominant culture (macro culture) and of the micro cultures, hence providing education that is multi-cultural. Seemingly, this is still a challenge for the teachers whose Grade 12 learners are to acquire the appropriate knowledge, attitude and skills required to function within the macro culture and micro cultures of society and thus to perform tremendously in terms of achieving high pass rate.

Meier and Van Wyk (2012:26-29), further state that the classroom is a micro culture where the different cultures of learners and teachers meet to form one complex and unique classroom culture. However, learners coming from different cultural backgrounds to those of the teacher and or dominant culture might experience cultural alienation and cultural discontinuity. Extreme cultural discontinuity can lead to the matriculants failing or even dropping out of school. Research suggests that the closer learner's culture to that of the teacher, the greater their chance of academic success. In this regard the teacher has an important role to play in bridging cultural gaps which may exist in the classroom. The effect of cultural conflict in the classroom may have a negative influence on interpersonal relations as oppose to healthy climate in the classroom, thus may lead Grade 12 learners to lose concentration which may influence their performance negatively.

2.2.6.6.4 Lack of school policy and parental involvement

The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) recognizes all primary caregivers as parents; the biological parent or legal guardian; the person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or any person who fulfils the obligations towards the learner's schooling and acknowledges the right of parents to be involved in the policy making of the schools and practice of parent involvement. However, the Department of Basic Education, (2009) insists that in practice since the type of decision making practices used by the school will depend on its philosophy, some schools only allow decision making opportunities for parents serving on the school governing body. This usually only involves five to ten parents and does not constitute true participative decision making. In this regard this may contribute negatively in Grade 12 performance.

2.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on presenting a literature review to explore the causes of low grade12 pass rates in two Umlazi schools and the factors that influence such low performance taking into consideration the factors influencing the performance from other developed and developing countries such as USA and Zimbabwe and South Africa. Moreover, the attempt was made to indicate the importance of the three role players or stakeholders in education system such as teachers, parents and learners. It was also revealed the challenge in the system of education does not only affect South Africa but it is a global issue. The next chapter deals with research design and methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research design and methodology used in this study to explore the causes of Grade12 low pass rates in two schools in Umlazi district, KwaZulu-Natal is outlined. It was necessary to engage qualitative research methods. Qualitative research provided the opportunity for the participants to articulate their perceptions, understandings and experiences around factors contributing to high failure rate and provide the mechanism to assist to improve the learners' performance. The paradigm within which this study is conducted, and the approach to be used in the study are discussed in this chapter. The sampling techniques and the research methods used to generate data are also explained. This chapter also discusses the ethical considerations of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative and aimed at gathering an in-depth understanding of the experiences, and factors that influence low Grade12 pass rate in two Umlazi district schools. In qualitative research the interviewee is an integral part of the investigation. This approach also enabled researchers to focus on social reality (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, and 2004:41), for it ensures an investigation of the qualities rather than the quantities of phenomenon. In this way, the approach stresses the socially-constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied, and the situational constraints that shape the enquiry. They also maintain that it also gives a clear and detailed account of action involved and the researcher thus gains a better understanding of the world and tries to use it to bring about educational changes.

Given the purpose of this study, the qualitative approach seemed relevant since it investigate the variables (causes of failure rate in Grade 12) in their natural setting where they are found (school where teaching and learning take place). According to Babbie and Mouton (2007:278) qualitative researcher's emphasis on studying human action in its natural setting and through the eyes of the actors themselves,

together with an emphasis on detailed description and understanding phenomena within the appropriate context, already suggest what type of designs will be methodologically acceptable.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:26) assert that qualitative designs are just as systematic as quantitative designs, but they emphasize gathering data on naturally occurring phenomena. Most of these data are in the form of words rather than numbers, and in general, the researcher must research and explore with a variety of methods until a deep understanding is achieved. Qualitative designs can initially be classified as interactive or non-interactive and then further delineated within each of these major types. Kobus (2007:51) explains qualitative research as an “attempt to collect rich descriptive data with the aim of developing an understanding of what has been observed or studied. Therefore, the qualitative approach was most suitable for this study to assist in clarifying the underlying causes and factors of Grade 12 low performance in Umlazi district schools.

As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:89) state, qualitative research seeks to explore group and not to generalize it over the whole population (specifically in two schools in Umlazi district). They further point out that the human person is the primary data collection instrument. Qualitative research seeks a wide understanding of the entire situation.

Qualitative research aims to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) assert that human activities are investigated in terms of meaning relating to why people say something, do that, or do something that way. This needs to be interpreted by linking them to other human events to enable greater understanding, thus produces more in-depth, comprehensive understanding. Durrheim and Painter (2006:59) further argue that qualitative researchers intend to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomenon (for this study failing or poor matriculants' performance) as they occur in the real world, and they therefore want to study them in the natural setting. Durrheim and Painter (2006:59) also stress that the aim is for qualitative depth rather than quantitative understanding. This approach therefore acknowledges an interactive relationship between the researcher and the

participants and their own experiences, and how they have constructed reality based on those experiences.

Cresswell (2008:43) points out that qualitative research aims to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior as dictated by the context they are in. Therefore, in this study the researcher sought to get an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon namely, the factors that influence the low Grade 12 performance. In this study, detailed data was gathered through open-ended questions that provide direct quotations. Denzin and Lincoln (2011:681-4) also defined qualitative research as the study of things in their natural settings, trying to interpret “phenomenon” in terms of meanings people bring to them.

3.3 INTERPRETIVIST PARADIGM

This study is located within the interpretivism paradigm. The interpretivism paradigm provides an understanding of why the Grade 12 performance in Umlazi district schools is terrible poor. According to Bryman (2004:19) the interpretivism paradigm enables the researcher to understand and interpret the data in ways that will facilitate an in-depth engagement with the phenomenon. In interpretivism, the epistemology rests upon moral and pragmatic concerns which are located in a particular context and time and are open to dialectic and mutualistic conversations. In this study the teachers and Grade 12 learners interacted with the researcher and with each other, discussing their perceptions, views and experiences.

The participants were mostly teachers who discuss the meanings they attach to their productivity in the era of Grade 12 results. It is critical that ethical considerations are addressed during the data collection between the researcher and the participants. Multiple experiences of this poor performance determined the multiple realities which the ontology of this study as the reality in the interpretivism paradigm is negotiated with participants (Schwandt 2000 as cited in Cohen et al. 2011:91). This study is determined by multiple truths that emerged from each case. In general, within this social context, the researcher was relying on the participant’s experiences and authentic statistics (as shown in graph on teenage pregnancy in chapter 2) to get the required data.

An interpretivism paradigm was used in this study because interpretivism attempts to understand the underlying causes of the Grade 12 poor performance from the view point of the participants and is context-dependent (Cohen et al. 2011:89-98). Moreover, Cohen, Browne and Leung (2007:57) support the use of interpretivism in this setting when they claim that in an interpretivism paradigm, lessons of experience and cultural ideology co-create each other. The experience of teachers and learners provided me with an in-depth understanding and challenges around the issue of culture of teaching and learning norms which may be the cornerstone and the underlying causes of the Grade 12 poor performance not only in Umlazi district, but also KwaZulu-Natal Province as a whole.

3.4 A CASE STUDY

A case study focuses on the actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perception of events. In the context of this study, the case study is conducted in two secondary schools. According to Lamnek (2005:33) a case study method involves in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance, event or a case study. By optimising an understanding of this phenomenon by pursuing scholarly research questions, a case study observes effects in real contexts, and recognizes that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect. It provides a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analysing information, and reporting the results. Given its characteristics, a case study highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.

The researcher was integrally involved in the case study and this is the reason the case study is both a process of enquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry (Cohen et al. 2011: 101). They also stressed that case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance. Case studies are set in temporal, geographical, organizational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case. They also assert that a case study enables the readers to understand or perceive how ideas and abstract principles can fit together.

Stake (2005:19) argues that a case study focuses on bounded system, usually under natural conditions, so that the system can be understood in its own habitat. Consequently, the researcher may acquire a sharpened perception of why the instance happened as it did, and what might become important to look at more extensively in the future research. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:316) in the case study design, the data analysis focuses on the phenomenon, which the researcher selects to understand in-depth regardless of the number of sites or participants for the study. Qualitative researchers investigate in-depth small, distinct, such as the entire faculty in an innovative classroom, or one principal's role for an academic year. This study is the multi-site one, in which there is a natural socio-cultural boundary and face-to-face interaction encompassing the person or group.

3.5 SAMPLING

Sampling involved where and from whom the data was generated. This is a process whereby the researcher chooses his or her target group or participants. For the purpose of this study the researcher used purposive sampling. According to Babbie and Mouton (2007:166-7) purposive sampling helps the researcher to study a small subset of a larger population in which many members of the subset are easily identified, but the enumeration of all of them would be nearly impossible. They further state that qualitative researchers are often particularly interested in studying deviant cases. Often, their understanding of fairly regular patterns of attitudes and behaviors is further improved by examining those cases that do not fit into the regular pattern.

Robinson (2002:59) as cited in Babbie and Mouton 2007: 211) argued that purposive sampling means that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them holders of the data needed for the study. Patton (2002:242) as cited in McMillan and Schumacher (2010:319) defines purposive sampling as selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth when one wants to understand something about those cases without needing or designing to generalize to all such cases. Purposive sampling is chosen because the samples are likely to

be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher is investigating (information-rich key informants, groups, places, or events to study).

Maree (2007:89) affirms that purposive sampling refers to the selection of the sample that is based on the judgment of the researcher as to which subjects best fit the criteria of the study and selected based on the particular purpose of the experiment. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007:15) purposive sampling focuses on the uniqueness of a particular group, and provides greater depth to study than other forms of sampling.

Purposive sampling was used because of its appropriateness in this study since it assisted the researcher to get the data that is rich, relevant and accurate to address the critical research questions. On that basis, the researcher chose participants (teachers) who are knowledgeable and possess necessary experience in the field of education. In other words, they have taught Grade 12 for the couple of years ago. These teachers interact with learners on daily basis at school. The researcher believed that teachers provided data that was specific in answering the research questions. The researcher therefore, choose six teachers per school to participate in the study (three males and three females).The researcher believed that this number of participants enabled him to complete the study; even if one or more participants decide to withdraw (as it can be part of the study limitations) others were left to complete the study.

3.6 THE RESEARCH SITE

The study was conducted at two secondary schools in south Durban Umlazi district in KwaZulu-Natal. The community that the schools are situated in is extremely poor with a high rate of unemployment. The research site is accessible; as there was limited travelling to another site as the researcher and participants are based in the schools which are not too far from each other, and therefore can remained behind after school to proceed with the study should they be requested to do so. Thus; this minimised costs and save time. According to Cohen et al. (2011:114) purposive sampling is a feature in qualitative research, whereby researcher handpicks the cases in the sample on the basis of specific characteristic that they possess. Purposive sampling means that participants are selected according to defining

characteristics. Therefore, purposive sampling was chosen so that the researcher accessed the expertise of the teachers, Heads of Departments (HODs) and principals.

3.7 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Bell (2005:88) points out those participants are described to indicate who will be involved in the investigation. However, participants may propose solutions or provide insight into events, but the focus is mainly on their own perceptions of the event or phenomenon being studied. For the purpose of this study the following participants were used:

Participants	Male	Female	Teaching experience	Academic qualifications	Portfolio in school
Teacher A	1		22years	STD, ACE, ABET, Bed. Hons.	Chairperson for SAIC. & Finance committee. L/areas: Maths& NS
Teacher B	1		21years	STD,BA, ABET Cert.& MED	Member of Admission committee. L/areas: Life Sc. & LO.
Teacher C		1	18years	STD,,ABET,ACE,BA MED	Convener of OVC, Member of bereavement committee/ areas: ATC & ECONOMICS
Teacher D	1		16years	PTD, BA, BSC &ACE	Chairperson for IQMS.L/areas: EGD &Technology
Teacher E		1	15years	UED, Bed Hons & MED	Co-ordinate for Sports & Cultural Activities. L/areas: English & EMS
Teacher F		1	20years	STD, ABET, ACE, Bed Hons	Teacher Liaising Officer & Secretary of Discipline, Safety and Security committee. L/areas: Physic. Sc.

3.7.1 Participants in the study

Looking at the above labeled table, one can see that these participants were purposively selected because they have expertise and knowledgeable in the field of education. They are highly qualified and display much experience. They hold important portfolios in the school as indicated in the table above. In the Discipline Safety and Security committee (DSSC), these teachers engage with most relevant stakeholders such as, teachers, learners and parents as members of the community to ensure that the safety and discipline among the learners specifically is maintained. However, the researcher believes that these participants provided rich, accurate, specific and adequate information that answered the critical research questions. The chosen participants live within the community where the study is conducted and are aware of challenges facing the community such as high matric failure rate, lack of discipline and absenteeism, and teenage pregnancy among learners to mention the few.

3.8 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Research instruments refers to the strategy followed in gathering and analyzing data retrieved from responses and also outlines the plan of action used to examine the problems under investigation (Cousin, 2009:22). Interpretivist rely heavily on naturalistic methods that include interviews which may be semi-structured, focus group to mention the few, survey and observations. For the purpose of this study the researcher used interviews such as focus group, individual and semi-structured), observation and field notes to generate data from the participants (Krueger and Casey, 2009:2).

3.8.1 Interviews

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:354) interview probes elicit elaboration of detail, further explanations, and clarification of responses. The primary data of qualitative interviews are verbatim accounts of what transpires in the interview session. Most qualitative interviewers prefer a conversational tone to indicate empathy and understanding while conveying acceptance to encourage elaboration of subtle and valid data.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher conducted interviews with different stakeholders such as the selected Grade 12 learners, teachers with two principals of the two sampled schools as follows:

3.8.1.1 Individual interviews

Data was collected from one hour individual interviews conducted with two principals of the selected schools. The basis of the interviews was to explore the experiences of the two principals pertaining high failure rates in their schools and if possible their surrounding neighbouring schools in Umlazi district. The individual interview refers to the face to face interaction between the interview and the respondent (Strange, Forest and Oakley, and 2003:17). Fowler (2009: 43) elaborated further that sensitive questions can sometimes be handled better in private face- to- face interviews than in the group. Since the participants came from two different schools it would be important to conduct individual interviews in a place that will provide privacy. The potential for trust, rapport and co-operation between the researcher and the participants is strong in face to face encounters (Opdenakker, 2006:8). He further states that in individual interview, the direct reaction between the participants and the researcher is spontaneous without extended reflection. If it happened that one principal from one of the school was reserved at first and I probed and reminded and reassured him that all interview were confidential. My expectations were that he must open and responsive and over and above the two individual interviews yielded much data that was appropriate and valuable for the study. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004: 107-118) argue that conducting individual interviews is time consuming because of distance taken travelling to the venue and preparation of the venue, to make it comfortable for the participant. Both individual interviews were conducted in the principals' offices during holidays where there was privacy and no interruption. Babbie and Mouton (2007:249) maintained that due to mainly to the relatively low level of literacy of the South African population, face-to-face interviews are the most common method to collect survey data in national surveys in South Africa.

3.8.1.2 Focus group interviews

For the purpose of this study three focus group interviews of one hour each were conducted. Six Grade 12 learners were from one school, the second one with teachers from the same school and the other one with teachers from the other school. Cohen et al. (2011:118) provides a deeper understanding about focus group discussions by stating that groups are economical on time and generate a large quantity of data. They elaborate on focus group discussion as form of group interview, though not in the sense of backwards and forwards between interviewer and group. In a focus group interview, the participants interact with each other rather than the interviewer with the result that data should emerge from the interaction of the group members. In this study participants were given the opportunity to interact with each other and dispute each other's assertions.

The first focus group discussion consisted of only six Grade 12 learners whereby the semi-structured open ended questions was used to create flexibility for gathering information. For this reason, I choose focus group interview as one of my research instruments to give participants an opportunity to express their views, opinions and experiences. All the participants completed a letter of consent form whereby confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed and the consent to participate in the research study was granted. This first focus group interview was conducted in the classroom after school. The reason was that the researcher did not want to interrupt teaching periods during seven hour-contact-teaching time, (Department of Basic Education, 2009) and all the participants agreed to be audio-taped.

From the data obtained it was evident that the second group interview was generating more data, with participants seeming more spontaneous in responses to questions. The researcher also conducted the second focus group interview with teachers from one of the schools, in the same day, in the office of the HOD for Maths and Sciences after 30 minutes from the first focus group interviews. The third focus group interviews were conducted with the last group from other school. The next day at the same time another focus groups was conducted, but this one took place in the staffroom.

Leung, Wu, Leu and Tang (2004) afford a deeper understanding about focus groups, that differences and similarities are observed within the same cultural group which

can limit generalization to a wider population. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:360) focus group is used to obtain a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concern, new product, program, or idea. They further stress that by creating a social environment in which group members are stimulated by one another's perceptions and ideas, the researcher can increase the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than one-on-one interviewing. In this regard participants' observations and in-depth interviews used focus group interviewing as a confirmation technique.

3.8.1.3 Observation and field-notes

Observation was used by the researcher as another tool to generate data in this study. Bertram (2003) as cited in Creswell (2008:118) argues that observations offer the researcher the opportunity to gather live data from naturally occurring social situations. In this way, the researcher looks what is taking rather than relying on secondhand accounts. Observation provided the researcher with a reality check and enables the researcher to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon being observed. Bertram (2003) also maintains that the researcher will be able to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, discover things that participants may not freely talk about in the interview as well as to move beyond perception-based data that will be reported by the participant. For the purpose of this study the researcher observed the focus groups discussions and quickly record notes since the quantity of information forgotten may be minimal over a short period of time but accelerated quickly as more time passes (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011:119).

The researcher kept the detailed record of what occurs, including those things that are characteristically taken for granted. The researcher recorded the notes as quickly as possible after observation. The researcher made at least two copies of field notes. The researcher typed on a master copy for reproduction purposes. Maree (2007:88) supported the idea when he asserted that the researcher look for patterns behaviour, in particular to understand the assumptions, values and beliefs of the participants, and make sense of dynamics of the setting.

In this case, the researcher observed attitudes towards low Grade 12 learners' performance. In other words how teachers viewed the low Grade12 pass rates.

The researcher observed the intervention strategies that teachers are using to assist learners to improve their performance. Resources in class were observed. The researcher developed a checklist for rating categories of behaviour that the researcher observed (see Appendix: I). The researcher used the same checklist for all the participants. Both Maree (2007) and Cresswell (2008) support this idea when they point out that the same checklist should be used for all participants taking part in the study.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) researchers in the interpretive (naturalistic) paradigm mostly prefer inductive data analysis, which is more likely to assist them identify the multiple realities potentially present in the data. Interpretivism is based on the assumption that there is not one reality but many, and interpretivist researchers therefore carry out their studies in natural context to reach the best possible understanding. After all, the naturalistic paradigm implies that those realities are in essence complete aspects (wholes) that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:463) as cited in Maree (2012:37) asserted that it is important to note that “there is no one ‘right’ way [to analyze data]...data can be analyzed in more than one way”.

In this study the researcher preferred inductive analysis of data which commenced immediately after verifications of transcripts were done by the participants and other researchers. I transcribed data verbatim and interrogate the data through reading and re-reading it to become familiar with it in preparation for discussion. I compared data from the first interview with that of the second and third one interview to check the consistency in responses. Data was arranged in categories and themes that will emerge from data collated.

Maree (2012:43) elaborates that ‘analysis means a close or systematic study or separation of a whole unit parts for study’. After coding and re-coding of data, analysis commences.

Once the analysis had taken place, the findings of the research were grounded against the context. The researcher referred back to the literature to look for information that could allow him to make inferences from the interview.

Lastly, this entailed a rich description and comparison of findings of other research, as outlined in the literature review.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

In terms of this study consent was received from the interviewees in oral and written form. In this study confidentiality was guaranteed in the sense that information provided by the participants did not reveal their identity (names). The permission was granted by the principals to conduct the study. This idea is supported by Maree (2012: 57) and Cohen et al. (2011: 122). The principals confirmed the permission in writing. After that a letter was hand delivered to the District Manager KZN Department of Education to request permission to conduct the study. The permission was granted by the DoE to conduct the study. Consent letters were sent to chosen participants to request their participation in the study. It was stated in participants' letters that permission has already been received from the principals and from KZN Department of Education. It was mentioned that the permission had been granted by the principals and the DoE that does not in any way compel them to take part and that their participation is voluntary. The letter revealed the purpose of the research and the tools that will be used to generate data. In terms of this study the participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they so wish. The consent forms were signed by the research participants.

3.11 RELIABILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research reliability refers to the consistency of measurement, or the extent to which the scores are similar over different forms of the same instrument or occasions of data collection (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010: 130). However, in this study some measures were taken to enhance validity and reliability. The transcripts were returned to participants to review data captured and the synthesis to ensure that the meanings communicated would have been correctly captured as well as communicated in a correct manner (Slonim-Nevo and Nevo, 2009:109-128). Lincoln and Guba (1985:991) as cited in Maree (2012:80) stress that in qualitative research, the researcher is the data gathering instrument. Thus it seems when qualitative researchers speak of research "validity and reliability" they are usually

referring to research that is credible and trustworthy. Lincoln and Cuba (1985) include credibility, applicability, dependability and conformability as key criteria of trustworthiness and according to them these are constructed to balance the conventional criteria of enquiry of internal and external validity, reliability and neutrality respectively. They further claim that “since there can be no validity without reliability, demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]”.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2007:119) reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time. Maree (2012:80) therefore stress that it is generally accepted that engaging multiple methods of data collection, such as observation, interviews and document analysis, will lead to trustworthiness. In addition, involving several investigations of the data could enhance trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is regarded as an important measure in this research, participants were requested to elaborate and provide clarity on some of the responses during their checks of the transcripts.

3.12 LIMITATIONS

Since the researcher is a full time worker, it was not possible to have broader sample. Conducting interviews during school holidays posed a problem as participants were at home at a certain time to assist with domestic chores. Time was also a problem for me as a full time teacher who supervises and teaches during school holidays. I also sent reminders to parents a day before the interview, to allow parents to deal with chores for participants and to provide them with necessary knowledge of their whereabouts. I had some difficulties in assembling focus group members because some simply may not appear for the sessions. Consequently, re-scheduled discussions added valuable data that was not captured during the first focus discussion.

Moreover, during the individual interviews with the principals, sometimes they were busy with their work managing and controlling their teachers, so they could not

honour the set or schedules of appointments. Most of the appointments were expected to be conducted during weekends.

Therefore, I was obliged to conduct these interviews after school. However, the participants were exhausted and restless worrying about rushing home. As a result some of the crucial data could have been compromised due to the lack of concentration among the participants.

3.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the research design and methodology which provided an in-depth discussion of the qualitative approach process and strategies employed in the study. This includes the paradigm in which the study is located, sampling and research tools that should be used to generate data. The data generated was solely aimed to respond to critical research questions. However, in chapter four the research findings are presented. The findings were categorised into themes that were used for recommendation purposes.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims at providing an analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the twelve teachers and twelve Grade 12 learners from the two rural schools, school Y and school Z. It is based on the information that was collected using interviews, observations and field-notes. The chapter begins with a description of the sample used in the study, and then moves on to explore the findings of the study. As this chapter directly refers to the causes of the low Grade 12 pass rates and the challenges experienced by both teachers and learners of these schools, their anonymity had to be considered. Teachers' views are grouped according to similar and different responses, irrespective of their schools. This creates a disadvantage by weakening the holistic descriptions of individual teachers or learners in the context of their schools and communities, but better protects the confidentiality they were promised.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

4.2.1 School Y

This is a public school situated in Umbumbulu south of Durban and learners are from the surrounding rural areas. The school operates from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Learners' ages range from around 15 to 21. The school itself falls under the Department of Basic Education and is registered as a public school. In this school most of the learners' mother tongue is IsiZulu and Swazi and this creates serious challenges because the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is English. Some of the learners can hardly communicate in English.

4.2.2 School Z

This school is also a public school situated in Umbumbulu south of Durban and learners are from the surrounding rural areas. School Z, just like the previous school, goes from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Learners' ages range from around 15 to 21.

The school itself falls under the Department of Basic Education and is registered as a public school. In this school most of the learners' mother tongue is IsiZulu and Pondo and this also creates serious challenges because the LoLT is English. Some of the learners can hardly communicate in English.

Both schools were selected because they fall under the same category of NSLA (National Strategy for Learners' Attainment) which is described by the Department of Basic Education as the schools that have achieved below 60% Grade 12 pass rate. These types of schools are expected to receive special attention and support from the Department of Education in order to improve Grade twelve results (DoBE, 2009).

4.3 SAMPLE USED IN THE STUDY

All schools and participants were given letters and numbers to protect identities, as referred to in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Schools, teachers and learners

SCHOOLS	TEACHERS	LEARNERS
Y	Participant 1	Participant 7
Z	Participant 2	Participant 8
	Participant 3	Participant 9
	Participant 4	Participant 10
	Participant 5	Participant 11
	Participant 6	Participant 12

4.4 RESEARCH THEMES

The different themes that emerged from this data were used to gain an understanding of the factors that influence the causes of the Grade 12 failure rate and the challenges experienced by both teachers and learners of these schools. The data from the focus-group interviews was first analysed and the relevant themes (see table 2 below) were identified.

Some of the themes that emerged in the study were also confirmed by observation. In response to the critical question asked in the study, this chapter discusses data that emerged from the interviews with the Grade 12 teachers and Grade 12 learners in the two rural schools selected for this study.

4.5 THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE GROUP INTERVIEWS

The following table displays the themes that the participants believed greatly contribute to the high matric failure rate.

Table 2: The themes, sub-themes and categories

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES
Inadequate resources for learner performance	Lack of adequate resources	<p>Human resources such as inadequately qualified teachers, lack of the scarce subjects such as physical sciences, maths and lack of technical subjects like engineering graphics and design (EGD).</p> <p>Physical resources such as lack of adequate classrooms leading to overcrowded classrooms, lack of adequate furniture for learners, textbooks and libraries.</p>
Impact of curriculum reforms Lack of parental involvement	Confusion and discouragement. Insufficient skills and training. Neglect of emotional needs and development. Underachievement	The role played by the Department of Education. Lack of access to sources of information for referral. Poverty (living below breadline).

Impact of subjectivity in the marking process	Negative impact of subjectivity marking.	The halo effect, the relative effect, personal biases. Moods, physical and emotional state.
Spontaneous absenteeism	High rate of teenage pregnancy. Orphanage leading to no guidance. Single parent crisis.	Dropout rates, lack of control and poor attention to school commitments. Chronic absenteeism.

4.5.1 Inadequate resources

Under the theme of inadequate resources two categories emerged, namely the human and physical or material resources.

4.5.1.1 Human resources

According to Murtine (2013:7,13), there is a severe shortage of teachers in South Africa and the rural areas are badly hit as the newly qualified teachers are reluctant to work in rural areas. The same sentiment is shared by the South African Democratic Union (SADTU) statement, 31 July 2014, when it stated that many public servants and teachers have resigned due to an un-founded rumours that is urging members to resign as the Government Employee Pension Fund was on a move to unilaterally change the benefits of members to such an extent that members may lose some benefits and money. SADTU further added that, with the current crises regarding the scarcity of jobs and the shortage of teachers, the attempts to improve Grade 12 results may become unsuccessful. The SADTU Secretariat was calling on public servants and teachers in particular to apply their minds and avoid joining the pool of the unemployed through resignations. SADTU, therefore, was discouraging any public servants and teachers in particular from resigning as their benefits are guaranteed. SADTU has called on the GEPF and the employer to engage in a vigorous information sharing campaign to correct these rumours as they risk bleeding the state dry of skills needed in the developmental trajectory (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

The participant 4 provided some insight in this regard when he stated:

“I think the Department of Education is doing something but it is not enough. If it was according to me, the DoE would provide permanent and qualified teachers especially mathematics and physical science teachers in all secondary schools. The DoE must also give incentives to rural school teachers in order to motivate them. These teachers are not allowed to access loan from their pensions in the Government Employee Pension Fund (GEPF). As a result the teachers are resigning in large numbers due to the financial constraints.” The majority of learners perceived the shortage of human resources as one of the major causes of the Grade 12 failure rate. They insisted that the DoE is not doing what it should be doing because there is still a huge shortage of mathematics and physical science teachers in rural schools and the learners are taught by under-qualified teachers in most schools. This sentiment was shared by participant 9 when he said:

“Another problem is that in the province as a whole there is a shortage of physical science teachers. In this school there is only one teacher who teaches physical science. Since he is the only science teacher in the school, it affects us because when he arrives at grade 12 classes you may find that he is exhausted, and this leads us not concentrating on what he is trying to explain showing bad tempered and shouting at us.”

The learners also felt that their teachers who taught Physical Science possibly did not have experience in this subject, which might be because his degree was not yet completed through distance learning. They therefore felt that teachers were unsure of what they are teaching. Participant 2 stated:

“In this school physical science teachers come and go; you may find that in one year the school has employed more than five teachers who come and go. That affects us as learners because teachers have different styles of teaching. Even though we get those teachers, the problem is that they are not teachers by profession. For example, this year we were taught by the teacher who was a technician who specialized in electronics.”

Participant 10 had the following to say regarding the rural schools' teachers:

“Another problem is that our teachers stay in town. They are very far from us and cannot provide extra-teaching after school hours.”

Even if we need them to assist us with difficulties that we experience during our study periods, we can't get hold of them because they leave school at 2:30."

They further stated that a solution to the problem of Grade 12 poor performances is to develop mathematics and physical science in the lower grades, especially in the Senior Phase, and rural schools must have developmental infrastructure. They suggested that teachers need to be developed in line with the curriculum. Participant 3 raised the following suggestions when she said:

"The Department of Education must organize the workshops so as to equip teachers with knowledge. Such department should negotiate with the universities to upgrade teachers with these new National Curriculum Statement (NCS) programmes. The former Colleges of Education should be re-opened to provide courses to upgrade in-service teachers."

Participant 9 strongly felt that the Department of Education must employ young and enthusiastic teachers because they understand this new curriculum. He felt that young teachers have been taught about the new forms of disciplining learners as compared to old teachers who know that corporal punishment is the only way. This was evident when he said that, *"These young teachers are active and know how to teach us, not these old teachers who are relying on corporal punishment to maintain discipline in schools. These teachers are using plastic pipes to punish learners for not doing homework and to address the problem of absenteeism."* He was totally against the use of corporal punishment by some of the teachers in his school. He believed that such corporal punishment has a negative impact on Grade 12 academic performance. He further argued that:

"Corporal punishment is illegal and is an offence punishable by dismissal. When these teachers administer corporal punishment the whole class becomes affected and learners are failing to concentrate in the lesson properly. Teachers turn to be emotional, and at the same time warn us not to report their behaviour to the parents and other government officials. This might disturb or hinder our good performance to achieve high pass rates because we are scared and cannot express ourselves freely."

The general feeling from the interviews was that the DoE is not doing what it is supposed to do, since the problem is getting worse and has to be solved. The participants thought that the DoE regards mathematics and physical science as normal subjects, whereas they are totally different from other subjects because the foundation or background from the lower grades plays an important role. They added that when learners choose subjects for specialization, they must bear in mind that not everyone is capable of learning the challenging subjects. If accounting, mathematics and physical science classes are packed with uninterested learners, there would be a high failure rate. They felt the DoE does not adequately support rural schools with resources and even the support to teachers is insufficient. They concluded by stating that qualified and good scarce subject teachers are leaving rural schools and heading for greener pastures in urban areas. Thus; rural schools end up producing poor Grade 12 results compared to township and urban schools.

Research indicates that 12% prevalence of HIV/AIDS was found among teachers in South Africa, and the mortality rate among teachers suggested an increase in the number of deaths especially among teachers between 25 and 45 years old (Lauw, Shisana, Peltzer and Zungu 2009:6). Participant 9 verified this when he said that, *“Another thing about the change of teachers is that sometimes teachers die due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and others get promotion to other schools and they are never replaced.”*

4.5.1.2 Physical or material resources

Under the physical or material resources the following will be discussed, namely lack of floor space, furniture and equipment as well as overcrowded classrooms, which are the result of lack of such resources.

4.5.1.2.1 Lack of floor space, furniture and equipment

While the two schools had science laboratories and a library, they were poorly equipped and poorly maintained. In one of the schools apparatus such as chemicals and science instruments were kept on shelves.

At school Y, the laboratory was about one and half times bigger than the classrooms, with long enclosed shelves mounted on one wall. In this school the places where apparatus is kept seemed to be cared for on a regular basis.

In School Z there was dust over most of the apparatus, especially bottles with chemicals. Only in School Y were there usable chemicals which were clearly separated from old, outdated ones. In School Z participant 1 pointed out that they had very old and outdated resources. He pointed to chemicals that might be 10 years old or more; they had been there covered in dust when he first started teaching in School Z. This raises issues not only of resources, but also of safety and disposal of hazardous chemicals. From observation it was clear that chemicals that might react with one another were not carefully separated and neither was special arrangements made for chemicals that were highly flammable. The research revealed that there is little improvement in scores of learners in the government schools because of the limited availability of supplementary teaching materials (UNESCO, 2009:8).

In the case of resources for teaching and learning, as with community resources, it was clear from the study that ideas of adequate resources are relative; all Physical Sciences teachers, regardless of the schools in which they teach, would like to have more resources. Some teachers compared their school with their previous ones. Participant 1 had the following to say, *“Even though my current school did not have some of the needed resources, it was still better than my previous school.”* Participant 3 shared the similar sentiment when she said that, *“Compared to the situation I was in – my school was located in a rural area, while my previous school was located in a deep rural area.”* Participant 7 reflected the same sentiment when he said that, *“In this school we do not have sufficient teaching aids or resources, even textbooks that we have are insufficient. We cannot get all the knowledge that we need in order to pass Grade 12 and here in the rural schools we do not have time to do practical learning because we are very far from laboratories and libraries.”*

The majority of learners stressed the major role that can be played by the availability of material resources in improving the Grade 12 academic performance, thus increasing the pass rate.

This was verified by participant 9, when he explained that:

“The problem that we are facing in this school is that we cannot do as many experiments as we want, because of the shortage of resources. Perhaps these experiments would help us during examination times, because when you write about something you have seen before, it’s quite easy to remember rather than to write about the things you have only read about in the books or told about. The shortage of laboratories is part of the problem, and even if laboratories are available, one may find that there are no apparatus or consumable materials.”

Most participants mentioned that the cause of poor performance in their schools is that they do not have chemicals or apparatus to do experiments for better understanding. The place where they could get information is very far from their schools and one needed to take a bus or a taxi to town. The participants suggested that it would be better if they all had resources in their schools. Participant 10 indicated that:

“...the cause of these problems is that we in rural areas are very far from areas with resources that we need. Here in this school people who help us in doing experiments come hardly twice a year, whereas in other schools learners get everything they want including experiments in science subjects. In most instances we do need science kits and additional books, besides these prescribed books.”

Participant 1 had the following to say regarding the shortage of resources:

“...if someone want to solve problem of low Grade12 pass rates, firstly one must build laboratories, secondly the Department of Education must increase the number of mobile laboratories and such laboratories must be subsidized by the government because the majority of rural learners are poor. These existing mobile laboratories are not subsidized; learners are paying every time we hire these laboratories. This makes it difficult to hire these Mobile Laboratories every month.”

Most participants argued that the DoE is trying its best to equip schools so as to effectively teach the scarce subjects such as accounting, mathematics and physical science just to mention a few, but that is not enough. Since the NCS programme was introduced, schools have still not been provided with laboratories and mathematics study materials, and those that have laboratories are not using them.

They commented that principals and school governing bodies need to prioritize the needs of the schools, since the norms and standards provided by the DoE are restricted to the specific items to be bought first. The DoE always allocated 60% to textbooks only, and it is an 'offence' to use that allocation for anything other than textbooks. In fact 60% of the allocation is not sufficient to order all the books for the other subjects such as English Second Additional Language, geography, life sciences and other subjects which are prescribed by the school curriculum. As a result, learners do not perform poorly only in mathematics and physical science, but also other subjects are affected, thus contributing to the low Grade 12 pass rates (Carl, 2005).

The researcher's interpretation is that this might be true since the DoBE declared some of the schools as 'No Fee Schools'. In 'No Fee Schools' learners are not paying school fees and that may disturb the smooth running of the school. It is difficult to teach without necessary teaching aids such as textbooks and overhead projectors.

Most participants felt that the Department of Education has not done enough because even now rural schools have no laboratories with equipment. Participant 11 verified that when she said:

"I follow the textbook and consider the needs of the learners. I also teach according to the milestones and consider the different outcomes of comprehension, grammar and speaking. Some learners complete the activities on time and others take longer. Not all learners are at the same pace. The shortage of textbooks remains a problem because since the school is a 'No Fee School', the learner teacher support material (LTSM) is not sufficient to cater for all subjects within the school curriculum. The LTSM, which is the system of school funding by the government from the norms and standards, is not sufficient."

Participant 9 stated that they need to have everything in their school. They need chemicals and apparatus like test tubes whereby teachers, learners and parents should work together. He stated, *"My cousin who is doing Grade 12 like me but in an urban school tells me they do almost all the experiments in her school and I usually look like a fool."*

This, therefore, indicates that teachers and learners are passionate about teaching and learning, but the lack of resources is an obstacle to achieve their goals.

The participants suggested that it would be better if they all had resources in their schools. Participant 3 shared the same opinion when she stated that, *“Also the schools should be well equipped with necessary resources; for example computers, scientific calculators, because research needs computers for the learners to have access to the internet.”*

4.5.1.2.2 Overcrowded classrooms

The lack of resources also includes the shortage of floor space. Fabunmi, Abu and Adenij (2007) stated that classroom congestion and limited student classroom space may affect secondary school learners' academic performance adversely.

In both School Y and School Z the researcher observed that teachers were teaching overcrowded classes, and the floor space was limited. Learners were squashed in groups. The researcher's interpretation is that overcrowding hinders effective teaching and learning since the teacher can hardly move between the desks to facilitate activities (Appendix- I).

Participant 12 believed that such overcrowded classrooms impact negatively on learner performance. This was evident when he said:

“It is very difficult to control learners work in the overcrowded classroom. I for one I like to evaluate the learners work while in the classroom, but that is impossible since by the time I am in the middle of the class the bell rings. And there are learners that I leave out every day. Even controlling the noise level it is very difficult. One can never enjoy teaching under these conditions. Learners who need individualized attention are lost on the way.”

According to Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:83), the quality of teaching declines with an increase in size of the class. The South African benchmark is 40 learners per teacher, but in many schools the learner per class exceeded the national benchmark of 40 learners per class (Sorto, 2012:11). This is the rule rather than an exception in the rural areas.

Participant 2 confirmed this when he said that, *“As I have been in the rural school since I started teaching I have not taught the class less than 40. I only hear about the teacher teacher ratio of 35:1 from other teachers or in newspapers.”*

4.5.2 Parental involvement

According to my observations, both schools under this study are generally in poor areas and homes are often long distances from schools. Most teachers complained about the lack of parental participation, explaining that parents did not usually turn up when they were called to attend meetings, and did not seem to show interest in their children’s education. One of the participants commented that parents could help with financial aid, since learners are not progressing well in their studies. This teacher was taking learners out for excursions and that is where parents could support their children with finance for transport. Since most of the learners travel long distances, he felt parents should organize transport for their children. He also felt that parents must help the school by helping children in doing homework and supervising the studies as additional support to the schools. In line with this, the Department of Basic Education (2013) has also emphasised that parents should regularly control and monitor learners’ tasks/homework, preparation for projects and readiness for tests/examinations. They should also attend meetings as requested by School Management Teams, regularly visit the school to enquire about the progress of their children and, where possible, parents should arrange additional tuition in identified subjects based on the performance of the learner. Finally, parents must ensure that learners complete the remedial programmes successfully.

Participants thought that teachers should work with school governing body (SGB), especially because the SGB is the body representing parents. Parents must know about all the problems related to teaching and learning at school. Motala and Mungadi, (2006) argue that the school governing body needs to fulfill all its functions effectively if the commitment to collaborative governing of the school is to be successful. In other words, parents, teachers, principals, learners and other members of the SGB need to work together as a team to successfully fulfill all their tasks.

They further stated that the lack of resources in many schools means that many governing bodies that were set up to improve the quality of education provision end up becoming fundraising bodies. Often these schools, which are situated in poorer communities, find it difficult to set and collect school fees that may assist in buying resources to improve learners' academic performance. In this regard the financial and administrative management of such schools is often difficult and requires skills and knowledge, which SGB members from these communities seldom do not have.

Participant 7 testified that their parents are irresponsible when he said that, *"Whenever I tell my parents to come to school meetings they tell me that they are working, And I always wonder whether the parents who attend school meetings are the unemployed one only. This makes me feel like they do not care about my education."* Participant 8 confirmed the same thing, claiming that the previous year one learner requested some teachers to speak to her mother stating that *"...last year, one learner requested us to talk to her mother. Her mother normally does the washing of clothes in several households as a domestic worker, but soon as she gets paid, she goes to a shebeen and used money to buy alcohol."* Generally, many of the learners live without parents, others live with their grandmothers and they take advantage of coming home late. Usually when they want parents to sign school documents, they have to wait for weeks because learners don't live with their parents. Most participants agreed that during winter some learners come to school without warm clothes to wear; others don't even wear jerseys, saying that they don't have money to buy school jerseys.

Some learners stated that they did not live with their parents; the parents were far away from them and learners lived with their grandparents, who might be very old and not physically fit. Participant 7 stated that, *"I live alone without my parents or guardians in rented house that is not conducive for effective learning."* Participant 12 complained about the issue of his parents not being able to help him and said that, *"Although my parents do assist me with whatever they have, they find it very difficult to assist me to pass the school subjects. Because they are uneducated, it matters not whether I pass or fail mathematics and physics because they do not know the importance of these subjects."*

They recognize mathematics and physical science as the same as all other subjects.” However, Participant 8 had different views pertaining to parental involvement. She said:

“My parents have great input in my education. That is shown by the fact that they allow me to work with my classmates even after school hours. They do that because they understand that working in groups brings better results. They also give me less chores after school. They do not say I am going to boys as the other parents are refusing to allow their children to come to these groups because they think it is just the means getting a chance of dating.”

Conversely, it was very difficult to find out since learners do not speak about their private lives, especially boys. It appeared that some of the learners were struggling to make ends meet and did not eat supper and breakfast. A common concern was that some learners don't have parents, while others are usually neglected by their parents who are living below the breadline and it took a lot to discover such learners. There were learners who come to school without lunch boxes every school day and it was observed that there were also female teachers who take care of the girls affected by poverty. In addition, participants believed that poverty contributed to non-parental involvement in learners' education. Participant 11 verified that when she said, *“My friend has the study guide that is very good and is helping her. When I asked my mother she said that she only has money for food and if she buys the study guide we will have nothing to eat.”*

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009), argue that there are a variety of ways to improve parental involvement that can be achieved by closing the traditional gap that often exists between parents and the school. They also insisted that this can be achieved by creating positive relationships between parents and teachers, and by encouraging direct parental involvement in their children's learning process. Participant 1 confirmed the same argument when he said:

“I have been inviting parents of certain learners to school. And spoke to them about their children as individuals and I discovered that those parents become more involved when they know that I know them personally then when those that have attended the general school meetings.”

The literature reveals that food security in the home may translate into a source of family stress that could affect parenting behaviour and learners' reactions as well as functioning in educational institutions (Van Rensburg, 2005). Parental involvement can make classroom teaching more effective, especially with Grade 12 learners who have a heavy work load. Participant 6 had this to say about this:

“There was once this learner in my class who seemed to have a potential at first and suddenly showed a great under-performance. I told her mother and the mother promised to attend to the matter. After that there was a great improvement. In fact she performed even better than before.”

The literature also reveals that a balanced approach regarding nutritional intake with regular monitoring and adequate physical activities should be encouraged. Therefore, teachers need to inform parents that it is important for learners to have breakfast before going to school in the sense that having breakfast has been found to improve academic performance (Slack and Yoo, 2005). Participant 5 shared the same sentiment when he/she said:

“There was this learner who was always sleepy in class. I called her and asked her to tell me her problem. She revealed to me that there is no food at home. After that I made it my responsibility to carry her food to eat before the school commenced. After that she was no longer drowsy in class and her performance improved dramatically.”

Unfortunately, some parents have never attended school themselves, or sometimes left or dropped out of school early and so they do not know how to read, write or count properly (illiterate). Most parents in the area where the two schools are located are illiterate and they are unable to assist their children. Many parents are handicapped in supporting their learners' education by their own limited education or lack of proficiency in English. This creates an inferiority complex and results in parents being reluctant to involve themselves with school work. Mji and Makgato (2006) stressed that although parental involvement is undeniably critical, many fall short. In general, they do not possess the necessary education themselves and thus they find it difficult to determine and understand what is done at school. Participant 4 emphasised this when he said,

“I called one parent of underperforming learner to school she indicated that her greatest problem is that she never went far with her schooling. So what her child is learning now is far from her understanding. But I told her that she can support her child by telling her to do homework and ask her to study.”

The above mentioned explanation was confirmed by participants 6 and 5 when they commented that:

“...if parents are called to Open Days, parents who come are those that their children perform better in their school work, those that their learners perform poorly, who are absent and who do not submit assignments in time, they do not come. So it’s vice versa. Of course I am to develop a relationship with parents. The fact of the matter is that if you invite a parent to school, parents tell you he or she will not come because she or he is working. They usually come up with stories or excuses and that is very much discouraging.”

Another participant claimed that parents display the signs of irresponsibility and ignorance about their children’s education. Participant 2 had this to say about the parental involvement. He said that, *“Parents do not come to school even on Awards Day to see the work and progress of their children. Some of my learners in Grade 12 class said that their parents were too sick to come to school, they would send somebody on their behalf and that did not happen.”*

As a researcher I think the role which must be played by parents is to look at what their children enjoy in their developmental stages and see if there is anything they do which is related to science subjects, then from there, parents must develop their children’s thinking skills based on what the children like. This must be done in consultation with teachers so that informal education must be linked to formal education. In this regard parents need to be responsible for their children’s education. Parents need to be part of planning at school level, and see to it that their children go to school. Parents should check their school work and also encourage their children to study all school subjects, especially mathematics and physical science. Their participation may contribute to improving the Grade 12 pass rate.

4.5.3 Impact of the curriculum reforms

There is mounting evidence that the negative impact of curriculum reforms contribute to the Grade 12 failure rate. The curriculum should become more meaningful for students as they see its relevance to themselves and their experiences. It implies student-centeredness and an approach by teachers which is based on collaboration and interaction. This once again highlights the importance of teacher empowerment with regard to curriculum development to realize this in practice (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008).

Morton (2012) argues that traditional classrooms tend to be closed systems where information is filtered through layers to students. In general, the use of resources is limited to what is available in the classroom or within the school. She therefore, recommended the inquiry approach when designing the curriculum since it focuses on using and learning content as a means to develop information-processing and problem-solving skills. The system is more students centered, with the teacher as a facilitator of learning. There is more emphasis on “how we come to know” and less on “what we know”. Students are more involved in the construction of knowledge through active involvement. The more interested and engaged students are by a subject or project, the easier it will be for them to construct in-depth knowledge of it. Learning becomes almost effortless when something fascinates students and reflects their interests and goals. However, this could raise the feeling that teachers should be thoroughly capacitated and deeply trained about the curriculum in order to produce better results and improve the learners’ performance (Bubenzer, 2009).

Most participants felt that South African curriculum reforms are not user friendly for teachers. Among other reasons for the dissatisfaction was that there is a lack of sufficient training and skills which make them feel uncomfortable to teach and thus they cannot produce good results. The participants were all of the opinion that NCS has resulted in stumbling blocks and that literacy and numeracy have dropped as a result of the implementation of the new curriculum. Participants expressed their concerns that information was cascaded to those teachers who were selected to attend workshops and meetings.

The participants reported back to the staff at a meeting but sometimes the handouts and documents were not available for perusal at the leisure of their colleagues which resulted in valuable information not reaching all staff members. What became apparent was that participants felt that, if they taught the same grade and the same learning areas every year, the teaching and learning experiences, for themselves and the learners, would result in learners producing better results. This was because they would attend the meetings and receive the information first hand. The participants expressed the view that reflection did not bring about change and improvement in a month or two. As one was learning to master the skills of teaching a certain learning area and noting strategies for improvement one was delegated to teach another learning area in the following year at the same institution. The two experienced participants felt learners achieved more with the traditional curriculum and were hopeful that with the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), education would be moving back to basics.

Some participants described the situation at their schools as a most difficult one. Participant 10 had this to say:

“The Department of Education came up with the new content which is too difficult in these days to teach, and the training that the Department has given us in mathematics and science particularly, was too short, in such a way that the training was two weeks which was not enough for this new content. What is worse is that the curriculum keeps on changing now and again. We feel uncomfortable to adapt to the ever changing curriculum.”

This was further supported by another participant when he commented about “challenges” with the curriculum. Participant 4 added that:

“...I cannot call it as a difficulty, but I can call it a challenging National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The NCS programmes are challenging because there are so many topics that have been introduced, and such programmes are challenging teachers to read more and also study further, as to catch up with these NCS programmes. Since these programmes involve research, some of the learners cannot afford to go to town. They are struggling to make ends meet; their parents are the poorest of the poor, so that is why their performances keep on deteriorating. So due to the lack of infrastructure and also costs involved, learners are losing interest, thus their Grade 12 results may be affected in this regard.”

The research reveals that children who speak a language other than English at home and have had a little exposure to English know that language has a communicative purpose and that communication will depend on the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical structure (Diaz-Rico,2008). In this regard it takes between two and four years to converse fluently in an additional language and another three years to become proficient, cognitive and academic users of that language (Commins, 2007).

In South Africa, where there are 11 official languages of which English is the main language of teaching and learning in most schools. Teachers, in general, are not adequately trained and equipped to cater specifically for the needs of learners learning in their second, third or even fourth language. This could be ascribed to inadequate provision of English as second language (ESL) learning and teaching in their training as teachers. However, Grade 12 learners in Umlazi schools use English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The sad part is that in rural areas, where these learners have little exposure to English outside the classroom and have little opportunity to learn it, they are still expected to excel in Grade 12 performance at the end of the year (Landsberg, 2011).

The role to be played by mother tongue in the curriculum was strongly emphasised by the participants who felt that it may influence the Grade 12 pass rate. Participant 4 confessed that:

“We are unable to make justice to our learners, because we are given the duty loads which include the teaching of English. The language teaching favors those whose language is their mother tongue or, the first language speakers. Therefore, one cannot guarantee effectiveness of teaching and learning under these circumstances. As a result the learners’ performance will be compromised, thus producing very poor result at Grade 12 level. I think the government should allow IsiZulu language to become the medium of instruction to all KwaZulu-Natal schools and at the universities. However, I hope this feeling will materialize because the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) has already begun to implement the study of IsiZulu as a compulsory module to the students who have enrolled this year 2014.”

One of the participants affirmed that there are many challenges that are caused by curriculum reforms and resultant problems. She felt that the Department of Education has never done any good for their education in this country. Participant 5 felt that:

“Every time the new government comes in, there is a trivial change in our education system. That alone brings problem in our education system, and the worst problem is the training of teachers. Teachers are trained for only two weeks and they are expected to teach learners for the whole year. This problem was there during apartheid era, and even our democratic government is not doing enough to improve the level of teaching in our schools, especially in rural schools because these schools were neglected for a long time.”

Most teachers believed that rural learners do not have a good background more particularly in subjects like mathematics and physical science. They also doubted that the Grade 12 intervention programmes that were introduced by the KZN Department of Education in 2014 would work effectively because they felt such Grade 12 intervention programmes were introduced very late in the year.

The research revealed that it seems like everyone is looking for someone to blame for the grade 12 failure rate (Sutherland, Gill and Binns, 2004). Interestingly, the research reveals that the teachers' job is to teach (Warren, 2002). The current thinking in the field of teaching is that successful teachers maintain high expectations for all learners, regardless of where they teach and the background of the learners. They understand that feeling sorry for learners and lowering standards with the application of the Progression Legislation in Grades 10-11 constitutes a disservice to the learners (DBE, 2013). The researcher's perception is that teachers understand that lowering standards can be interpreted as the violation of learners' rights. This implies that if teachers lower standards in complying with the curriculum they will be not doing justice to the learners whom the researcher feels are the victims of the curriculum reforms. According to Mayer (2008) people are not born teachers and that teaching is a skill that is taught. Hence, it is in this context that the researcher assumes that the participants realized that lowering expectations can lead learners to lag behind in their academic achievement.

4.5.4 Subjectivity in the marking process

Findings from the study are consistent with possible causes of the low Grade 12 pass rate and suggest a need to improve the marking skills training of National Senior Certificates (NSC) examinations. Some participants felt that teachers are not well trained for marking the NCS examinations. They stated that subjectivity can be a threat to quality marking which includes the 'halo effect', the 'relative effect', 'personal biases', and 'moods, physical and emotional state'.

4.5.4.1 The 'halo effect'

In the marking and assessment context, the halo effect refers to the cognitive biases of markers that attend to their thinking causing them to apply their overall impression of the candidates, their likeability and their successfulness in teaching and learning (Teaching to Learn, Teach to learn, 2014:2). The halo effect can be a challenge in the marking of public examinations in the sense that a candidate can answer the first two parts of the question very well and the marker can end up assuming that the questions which will follow are good thus giving a wrong grade. The opposite can happen when the candidate has answered the first two questions of a section in a dismally poor manner and then the marker assumes that the candidate is generally a poor learner. This is likely to influence the grading of the rest of the candidates' questions. The Chief markers can decide to start with the distribution of full time candidates' scripts because they write all the subjects. After the completion of the full time candidates, the Chief markers happen to know about this arrangement (that the coming consignment of scripts is that of part-time candidates) they may, influenced by 'halo effect', grade them lower because of the myth that part-time candidates are poor performers (Robert, Buford and Mew, 2014). Although this myth is an unfounded fact, it can influence the scoring of candidates by markers. Participant 6 argued that, *"Some of the markers can go to an extent of over-suspicion of irregularities because of the beliefs that the part-time candidates are always ill prepared."*

4.5.4.2 The 'relative effect'

The relative effect refers to the influence of the work of one candidate in the scoring of another candidate. This happens when the marker first reads the responses of a good candidate and scores him/her very good mark. When the same marker then reads the response of an average candidate who is not as good as the first, he/ she gives a lower score because the response does not come anywhere close to that of the previous candidate. This often happens when markers read essay questions or long paragraph responses (Learning to Teach, Teach to Learn, 2014). The relative effect can also be seen when the marker starts with the scripts of learners from a very good school and gives all the candidates very high scores because of their excellent work (Borgatti, 1999). Participant 5 said:

“The relative effect creeps in when the same marker’s next batch of scripts come from a school of average learners. Influenced by relative effect, the marker can be tempted to compare the performance of the second school to that of the first school thus scoring them too low. The problem with relative effect is that the decision of the marker is influenced by the performance of the first group and not by the guidelines in the memorandum.”

4.5.4.3 'Personal biases'

Personal biases refer to the tendency of markers to use their own personal beliefs to make decisions about candidates' responses especially in essays. This also happens when markers deal with questions which require an opinion of the candidate about a particular idea or a process or a decision or a form of behaviour. The influence of personal biases occurs when the marker becomes more indulgent towards an answer that adopts a view that is similar to his/her personal view (Jordan and Jourbert 2008). Participant 4 expressed her views as follows:

“Personal biases are very dangerous especially in questions where the candidates are expected to raise their view about particular issues from the source material (e.g. a cartoon or newspaper extract). If this happens a marker may be unconsciously tempted to give higher marks to candidates who argue in favour of a view which is not similar to his or her own personal view.”

4.5.4.4 Moods, physical and emotional state

The marking of the National Senior Certificate examination is taxing both emotionally and physically. The marker must complete the assessment of thousands of candidates within a short period of time. Gareeb (2009) argues that the markers need to go through the work which was completed in more than eight months in a matter of less than 15 days. This kind of work needs reading, decision making, consistency and accuracy. All these demands of the marking task are likely to affect the marking process. Participant 6 thought that:

“The effect of moods and physical state can be seen during the appeals process where more errors are identified in the scripts which are marked towards the end of the marking day or towards the end of the marking period. The problem of emotions is usually evident towards the end of marking when Markers try to mark faster to complete marking and go home.”

Based on this background, there is mounting evidence that the negative impact of the subjectivity of the marking process can influence the low Grade 12 pass rate. Therefore, since marking is taxing physical and mentally, markers must not mark when tired or hungry so that they retain enough energy to concentrate and focus on their work properly; thus the quality of the National Senior Certificate examination’s marking cannot be compromised. Furthermore, Chief Markers must manage the final days of marking in such a way that the last candidates to be marked are not unfairly disadvantaged (Mthembu, 2015). Finally, it is evident that there is more to be done to address the crises of low grade 12 pass rates to improve the learners’ performance not only in KwaZulu-Natal, but in South Africa as a whole. Participant 3 felt that:

“A marker who is not well developed in the subject can end up awarding marks to wrong answers or vice versa. Sometimes in the paragraph type questions some of the candidates demonstrate extra knowledge borrowed from the other subjects which they offer. This needs a marker who understands the subjects well and who is well read in the field.”

4.5.5 Spontaneous absenteeism

Absenteeism is a major factor responsible for the falling standard in the school education system today. Being in school, leads to succeeding in performance. There is a strong correlation between poverty and chronic absenteeism. Absence rates were found to be three times higher among economically disadvantaged learners (HSRC, 2005). Participant 2 felt that:

“Learners that have absenteeism problems generally suffer academically and socially. Therefore the way schools care about children is often reflected in the way schools care about absenteeism. If teachers view learners’ absenteeism simply as less important, they are likely to regard the family as separate from the school. In other words, the families are expected to do its job and dedicated to the learners’ school attendance irrespective of poverty.”

Doran, (2011) argues that the negative impact of the loss of days in school due to absenteeism has been universally acknowledged and it has been linked to poor performance, repetition and eventually dropout. Participant 10 verified this when she said that:

“The rural school is located far away from the learners’ community. The learners have to travel long distances to and from school and many have to walk these distances in all weathers. As a result, the easier short-term answer is to stay at home and help the family on the plot/farm/small holding or workshop. The situation is particularly common if the parents consider school to be a waste of time.”

Many participants acknowledged that parents always shift the blame. Parents should make sure that children attend school regularly. The researcher has observed that learners absent themselves from the school even more than five days in a row and come back without a medical certificate. Participant 9 thought that:

“When the school does not exercise discipline or does not allow pupils to participate in educational planning and decision making, when they are excluded from exercising authority and are subjected to strict external control learners may adopt hostile and rebellious attitudes towards the school.

Secondary schools, especially, should not regard the learners as incompetent and too irresponsible to share in the running of the school. Such an attitude on the part of the authorities may in itself contribute to spontaneous absenteeism.”

The participants stated that the higher absent rate occurs more with learners who are orphans. Participant 1 proceeded to say that:

“...the following day they come to school with stories to justify their absenteeism. This makes them to lag behind and decline in their performance. By so doing they make the teacher’s work more difficult because the teacher has to go back to teach the learning matter that he or she has already taught.”

Booyse, Le Roux and Wolhuter (2012) argue that both violent incidents and threats of violence at schools affect learners (for this study, matriculants), teachers and the educational process negatively. Grade12 learners who are exposed to violence are not eager to attend school because of the occurrence of violence. The above mentioned authors further stated that grade12 learners may become withdrawn, isolated or inattentive in class. These effects will impact negatively on their motivation and ability to learn, on their socialization with peers, the quality of their relationships with adults at their school and eventually on Grade 12 results. In this regard it may happen that learners are missing school lessons because they fear for their personal safety. Moreover, Grade 12 learners are expected to have completed the prescribed formal tasks to be assessed at the end of the year. Participant 5 shared the insight that:

“... due to the fact that there is an increasing rate of drugs abuse such as marijuana (dagga), woonga, alcohol and cigarette smoking among learners, the rate of absenteeism is too high. Learners are bunking the lessons, intimidating and bullying other learners. The big worry is that if these drugs are used frequently, the learners will not only ever learn to cope with the stress and problems of everyday life, but other serious learners are disturbed from attending the school thus losing out academically. This may result in a state of perpetual immaturity, with increasing dependence on alcohol and other drugs in order to cope with life.”

Macmanis and Sorensen (2002) found that teenage mothers’ failure to concentrate in the classroom would make them feel drowsy and exhausted thus leading to poor attendance and disappointing performance.

A study by Malahlela (2012) revealed that teenage pregnancy and parenting play a major role in school absenteeism. These common forms of absenteeism exist to some extent in all classrooms. Participant 9 stated that:

“Some learners have been absent for valid reason such as that they went to bed on hungry stomachs the previous day and nothing to eat before going to school. Others are absent because of pregnancy and have to visit the antenatal classes or they do not have learning materials required by teachers or else they did not do the task or homework.”

Fulani and Hendricks (2011) believe that schools need to take a comprehensive approach to involve families and the community in ways that help students reduce chronic absenteeism. Schools that conduct more attendance-focused partnerships practice different types of involvement to reduce their rates of chronic absenteeism from one year to the next, thus they do not experience a variety of challenges and demands that may make it difficult for them to remain active in their children’s education. By conducting a wide range of involvement activities schools may enable more families and community partners to encourage, mentor, and support student attendance. Participant 6 suggested that, *“Parents and teachers, schools and families, exercise an influence in education and each has their own special contribution to make. Moreover, the most effective education occurs when families and schools work together / a shared enterprise.”*

Most participants stated that chronic absenteeism has a negative impact on the Grade12 performance. They therefore recommended that frequent and positive communication with parents about attendance is needed to reduce chronic absenteeism. This idea was supported by James and Poland (2006). They insisted that the effects of school, family and community partnerships on student attendance should be included. Therefore, a larger and more diverse sample of schools and a more extensive set of partnership activities focused on school attendance cannot be ignored for quality performance. They further believed that providing awards and incentives to students, referring chronically absent learners and their families to a counsellor, and to a truant or court officer are the good example of partnership activities to reduce chronic absenteeism, thus increasing learners’ performance. One of the Grade 12 learners indicated that:

“...teachers are required with learners from diverse cultural backgrounds as well as with cultural diverse parent bodies. Some parents may come from completely different backgrounds with different values, and traditions, different languages and

communication styles, and even different expectations and views on education. If teachers are knowledgeable about parents, there would be effective communication as well as working together as equal partners thus; chronic absenteeism may be reduced in this regard”

Participant 11 strongly believed that the diverse cultural background of the above mentioned stakeholders can have positive impact in improving Grade 12 results.

4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The data that was captured through interviews was tape-recorded. Interestingly, the researcher’s observation concurs with the literature that there is a high rate of absenteeism and classrooms are overcrowded, there are curriculum changes and inadequate resources, and the lack of parental involvement affects the way the Grade 12 learners perform at school. The literature reveals that teen parents are more likely to do poorly in school and repeat grades more often than teens who are not parents (Malahlela, 2012:47). Based on this argument, the researcher is of the view that without meeting this pre-condition for educational success, that is, being a teen parent, the Grade 12 academic performance can be negatively affected (Sutherland, Gill and Binns, 2004). The recommendations and conclusions for this research study will be dealt with in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research was conducted to get teachers' and learners' understandings of the causes of the low Grade12 pass rate in two Umlazi District schools, KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher used a case study approach to get teachers and Grade 12 learners' understanding with regard to the phenomenon being studied. The study was conducted in two secondary schools that obtained below 60% Grade 12 pass rate in the Umlazi District. The researcher used interviews with open-ended questions to generate data from the participants. The interviews were tape-recorded. The researcher also used observation as another tool to generate data. During observation, field notes were taken. This constituted a non-participating observation for this study refers to the "systematic process of recording the behavioral pattern of participants, without necessary questioning or communicating with them" (Kobus, 2007:84).

The researcher developed a check list for rating categories of behaviour that the researcher was observing (see Appendix: I). The researcher used the same checklist for other participants who were participating in the study. Hence, both Maree (2012) and Cresswell (2008) support this idea when they point out that the same checklist should be used for all participants taking part in the study. This instrument was chosen for the purpose of assisting the researcher to be more unbiased and objective.

Teachers and Grade 12 learners participated in this study. These participants were chosen because the researcher felt they would provide rich, accurate and relevant data. In addition these teachers were chosen because of their experience in the field of education and because of their qualifications. To unpack what the participants understand or perceive and get their views with regard to the phenomenon under study, the researcher devised three critical research questions and the main research question.

The main research question of this study is as follows: What are the reasons for the poor Grade 12 results in two schools concerned in Umlazi district? Against this background the following questions need to be answered:

- What are the trends in the Grade 12 results of the two selected schools over the last five years?
- Why are such tendencies occurring?
- How can the inclinations in the observed results be improved?

The researcher used individual interviews and focus group interviews to interview the research participants. The researcher used thematic data analysis to reduce the massive set of data into themes and categories in order to answer the critical research questions.

The main objective of the study is to determine the factors that caused low Grade 12 pass rate in Umlazi district, KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, in order to accomplish this objective, the research will be:

- To examine the trend in the Grade 12 results of two schools in Umlazi district over the last five years.
- To identify reasons for the trend of high failure rate.
- To identify possible strategies for improvement.

In this chapter the summary, recommendations and conclusion with regard to the phenomenon under study are provided.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

In the first chapter of the study, I began by giving a background, the focus or the statement of the problem as well as the purpose of the study. The chapter also discussed the rationale and motivation for the study.

Key research questions, significance of the study and the operational definitions of terms used in the study were also presented. It outlines the aim of the study, methodology, population as well as sampling. Aspects touched upon were the causes and factors that underpin low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi district

schools, KwaZulu-Natal. What is evident from literature is that many rural Grade 12 learners are not receiving the relevant education services to which they are entitled. However, this study indicated that despite shortages of resources and curriculum reforms, there are a myriad other factors that influence these circumstances. Factors such as spontaneous absenteeism, lack of parental involvement, overcrowding, school violence and corporal punishment - to mention but a few - have an impact on how learners perform at school. Furthermore, the theoretical and philosophical frameworks for the study and the paradigm of the study were discussed in this chapter (cf. 1.15).

In Chapter Two, I reviewed both national and international scholarly literature which focused on the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi district schools, KwaZulu-Natal. The review of the literature in South Africa focused on the role that was played by the stakeholders like parents, teachers and learners in schools.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the research design and methodology, sampling and measuring instruments. The measuring instruments that were used to collect data consisted of focus group interviews, field notes and observations.

Trustworthiness, credibility, limitation of the study as well as ethical consideration and confidentiality were also considered for this study (cf.3.11).

This study is located within the interpretivism paradigm. The interpretivism paradigm provides an understanding of why the Grade 12 performance in Umlazi district schools is terrible poor. According to Bryman (2004:19) the interpretivism paradigm enables the researcher to understand and interpret the data in ways that will facilitate an in-depth engagement with the phenomenon. In interpretivism, the epistemology rests upon moral and pragmatic concerns which are located in a particular context and time and are open to dialectic and mutualistic conversations. In this study the teachers and Grade 12 learners interacted with the researcher and with each other, discussing their perceptions, views and experiences.

The participants are mostly teachers who discuss the meanings they attach to their productivity in the era of Grade 12 results. It is critical that ethical considerations are

addressed during the data collection between the researcher and the participants. Multiple experiences of this poor performance determined the multiple realities which the ontology of this study as the reality in the interpretivism paradigm is negotiated with participants (Schwandt 2000 as cited in Cohen et al. 2011:91). This study is determined by multiple truths that emerged from each case. In general, within this social context, the researcher relied on the participant's experiences and authentic statistics (as shown in graph on teenage pregnancy in chapter 2) to get the required data (cf.3.3).

Chapter Four aimed at providing an analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the teachers and Grade 12 learners from the two rural schools, school Y and school Z. It is based on the information that was collected using interviews, observations and field-notes. The chapter begins with a description of the sample used in the study, and then moves on to explore the findings of the study. As this chapter directly refers to the causes of the low Grade 12 pass rates and the challenges experienced by both teachers and learners of these schools, their anonymity had to be considered. Teachers' views were grouped according to similar and different responses, irrespective of their schools. This created a disadvantage by weakening the holistic descriptions of individual teachers or learners in the context of their schools and communities, but better protects the confidentiality they were promised (cf.4.1).

In this final chapter of the study (Chapter Five), concluding remarks are made as the final analysis. This chapter looks at the summary of the study. The recommendations are examined on the basis of the research findings, as discussed in the literature review (chapter two). However, the researcher's primary aim of these recommendations hopes to improve the Grade 12 performance not specifically, in the rural schools in Umlazi district, but eventually to the interest of the whole KwaZulu-Natal Province. Therefore, these recommendations are structured in the form of guidelines which are provided in terms of five categories (cf.5.2) as follows:

- The Department of Basic Education (DoBE),
- Teachers,
- Learners,
- Parents and caregivers, and
- Future research

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE FORM OF GUIDELINES

The three critical research questions were answered based on the findings in the study. Since Grade 12 failure is a provincial issue (KwaZulu-Natal), it is important to conclude this study by providing guidelines in the forms of recommendations. The low Grade12 pass rate is influenced by a myriad of factors that impact on the learning and development of learners. It has already been mentioned throughout the study that teenage pregnancy and school violence make learners not receptive to learning regardless of the materials or the methods used. Therefore, teachers and learners are faced with challenges and teachers need to be creative so that they do not lose their passion for teaching under such conditions. Each and every one of us has to play his or her role to make sure that learners perform well and enjoy quality education.

The provision in the form of indirect support to learners through supporting teachers and school management are the main focus and responsive to the full range of learning needs that may assist in improving the poor Grade 12 poor performance (DoE 2005:22). The Education White Paper 6 (DoE 2001) makes provision for support by means of the systems approach and collaboration between these systems. According to Henson (2004:280), in cooperative learning groups, individual learners work together to reach a common goal. Johnson and Johnson (2008:9) maintain that cooperative learning tends to result in greater achievement, more positive relationships and greater psychological health. The following five recommendations are highlighted in the form of guidelines:

5.3.1 The DoBE

Recommendation One

During the interviews it became clear that the role of the Departments of Education in the nine provinces is to implement policy accepted by the national Department of Education (cf.4.5.1). It stands to reason that the provinces are not on the same level regarding the implementation of the policy of inclusion, as resources and manpower differ from province to province (DoE 2011:7). Given the fact that Grade 12 is regarded as the senior grade to determine acceptance to the tertiary institutions, the DoBE has a myriad tasks to perform in order to improve the quality of Grade 12 learners' performance. The DoBE (2011) should stop changing curriculum so often

so to reduce the uncertainty about curriculum for both teachers and learners (4.5.3). Then teachers should be trained to be able to equip learners in a climate of standardized results. Teachers should be trained to teach new learning areas that are found fit for necessary skills needed. A strong knowledge base for incoming and practicing teachers to teach - FET Band learners should be developed by the policy makers.

As it was stated in the interviews, most of the public secondary schools were previously built by the very poor communities to improvise as mainstream schools for their learners and they are not properly planned (including the school where the researcher is presently teaching). These schools are not properly built to establish adequate resources for effective teaching and learning (cf.4.5.1). Therefore, the DoBE should increase its budget to cater for proper renovations of these schools.

More fully equipped laboratories, classrooms and libraries should be built so that learners will be exposed to doing experiments and acquiring more data for better performance. In this regard overcrowding challenges will be addressed when three learners will be no longer share one desk to accommodate sixty five to seventy learners per class. Based on what I found from the findings of the study, overcrowded classes demand efficient educational intervention and policy review that will yield the maximum benefit in return for the resources allocated to education (cf.4.5.1.2.2). It goes without saying that there is a serious shortage of teachers in the education system. Therefore, through the budget increase, the previous colleges of education should be re-opened to train teachers on the new curriculum. This should create a link between secondary schools and the tertiary institutions. One of the positive outcomes from these reforms mentioned above is that there will be adequate teachers available to teach in the rural areas.

During the interviews it became clear that the introduction of an advanced integrative approach in training programmes of future teachers is needed in which attention to rural -FET band schools will be considered as an integral part of the training whereby teachers will be trained to teach inclusive education (cf.4.5.3). Training programmes should be in place to assist teachers more easily assist learners with barrier to learning and address the challenges of assisting them. In the training of future teachers, there is a dire need for interdisciplinary orientation which includes

collaboration with specialists in the areas of teenage pregnancy, school violence and sporadic absenteeism that mostly affect Grade 12 learners' performance.

A suggestion was made in the course of interviews that the DoBE should provide a valuable avenue for teachers to assist underperforming learners and their parents on ways that will minimise Grade 12 failure rate (cf.4.5.2). Through the DoBE budget increases there should be adjustments to cater for the incentives for teachers as a motivation purposes. Teachers may be encouraged to go the extra mile assisting in extra by assisting classes which involves morning classes, afternoon classes, and weekend and holiday classes. This may have a positive impact in producing good Grade 12 results.

5.3.2 Teachers

Recommendation Two

From what I observed and from informal conversations, teachers play a crucial role in the education system. They are in possession of a degree of knowledge which allows them to communicate fluently. As professionals they are devoted to displaying their intellectual abilities inspired by a deep-seated love for their chosen task (cf.4.5.4). They are expected to act as parents and guardians for the learners they teach. They should also create a relationship of trust, authority and obedience between learners and themselves. Teachers act in loco parentis which means the parent delegates his or her parental authority to teachers, who can then have this delegated authority. Therefore, the teacher acts as a parent in the education situation, but not that he or she replaces the parent (South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996).

Based on the findings of this study, teachers should be provided with guidance as to mark, plan, draft, revise and edit texts for the learners (cf. 4.5.4.1), including team-building exercises in the form of activities, games or role-plays where different opinions are given in order to improve teaching and learning for quality Grade 12 results. Teachers should establish connections that facilitate engagement so that when a learner does not have adequate resources available for writing and reading, they assist in searching outside the school environment for such resources (cf.4.5.4), including re-enforcing health-promoting behaviours of learners and their families within a supportive environment. While understanding the environment in which they

work, they should value the skills and the capabilities of the learners. Education orientation is a crucial part of safety education intervention. It is from this context that teachers need training and background information on issues like school violence, absenteeism, and teenage pregnancy-to mention but the few -as these are barriers to learning. More liaising with the community structures is also needed to access the community resources for the benefit of improving learner performance (cf.4.5.1).

5.3.3 Learners

Recommendation Three

Although the South African Constitution Section 12 guarantees everyone the right to freedom and security of person, which includes the right not to be deprived of freedom arbitrarily or without just cause; to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources and not to be treated or punished in a cruel inhuman or degrading way, learners must take the responsibility for their own education and lives. They should display commitment from their side to familiarize themselves with the school curriculum by visiting public libraries, reading newspaper articles and attaining more information that will assist to enhance their vocabulary (cf.4.5.5). They should take the responsibility to do their tasks on time, forming study groups as soon as possible when the school work is not in large quantities so that they can grasp it easily. This will assist them to identify the areas of difficulty to be addressed. They should exert intense efforts at improving their knowledge, skills and attitudes towards improving their performance. Learners themselves should be the agents of change and important resources in promoting a high Grade 12 pass rate and building their futures. Learners should learn to distance themselves from all forms of violence either caused by drug abuse or criminal activities.

Learners should learn to abstain from sexual activities which result in high teenage pregnancy, and thus contributing to the poor Grade 12 performance as the findings clearly stated (cf. graph 2.2). They should take the leadership role in self-discipline and focus on school work rather than shifting blame to teachers and the DoBE.

5.3.4 Parents and care-givers

Recommendation Four

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009: 11-12) says that parents and teachers, schools and families, exercise an influence in education and each have their own special contribution to make. Moreover, the most effective education occurs when families and schools work together in a shared enterprise. Families exercise by far the most powerful and lasting influence upon the attitudes, behaviour and academic performance of learners and young people.

Much of what learners will eventually know and be able to do is determined at home (cf.4.5.2). When psychologists or historians probe the lives of the highly successful people (or the converse, dysfunctional people) to determine the reasons for their success or failure, they usually start with the influence of their family of origin, especially the impact of their mothers or fathers on educational achievement and character formation. In the light of this it is clearly short-sighted to regard learner's attitudes and achievement simply in terms of the work of the school alone. Finally, just about all families care about their learners' schooling. Surveys show that even parents who have dropped out of school or are on the fringes of society for various reasons indicates that they care deeply about their learners' schooling and desire that their learners to avoid the mistakes that they have made. During the interviews, it became clear that there are some expectations from parents so that the school will function well and the academic performance of their learners will be improved (cf.4.5.2).

Therefore, parents should comply with the statutory requirements for sending their learners to school at the appropriate age. In this regard they should not distance themselves from the school. They must be concerned about their learners' school work by means of attending parents meeting and open days, support teachers and ask for clarity where there is a minimum of tasks being covered for the quarter (cf.4.5.3).

Parents should ensure that their learners attend school regularly and are always punctual. Parents should ensure that learners are adequately fed and clothed, and therefore attend school in a state fit to learn. They should see to it that their learners are adequately equipped with the basic materials to benefit from schooling. They

should see that their learners behave well, and respect the rights and interests of others in the school community (cf.4.5.5).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE STUDY

Effective teaching and learning, according to James and Pollard (2006:25), require the teachers to scaffold learning by providing intellectual, emotional and social support so that as learners grow and mature and the scaffolds are removed, learners are confident in their learning. Through the contributions of teachers in this study, the findings provide the information relevant to the advancement of future research in manifesting the causes of the low Grade 12 pass rate. Advancing this study as an integral part of the work in educational institutions may be especially important considering the detrimental effects that a low Grade12 performance may have on the educational status of KwaZulu-Natal, and South Africa at large. Since there is limited information available about teacher's interventions to improve Grade 12 performances, it is recommended that research be undertaken to fill this gap. However, this current study could be used as a foundation for future research as it provides some information in this regard. As a researcher I believe that this study will make a positive input to the existing body of knowledge and will benefit all stakeholders in the education system.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It should be noted that, in considering the implications of the findings, because this research was conducted in only two schools and with a sample of 12 out of 35 teachers and 12 learners out of 25 learners, generalizability may be limited. Furthermore, if the study had involved other schools in the area, it may have provided different results. Perceptions and experiences of 12 learners and 12 teachers with regard to the phenomenon being studied might not be as extensive and representative of all learners and teachers in the two schools that were studied. Although these participants were purposively chosen, the sample could have involved all teachers and Grade 12 learners at the two schools so as to gather different views regarding the phenomenon under study. In addition, this research was conducted with only IsiZulu speaking African learners and teachers living and

working in the rural areas, so it could have also involved other racial groups which would have expanded the experiences and knowledge about the causes of the low Grade 12 pass rate. Despite these limitations, the researcher trusts that the case study achieved its minimum goals pertaining to the phenomenon under study.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to come to a better understanding of the causes of the low Grade 12 pass rate and to investigate all the obstacles and effects that are faced by both learners and the teachers. Throughout the study it was clear that, both teachers and the government share the culpability for the Grade 12 learners' results. Curriculum reforms contributed negatively to learners' performance since the curriculum experienced many challenges such as unqualified teachers and other resources needed for the successful implementation of it. Academic performance is pegged on discipline as no study time is wasted in punishing deviant and ill-disciplined learners. Teenage pregnancy is also a contributory factor to learners' poor performance since the teenage mothers cannot concentrate fully on their studies due to the stigma during and after pregnancy which leads to depression, social exclusion, low self-esteem and, indeed, poor performance.

Clearly, the damage caused by the low Grade 12 pass rate is irreversible. All possible mechanisms and interventions, including designing a fixed curriculum by the education policy makers, should be explored and exhausted to combat this trend before it is too late. Therefore, it is believed that the findings of this study will be of great value to all stakeholders to improve the participation and academic performance of learners in the education system

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

PHM Ngcongco [8858187]

for a M Ed study entitled

**Exploring the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi District schools,
KwaZulu Natal**

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa
College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two
years from the date of issue.

Prof VI McKay
Acting Executive Dean : CEDU

Dr M Claassens
CEDU REC (Chairperson)
mcdtc@netactive.co.za

Reference number: 2014 OCTOBER /8858187/MC

22 OCTOBER 2014

APPENDIX B: REQUEST PERMISSION TO STUDY AT DOE

Private Bag 737
Scottburgh
4180
13 June 2013

**Department of education-Umlazi District
Umbumbulu
4105**

Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST FOR CONDUCTING AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH STUDY

I hereby wish to request your permission to conduct the research study in two of your schools namely: Lugobe Secondary School and Ndonyela Secondary School. I am a student at UNISA doing the Masters in Inclusive Education (MED) as part of my studies. I intend to do a research for dissertation.

My main topic is exploring the causes of low grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi District Schools, KwaZulu -Natal. My research study will comply with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully
PHM NGCONGO
Sign.....

**APPENDIX C: REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY AT ISISUSA
SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Private Bag 737
Scottburgh
4180
22 October 2014

**The Principal
Isisusa Secondary School
Private Bag x 1026
Umbumbulu
4105**

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR CONDUCTING AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH STUDY

I hereby wish to request your permission to conduct the research study in your school mentioned above. I am a student at UNISA doing the Masters in Inclusive Education (MED) as part of my studies. I intend to do a research for dissertation.

My main topic is exploring the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi District Schools, KwaZulu-Natal. My research study will comply with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully
PHM NGCONGO

Sign..........

**APPENDIX D: REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY AT NDONYELA
SECONDARY**

**Private Bag 737
Scottburgh
4180
18 June 2013**

**The Principal
Ndonyela Secondary School
Private Bag x 1031
Umbumbulu
4105**

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR CONDUCTING AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH STUDY

I hereby wish to request your permission to conduct the research study in your school mentioned above. I am a student at UNISA doing the Masters in Inclusive Education (MED) as part of my studies. I intend to do a research for dissertation.

My main topic is exploring the causes of low grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi District Schools, KwaZulu -Natal. My research study will comply with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully
PHM NGCONGO
Sign.....



kzn education
Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Mr S.BM.MNGADI

Reference: P.HM. Ngcongco Date: 02.07.2013

Appendix E: Permission to conduct a study at Lugobe and Ndonyela Secondary Schools

Dear Sir

On behalf of the Department of Education, Umbumbulu District Office-KZN, I hereby agree to allow an Educational Study to be conducted at the above mentioned schools as per request of the researcher.

However, I am convinced there will be no exploitation of research participants (including learners, educators, community members, institution's and any vulnerable people). I am also convinced that the study will be beneficiary to the community in which research will be conducted (non-exploitation) to mention the few principle of the UNISA Policy on Ethics that was presented to me by the researcher.

Regards

Mr SBM Mngadi :Circuit Manager
Umbumbulu Central Ward

MR SBM MNGADI (CIRCUIT MANAGER)

SIGN _____

APPENDIX F: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY AT ISISUSA SECONDARY

Isisusa Secondary School
P/Bag X 1015
Umbumbulu
4105
24 October 2014

Dear Mr Ngeongo

Permission To Conduct Study At The Above Mentioned Institution

We wish to inform you that your request to conduct the study at our school has been accepted.

Therefore we trust that as the researcher, you will comply with the conditions that are contained in the UNISA Policy on Ethics which includes confidentiality and privacy of all participants involved in the study.

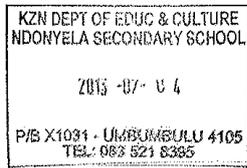
Wishing you a good lucky and success to your study.

Kind regards
Mrs AN Hlela (Principal)

Sign..........

KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ISISUSA SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRIVATE BAG 1015
UMBUMBULU
4105

APPENDIX G: PERMISSION FROM NDONYELA SECONDARY



DONYELA SECONDARY SCHOOL

P O UMBUMBULU

4105

July 4, 2013

Dear Sir

RE: RESPONSE ON THE APPLICATION FOR CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH AT MY SCHOOL NDONYELA SECONDARY SCHOOL.

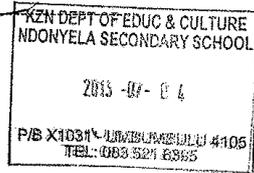
Please be advised that after meeting with the School Governing Body chairperson (SGB) your application has been successful.

We therefore hope that it will be of the beneficiary to our school and community.

Regards

Mr M. Sabelo(Principal)

Sign-----



**APPENDIX H: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR FOCUS GROUP
INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS**

**Private Bag 737
Scottburgh
4180**

Dear Educators

RE: Consent to take part in focus group interview

This letter aims to ask your consent to take part in a focus group interview. Therefore, I will read letter loudly to assist you decide whether or not you want to participate in the study. I assure you that there is no risk involved in your participation in the study. Please pay attention to all the statements I read. If you have any question concerning the study you are free to raise is at any time. For further information, please contact me, the principal researcher: Piuson Hluphani Muntu Ngcongco using my cell phone 072 8112661 or email sihlc.ngcongco@transnet.net I am a masters student, conducting a research study and entitled “Exploring the causes of low Grade12 pass rate in two Umlazi District Schools, KwaZulu-Natal” under the supervision of Dr LDN Tlale at the College of Education and Department of Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The main purpose of the study is to explore the causes of low Grade 12 pass rate to assist in improving the result of the matric pass rate in Umlazi District, KwaZulu-Natal. The study comprises the following specific objectives:

- 1. To examine the trend of low performance in the matriculation result of two schools in Umlazi District over the last five years.**
- 2. To identify reasons for the trend of high matric failure rate.**
- 3. To identify possible strategies for improvement.**

I would like to know whether you would be willing to participate in focus group interviews in which you will be expected to answer questions about challenges you and your colleagues, experienced as far as inclusive education at Umlazi District is concerned. The interview process will take about one hour of your time. With your consent form, I will record the session, since it enables me to capture all information forwarded by participants. Although participating in this study might not benefit directly, you can make a considerable contribution as far as identifying serious challenges that you and your colleagues experienced at Umlazi District Schools.

However, you only have to participate if you choose to do so. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The result of the study will appear in the final thesis and the article may be published. The information obtained from you through interview process will only be used for the purpose of this study and it will be confidential. The only people who will be allowed to access the audio-records and the transcriptions are myself and my supervisor, who is allowed to check whether or not I am

doing correctly. The audio recorded and transcribed data will be kept safe in my office for at least five years from the publication of the result, and then be discarded with.

Regards
Piuson Hluphani Muntu Ngcongco

CONSENT FORM

I agree that:

1. I understand the information of the consent form for this research project.
2. The nature and the purpose of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that this part of the study involves focus group interviews that may take one hour of my time.
4. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and may withdraw at any time without any harm.
5. I agree that the data gathered from me maybe published anonymously.
6. I understand that all the research data will be kept for five years, and will then be discarded.

Name of Participant	Signature	Date

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

This focus group interview will be held with twelve educators (a group of six from school A and group of six from school B) to identify the prevailing factors and challenges that have experienced in their schools using the following open-ended questions:

1. In your opinion what are the challenges and contributing factors of low Grade 12 pass rate considering the following three stakeholders that are involved in education?
 - (a) Community and parents
 - (b) Department of Education and Educators
 - (c) Learners
2. Please specify any possible solutions to the factors that can assist to improve the result taking into consideration the following three stakeholders in the South African Education system namely:
 - (a) Learners
 - (b) Community and parents
 - (c) Department of Education and Educators

Thank you for your participation in this interview.

APPENDIX I: OBSEVARTION CHECKLIST

GRADE 12

DATE.....

EDUCATOR.....

Classroom control	YES	NO	COMMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the educator administer corporal punishment (to re-enforce learners' participation?) • Does the educator move around the class? • Number of attendances (compared to enrolment). • Where are hand-outs, books, placed? • Disruptions if learners come late (having to find seats). • What are the educators' attitudes towards pregnant and drugs addicted learners? Is the educator harsh towards or get easily irritated or upset or the educator neglects the pregnant learners? 			
<p>Academic accomplishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the remedial work done to help the slow learners to catch up? • Do learners attend regularly and promptly? • Hand in properly completed both formal and informal tasks? • Are learners actively involved and committed during teaching periods? • Do they bring their necessary materials such as stationery, calculators, and dictionaries into the class? <p>Physical Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do learners seats e.g. groups, rows or isolated from each other? • Are they overcrowded? • Is the furniture adequate and in good condition? • What about ventilation e.g. windows, doors in good condition? • Are the resource material e.g. overhead projectors. Chalkboard and teaching aids available? 			